

Constitution and Bylaws Revision

Constitution (Presented to the Congregation at 7/30/17 QSM)

Amend Article IV, Sec 1g

From: *Approve the call, job description and initial salary of Vocational Pastors and Ministers.*

To: *Approve the call and job description of those Elders who receive compensation from the Church for fulfilling their Elder responsibilities.*

Bylaws (Presented to the Congregation at 10/29/17 QSM)

Amend Articles I, II and III from their current form to the following:

ARTICLE I Membership

Section 1 PROCEDURE

All actions regarding membership, either of admission or dismissal, shall be by vote of the Church upon recommendation of the Council of Elders. At any of the regular meetings for worship, the Church may, without special notice, receive new members.

Section 2 INSTRUCTION TO NEW MEMBERS

All persons uniting with this Church shall previously be made acquainted with the Church Covenant and the Membership Affirmation of Faith. New members shall pledge themselves to fulfill their stewardship obligations to regularly attend worship and participate in service and giving, when they make public profession of faith and join the Church.

Section 3 REMOVAL OF MEMBERS

- a. Members may be removed from membership upon recommendation by the Elders and a majority vote of the members present at any business meeting.
- b. Members in good standing may request a letter of recommendation to present to a different church. Members who unite with another Church will be removed from the membership roll.
- c. Members who are found to be inactive in the worship, fellowship and ministry of the Church will be removed from the membership roll. It is the responsibility of the Council of Elders to remind members of their duties in this respect.
- d. Members whose conduct consistently or grievously contradicts the commitments outlined in the Church Covenant may be subject to Church discipline under the leadership of the Elders.

ARTICLE II Church Government

Section 1 OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH

The Biblical offices of the Church are Elders and Deacons. The Council of Elders are the legal directors of the Church. Elders and Deacons shall be called to office by vote of the membership of the Church as described in Article II, Sections 2–3 of these Bylaws. All Elders and Deacons of the Church shall be members in good and regular standing. The Church also recognizes the administrative positions of Clerk, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary and may employ additional personnel as described in Article III of these Bylaws.

Section 2 ELDERS

a. Qualifications

Elders and nominees for Elder shall be men of demonstrable godly character, above reproach in public and private, and committed to shepherding the flock of God and to teaching and guarding sound doctrine, as expressed in the Bethlehem Baptist Church Elder Affirmation of Faith. Elders and nominees will exemplify the Biblical characteristics of elder-overseers in I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9 and I Peter 5:1-4 and will agree with the Bethlehem Baptist Church Elder Affirmation of Faith and commit to the Elders Covenant.

b. Responsibilities

The fundamental responsibility of the Elders is to devote themselves to prayer and the Word. The Elders are responsible for governing the Church as godly servant leaders. They must teach the Word and tend the flock of God in this Church. The responsibilities of the Elders shall include: examining prospective members and candidates for baptism and acquainting them with the Affirmation of Faith and Church Covenant, overseeing the process of Church discipline, examining prospective candidates for office, scheduling and providing a moderator for business meetings, providing for reporting and recording of official Church business, overseeing the work of the Deacons and appointed Church agents and committees, conducting worship services, administering the ordinances of the Gospel, equipping the membership of the Church for the work of the ministry, teaching the whole counsel of God both formally and informally, correcting error, overseeing, coordinating and promoting the ministries of the Church, and mobilizing the Church for world mission.

c. Composition

The Elder Council shall be comprised of Staff and Non-Staff Elders. Staff Elders are men who receive financial compensation from the Church as they fulfill God's call to the specific ministries of the Word, prayer and shepherding the flock. In addition to the duties of their office as described in Section 'b' above, Staff Elders shall perform the duties determined by the Council of Elders and approved by the congregation. The duties shall be in writing at the time of employment and substantial changes shall be approved by the Church.

Non-Staff Elders are men recommended by the Council of Elders and called by the Church who serve voluntarily without financial support from the Church as they fulfill God's call to the specific ministries of the Word, prayer and shepherding the flock.

d. Call by the Church

The members shall call Staff Elders and Non-Staff Elders (1) by ballot upon recommendation of the Council of Elders and (2) by at least a two-thirds majority of those members voting at the meeting with at least ten percent (10%) of the membership of the Church present. Oral notice of any such meeting, stating its object, shall be given from the pulpit on the two successive weekends preceding the meeting. Notice shall also be given by mail (electronic or otherwise) to the resident membership at least one week before the meeting. Elders shall stand for reaffirmation not later than the third annual meeting following their call or previous reaffirmation. Reaffirmation of Elders shall be by two-thirds vote of those members present and voting at the meeting.

e. Organization

The Council of Elders shall organize itself however it determines to be best to achieve the mission of the Church. The Elders shall be equal in authority but may be specialized in function. Meetings of the Council of Elders may be held at any location and may be conducted by means of electronic communication through which the Elders may simultaneously hear each other. Unless the Council provides otherwise, meetings of the Council may be held immediately upon notice. The Council shall annually select its Chairman and Vice-Chairman from among its Non-Staff Elders. The Council of Elders will meet at least quarterly and will consist of a quorum which is at least one-half of the Non-Staff elders plus at least one-half of the Staff Elders, except for matters on which only Non-Staff Elders are entitled to vote, in which case a majority of the Non-Staff elders shall constitute a quorum.

Section 3 DEACONS

a. Qualifications

Deacons and nominees for Deacon shall be men and women who are members in good standing and demonstrate godly character and possess particular gifts of service. Deacons will exemplify the godly characteristics set forth in I Timothy 3:8-12.

b. Responsibilities

The Deacons shall advise and be ready to assist the Elders in any service that shall support and promote the ministry of the Word, new and existing ministries of the Church, and the care for the members of the congregation. Their responsibilities may include: administering a fund to assist the poor and needy and otherwise providing aid in times of crisis or distress; the greeting and welcoming ministries of the Church; assisting in administering the ordinances of the Gospel; assisting at fellowship gatherings of the Church; caring for and maintaining the Church properties; administering the business affairs of the Church that pertain to its material assets.

c. Composition

The Deacons may be both men and women. Deacons may or may not be employed by the Church. The number of Deacons shall be determined by the needs of the ministry and by the call and qualification of men and women in the Church.

d. Call by the Church

The members shall call Deacons (1) by ballot upon recommendation of the Council of Elders and (2) by at least a two-thirds majority of those members voting at the meeting with at least ten percent (10%) of the membership of the Church present. Oral notice of any such meeting, stating its object, shall be given from the pulpit on the next two successive weekends preceding the meeting. Notice shall also be given by mail (electronic or otherwise) to the resident membership at least one week before the meeting. Deacons shall stand for reaffirmation not later than the third annual meeting following their call or previous reaffirmation. Reaffirmation of Deacons shall be by two-thirds vote of those members present and voting at the meeting.

e. Organization

Under the direction of the Elders, the Deacons shall organize themselves however they determine to be best to achieve the mission of the Church. The Elders or the Deacons may designate any specific Deacon or group of Deacons to specialize in some particular diaconal function. Meetings of the Deacons, or subcommittees thereof, shall be held as needed to best fulfill the responsibilities of the Deacons.

Section 4 REMOVAL

- a. By resignation. Elders or Deacons may resign their office at any time if they find they are no longer able to discharge the duties of the office.
- b. Grievance. Where a grievance exists against an Elder or Deacon due to teaching contrary to the beliefs of the Church as set forth in Article II of its Constitution or to alleged conduct on their part unfitting an Elder or Deacon, such grievance may be brought before the Council of Elders by any two members in good standing. If the Council, after thorough investigation and consideration, believes the grievance to be true and substantial, then the call of the Elder or Deacon may be terminated at any business meeting upon the recommendation of the Council of Elders when supported by closed ballot of a majority of those members of the Church present and voting with at least ten percent (10%) of the membership of the Church present at such meeting. Oral notice of any such meeting, stating its object, shall be given from the pulpit on the two successive weekends preceding the meeting. Notice shall also be given by mail (electronic or otherwise) to the resident membership at least one week before the meeting.
- c. Lack of Reaffirmation. If an Elder or Deacon fails to be reaffirmed to the office of Elder or Deacon a

special business meeting shall be called to consider the question of terminating the call of that Elder or Deacon. The call shall be terminated only if supported by closed ballot of a majority of those members of the Church present and voting with at least ten percent (10%) of the membership of the Church present. Public notice of any such meeting, stating its object, shall be given on the two successive weekends preceding the meeting. Notice shall also be given by mail (electronic or otherwise) to the membership at least one week before the meeting.

Section 5 LICENSING AND ORDINATION

In the matter of licensing and ordaining any person to the Gospel Ministry, the Church shall follow the procedure approved by the Council of Elders.

ARTICLE III Church Employees

In addition to Staff Elders, the Church may employ additional personnel. The moneys for such personnel must be approved by the congregation at a properly called business meeting. The Council of Elders or their designees will be responsible for determining the duties of and hiring such personnel.

Companion Notes

Constitutional Change

- Eliminates the category of “vocational minister” and “vocational pastor” as constitutionally stipulated
- Eliminates the standard of entire congregation approving salaries of staff Elders
- Provides greater clarity that ‘Elder’ and ‘pastor’ are the same office
- Provides ground for ‘staff Elders’ to be defined by their responsibilities as ‘Elder.’ That is, avoiding the situation in which one is deemed a staff Elder simply because they are employed by the Church as opposed to fulfilling Elder responsibilities

Bylaws Article I Changes

- Removes archaic membership practices
- Greater clarity on the responsibilities for members, congregation and Elders towards meaningful membership

Bylaws Article II Changes

- Clarifies that Elders and Deacons are the biblical officers of the church while Elders are the legal officers of the church
- Establishes ‘Staff’ and ‘Non-Staff’ Elders while removing ‘vocational minister,’ ‘vocational pastor,’ ‘vocational Elder’ and ‘lay Elder’
- Clarifies that the designation of ‘Staff Elder’ is tied to responsibilities and not employment
- Simplifies and brings continuity to direction for Elders and Deacons in qualifications, responsibilities, composition, call by the Church and organization
- Retains the essence of Elder and Deacon roles
- Removes the ratio of Non-Staff Elders to Staff Elders
- Removes the compulsory year off for Non-Staff Elders
- Clarifies ordination standard