

CONSTITUTION

AND

BY-LAWS

Put forth by the

ELDERS and BRETHREN

Of

SOJOURN BAPTIST CHURCH

On

October 31, 2008

“For the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.”

Ephesians 4:12-13

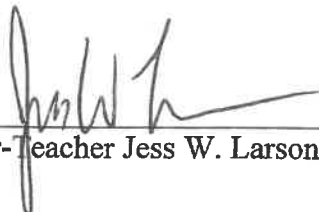
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PREFACE: FORMAL AFFIRMATION

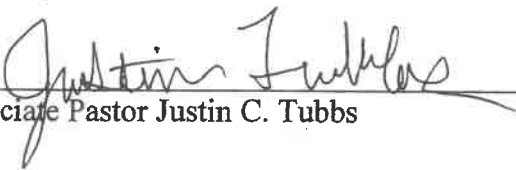
After two years of prayer and work, today on October 31st, 2008, we the elders of Oak Ridge Reformed Baptist Church alongside the consent of the members of this congregation do hereby formally adopt this newly revised Constitution and By-Laws and all the supporting documents cited herein. May the Lord be honored by the manner in which we conduct the affairs of this church. We submit all of our actions to God's Holy Word, desiring that everything be done in good order, all to the glory and renown of our great and good God.

The Founding Elders of Oak Ridge Reformed Baptist Church



Pastor-Teacher Jess W. Larson

10-31-08
Date



Associate Pastor Justin C. Tubbs

10-31-08
Date

AMENDMENTS:

January 1st, 2014:

Amendment Affirmed to Article VI, Section 8, Subsection B.

This Amendment was adopted to provide a more equitable voting procedure for elder decisions. The elder's desire for this Constitution & ByLaws is to uphold a conservative form of church government in which a super-majority of elders are required to change existing direction, while simultaneously preventing too much power being vested in any one elder.

Amendment Affirmed to Article IV, Section 7.

This Amendment was adopted to shorten the time required to remove members who have become inactive. It was decided that six months was far too long to declare a member inactive. Three months will now be the time used to determine inactivity in this church.



Pastor-Teacher Jess Larson

1-13-14
Date



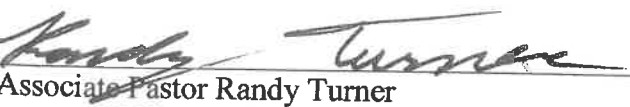
Associate Pastor Brin Duncan

1-13-14
Date



Associate Pastor Christian Bailey

1-13-14
Date



Associate Pastor Randy Turner

1-13-14
Date

ARTICLE I. NAME, LOCATION, AND AFFILIATION

The name of this church shall be OAK RIDGE REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH. The church is located at 27420 Robinson Rd, Oak Ridge, Montgomery County, Texas 77385. Oak Ridge Reformed Baptist, though independent and autonomous, is a Southern Baptist Church. The church is voluntarily cooperating with the Southern Baptist Convention as a part of the Southern Baptists of Texas State Convention in its ministries and the spreading of the gospel of Christ around the world through its mission programs.

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this church is as stated in the New Testament Scriptures. Being “a people for God’s own possession” (**I Pet 2:9**), the church exists for God’s pleasure. It is to bring glory and honor to His name and the name of His Son, Jesus Christ (**Rom 12:1-2, Col 1:15-23**). Our congregation desires to Equip the Saints for Ministry and Edify the Body of Christ (**Eph 4:12**). This involves careful preaching and teaching of God’s Word (**II Tim 3:16-17**) and being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace (**Eph 4:3**). In so doing the church fulfills the Great Commission given by Jesus Christ (**Matt 28:18-20**).

1. **Proclamation.** Jesus commissioned the church to be the salt of the earth and light of the world (**Matt 5:13-16**). This involves holy living and zealous proclamation of the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. The church is composed of people whom the Lord has saved by His grace through faith (**Eph 2:8-9**) who now proclaim His Excellencies in everything they say and do (**I Peter 2:9-10**).
2. **Discipleship.** The church serves to equip the saints for the work of service (**Eph 4:12**). This is done through systematic bible study and exhortation. The truths of God’s Word have been entrusted to faithful men who are to train others also (**II Tim 2:2**). Discipleship results in Christians living in unity, growing in holiness, growing up in all things into Him who is the head, even Christ (**Eph 4:13-16**).
3. **Ministry.** The church is designed to be the hands and feet of Christ here on the earth, for “we are God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works” (**Eph 2:10**). Ministry and service is always done with an understanding that our work is done unto the Lord (**Rom 12:11, Matt 25:31-46**). He is the one that we serve when we serve other Christians and those who are destitute and in need. Of special concern, are those in dire straight, such as widows and orphans (**James 1:27**). Ministry involves caring for those within the church and reaching out to those outside with the gospel, working in accordance with that message with practical helps.

ARTICLE III. VALUES AND CONFESSION OF FAITH

SECTION I. VALUES

Because we believe that the Holy Bible is the Inspired, Infallible, and Inerrant Word of God, it alone is and will be the basis and authority of answering any and all questions regarding the purpose, structure, and function of the church. The following beliefs are non-negotiable and are the foundation on which this constitution and these by-laws are based.

1. *WE BELIEVE IN A HIGH VIEW OF GOD*

- **Isaiah 42:8, 46:9-10; Ps 115:3, Rev 4:11**
- The Lord God is God over all creation, the object of our worship, the focus of our service, the author and perfecter of our faith. Everything we do will be judged by and is intended to magnify the glory of Almighty God.

2. *WE BELIEVE IN A HIGH VIEW OF SCRIPTURE*

- **Hebrews 4:12-13, II Tim 3:16-17, II Pet 1:19-21**
- The Holy Scriptures contain the authoritative, sufficient, infallible, inerrant revelations of God to man. They are the final authority over our ministries, representing the will and instructions of God. They are the fullness of the message of hope that unites and defines our ministry.

3. *WE BELIEVE IN THE TEACHING OF SOUND DOCTRINE*

- **Titus 2:1, II Tim 4:3-4**
- Since God's revelation to man has been given in the form of literary text, we have an obligation to understand and teach His word according to sound doctrine. We teach it out of obedience to our Lord rather than to please man (**Gal 1:10, I Thes 2:4**).

4. *WE BELIEVE IN PERSONAL HOLINESS*

- **Eph 5:3-12, Rom 12:1, I Pet 1:15-16, II Cor 7:1, Matt 18:15-20**
- Having been laid hold of by Christ in salvation, Christians are called to a life of holiness as to be a reflection of the character of Christ in the world. We have become new creations of God created unto good works which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Now, as fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, we are to stir one another up to follow Christ in holiness. We are accountable to God and one another for how we live, for we have been bought and are not our own.

5. *WE BELIEVE IN SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY*

- **Col 1:18, I Pet 5:1-4, Heb 13:17, I Tim 5:17**
- God has clearly defined the structure of authority for the church. Christ is the head of the church and He mediates His rule through the shepherding of godly elders (pastors). The elders (pastors), having a high view of God and scripture, being devoted to the preaching, teaching and practicing of sound doctrine, and being examples of personal holiness before the congregation, are responsible to lead the church. The congregation is accountable to the elders (pastors) and the elders are accountable to God. Therefore, decision making authority is vested in the elders (pastors), who shepherd the church.

6. *WE BELIEVE IN GODLY RELATIONSHIPS*

- **John 13:34-35, I Thes 4:9, Eph 5:22-6:1**
- The greatest evidence of Christ in the life of any Christian is found in love for other believers. As Christians, we must pursue and maintain godly relationships, loving and encouraging one another so that Christ will be evident among us. This is seen in Godly families as well.

7. *WE BELIEVE IN THE NECESSITY AND VALUE OF PRAYER*

- **I Thes 5:17, Eph 6:18, Matthew 21:13**
- The church is by definition a “house of prayer.” Prayer is a large part of every Christian’s life. Private and Public prayer must not be neglected.

8. *WE BELIEVE IN PASSIONATE PRAISE*

- **Ps 118:1, 150:2-6, I Pet 1:3-4**
- Throughout God’s Word we see the resounding refrain: PRAISE THE LORD! We, as God’s people, join the chorus, by the Holy Spirit’s work of regeneration in our hearts; we exalt the name of Jesus Christ all to God’s glory! Praise involves us focusing our minds’ attention and hearts’ affection on the worth of who God is and what He does.

9. *WE BELIEVE IN THE CALL TO SERVE OTHERS*

- **Matt 20:28, I Pet 4:10, Phil 2:3-4**
- We are called to follow Christ’s example in serving others out of love! This service takes on many different forms and involves us putting others before ourselves in our resources of money, talents, and time.

10. *WE BELIEVE WE MUST MAINTAIN A MISSIONS FOCUS*

- **Matthew 28:18-20, Rom 10:14-15**
- We are called to preach the gospel to all nations, all peoples! We will always maintain a focus that remembers the Lord’s desire and plan to save people of all nations!

SECTION 2. CONFESSION OF FAITH (See Attached)

Our confession is based upon the 2nd London Baptist Confession of Faith written in 1689. As the 2nd London Baptist Confession is grounded in the Westminster Confession, we have studied both documents side by side and have chosen to keep the Westminster’s language in some parts. Changes have also been made to reflect the particular beliefs of our congregation and explanatory notes have been made for those changes throughout. Affirmations are made of several supporting documents and have been included as appendices. The longer confession defines the doctrinal position of Sojourn Baptist Church, and is accepted by all of the elders as the official teaching position of the church. The shorter confession defines the essentials of the Christian faith, the affirmation of which is therefore necessary for membership and service within our church.

ARTICLE IV. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 1. THE CHURCH DEFINED

The word church (*ekklesia*) means “called out ones” and can refer to the entire spiritual body of Christ or a local congregation of that body. In the New Testament it most often refers to an established local congregation of believers. Scripture teaches that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united body called the Church, the family of God, of which Jesus Christ is the head (**Col 1:18, Eph 1:22**). Further the English word “church” derives its meaning from the Greek word *kuriakos* which means “belonging to the Lord.” The Church is made up of individual local congregations of believers that assemble together for the cause of fellowship and growing in Christ. God has given each local congregation all that it needs to individually and corporately mature and carry out the commands and commissions of our Lord (**Col 4:15**). The church exists for the spiritual purpose set forth in Chapter 23 of *The Confession of Faith*.

SECTION 2. MEMBERSHIP DEFINED

Members of this church shall be comprised of those who have:

1. Repented of Sin and Believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (**Matt 10:32, Rom 10:9**).
2. Requested to be a member of this church.
3. Made a commitment to abide by the membership covenant of this church.
4. Publicly affirmed the Sojourn Baptist Church *Shorter Confession of Faith*
5. Been baptized (**Matt 28:19, Acts 2:38, 8:12, 19:5**).
6. Been received as members of the church.

SECTION 3. PURPOSE OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Church membership is important in that it facilitates:

1. The defining of who belongs to our local congregation (**Phil 2:2**).
2. The knowing of who should participate in the privileges and responsibilities of the church (**I Tim 5:16, James 5:14**).
3. The providing of adequate care, nurture, and protection for every individual that belongs to this church (**Acts 6:1**).
4. The exercising of authority and oversight in discipline and restoration of those members not maintaining a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct (**I Cor 5:1-5**).

SECTION 4. PROCEDURES FOR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

A. APPLICATION FOR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Any person may request membership with this church by publicly or privately presenting himself or herself to an elder for membership.

B. PROCESS FOR CONSIDERATION OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

1. The person shall meet with an elder or an elder-appointed member to discuss if he or she has truly trusted Christ as Savior and Lord.

2. The person will attend a new member's class which will include a presentation of the gospel, teaching on the significance and observance of the Ordinances, and discussion of the Sojourn Baptist Church Confession of Faith and Constitution & By-Laws.
3. All persons still seeking membership shall sign the membership covenant.
4. Pending conversion, baptism, signing of the membership covenant, and elder body approval, the new member will be publicly presented to the congregation as a fellow member and assigned a ministry team to serve in.

SECTION 5. MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

The Church is made up of individual local congregations of believers that assemble together for the cause of fellowship and growing in Christ. Sojourn Baptist solemnly pledges to be a congregation which provides for the mutual edification of believers. Its elders do hereby affirm that they will teach sound doctrine (in accordance with the Sojourn Baptist Confession of Faith) leading to a healthy and growing body of believers and its deacons do hereby affirm that they will diligently serve the body in practical matters. God has given each local congregation all that it needs to individually and corporately mature and carry out the commands and commissions of our Lord (Col 4:15). Sojourn Baptist will equip the saints for ministry, edifying the body of Christ. As each member of Sojourn Baptist has covenanted, so I join them in affirming the following:

- I have repented of my sin and believe in Jesus Christ as Lord & Savior.
- I have been baptized.
- I affirm the Sojourn Baptist Shorter Confession of Faith.
- I desire to be a member of Sojourn Baptist Church.
- I affirm and accept the following responsibilities and will fulfill them by the Lord's grace:
 1. Seek to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.
 2. Support the church with my regular attendance in worship.
 3. Seek to use my spiritual gift in our church to the glory of God.
 4. Support the church financially.
 5. Be accountable to the church in doctrine and conduct.
 6. Submit to the loving rule, oversight, and authority of the elders regarding reproof, instruction, correction, and loving discipline.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

SECTION 6. DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS

The purpose of church discipline is to affect a return to a biblical standard of conduct and doctrine in a member who errs, to maintain purity in the local church, and to deter sin. Members of this church who shall err in doctrine or conduct shall be subject to dismissal according to **Matt 18:15-18, I Cor 5:1-5, I Tim 1:18-20, 5:19-20, Ja 5:19-20**. See Ch 28 of *The Confession of Faith*.

Before such dismissal, however:

1. It shall be the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of the erring member's heresy or misconduct to warn and to correct such erring member in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration.
2. If said erring member does not heed this warning, then the warning member shall again go to the erring member accompanied by one or two witnesses to warn and correct such erring member, seeking his or her repentance and restoration.
3. If said erring member still refused to heed this additional warning, then, it shall be brought to the attention of the elders.
4. The elders, upon careful and prayerful investigation, shall tell it to the church.
5. If said erring member refused to heed the warning of the elders and the church, he or she shall be publicly dismissed from the church.
6. There shall be no appeal to any court from that decision.
7. It is understood that this process will continue to conclusion even if the erring member leaves the church or otherwise seeks to withdraw from membership to avoid the discipline process.
8. If said member, after dismissal, heeds the warning, demonstrates repentance, and requests restoration of membership, he or she shall be publicly restored to membership.

SECTION 7. REMOVAL FROM MEMBERSHIP

Members may be removed from the church membership for any of the following reasons:

1. Death.
2. Transfer of membership, providing that disciplinary action is not in process for an offense under Article IV, Section 6 of this Constitution and By-laws.
3. Inactive for 6 months.
4. Disciplinary action.
5. Member request, providing that disciplinary action is not in process for an offense under Article IV, Section 6 of the constitution and by-laws.

SECTION 8. RESTORATION OF MEMBERSHIP

If a member, after dismissal, heeds the warning, demonstrates repentance, and requests reinstatement, he or she shall be publicly restored to membership. Any such request shall be made to the elder body (**Gal 6:1**).

SECTION 9. MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

A. TYPES OF MEETINGS

1. A regular annual meeting shall be held to affirm the church's annual budget and hear reports to the congregation from the elder body regarding the church.
2. A quarterly meeting will be held to inform the church about recent decisions and future direction.
3. Special meetings may be called by the pastor-teacher or the elder body to report to the church of pending decisions or decision made by the elder body.

B. NOTICE OF MEETINGS

Any special-called meetings shall be publicly announced and in printed form at least two (2) weeks prior to the meeting unless extreme urgency renders such notice impractical.

SECTION 10. ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH

Scripture teaches that there are two ordinances that the church is to observe till Jesus' return:

1. Baptism (see Chapter 26 of *The Confession of Faith*)
2. Lord's Supper (see Chapter 27 of *The Confession of Faith*)

ARTICLE V. CHURCH GOVERNMENT

SECTION 1. PURPOSE OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Church government is an extremely practical and theologically significant issue. Biblical structure and function allows the peaceful and orderly working out of the ministry of the church. The Church is the family of God and its head is Jesus Christ. Just as God has given us the structure and the function of each person in a family, He has done so in regard to His church (**Eph 5:23**). God's Word reveals the proper structure of the church and the function of each of its parts. The purpose of such structure and instruction is to ensure spiritual maturity both individually and corporately as a New Testament Church (**Eph 4:11-13**).

SECTION 2. STRUCTURE OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

A. JESUS CHRIST IS THE HEAD

Scripture teaches that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. Jesus Christ has revealed His will for us, as the Church, through His Word, the Bible (**Eph 5:23**).

B. ELDERS

Jesus Christ as Head of the Church mediates His rule over the Church by gifting elders (pastors) to shepherd, oversee, and lead the church. These elders are directly responsible to Jesus Christ for the governing of the church according to His Word (**Acts 20:28-30, I Thes 5:12-14, I Pet 5:1-2**).

C. DEACONS

Deacons are recommended by the church and approved by the elders to assist the elders in the practical ministry of service to the church (**Acts 6:1-6**).

SECTION 3. COUNCILS

To promote efficient handling of church matters, the elder body may appoint various councils from within its members, the staff, the deacons, and from the church at large. These councils shall perform tasks solely in accordance with the duties and with the powers specifically delegated by the elder body. The general functions of any council are:

1. To bring considered recommendations to the body of elders concerning church matters.
2. To provide a wider base of counsel to the elders regarding church matters.
3. To assist in leading the rest of the congregation in ministry.

All elders serve as ex-officio members of all councils and may sit as such at their discretion. All councils shall exist for the period specified by the elder body.

SECTION 4. THE FINANCE COUNCIL

To promote the efficient and studied handling of the financial matters of the church, the elder body shall appoint a council for the purpose of making recommendations to the elders regarding the finances of the church. This group shall be known as the finance council. They shall aid in

the compilation of the annual church budget, and any other financial matters that the elders delegate to their care. The elders shall determine the number and tenure of members of the finance council (I Pet 5:2, II Cor 8:18-20).

SECTION 5. THE PASTORAL CARE COUNCIL

Just as elders (pastors) have been given the responsibility to care for the church body, the church body has been given the responsibility for the care and honor of those who minister to the church (Rom 10:14-15, I Tim 5:17-18, I Thes 5:12-13). It is for this reason that the elder body shall appoint a group to be known as the pastoral care council. This council shall, on behalf of the church, be vigilant in the watch care and honor of our pastors and ministry staff. They shall be responsible for initially establishing and annually reviewing salary and benefits packages. They are to lead the church in the recognition of special occasions such as anniversaries, birthdays, etc. They are also to be diligent in seeking to meet any special need that should arise regarding the pastoral staff. The elders shall determine the number and tenure of members of the pastoral care council.

SECTION 6. THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATION COUNCIL

This council will be made up of at least one elder and the school Head Master. This council will oversee major decisions regarding Oak Ridge Christian Academy. School policies will be developed and reviewed within this council (see Oak Ridge Christian Academy's *Policy and Procedures Manual*).

SECTION 7. THE MINISTRY COUNCIL

This council will be made up of the leaders of the ministry teams (see Article X). It will meet quarterly to discuss ministry opportunities and areas of service. This will serve as an accountability device to ensure that the church's ministries are unified in focus and purpose under the oversight of the elders.

SECTION 8. TRUSTEES

The elder body for the purpose of signing legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, or rental of property, or other legal document where the signatures of trustees are required shall appoint trustees which may be made up of the elders themselves. They shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer property without the specific authorization of the elder body. Trustees shall serve for a period specified by the body of elders.

SECTION 9. ORDINATIONS AND LICENSING

A. ORDINATION

Ordination refers to the recognition by the elders and the church of a man's desire and qualifications for ministry as a pastor or a deacon (Acts 6:6, 13:2-4, 20:28). Ordination shall be conferred for life, so long as the man manifests the qualification of the office to which he was ordained and continues to serve in such capacity.

B. LICENSING

A man shall be licensed by the church to the gospel ministry upon the approval of the elder body (provides legality for a man to perform weddings).

SECTION 10. CHURCH RECORDS AND BOOKS

The church shall maintain current, adequate, and correct accounts, books, and records of its business and properties. An accurate account of all receipts and disbursements shall be maintained by an administrator that is appointed by the pastor-teacher. The fiscal year of the church shall begin on June 1st and end on May 31st of each year.

SECTION 11. DISSOLUTION OF THE CHURCH

The elder body shall allow the church membership to decide by ballot vote for the dissolution of the church. A 75% majority vote of all eligible members present is required for the dissolution of the church. Upon the dissolution of the church, the elder body shall cause all assets of the church to be distributed to another church or ministry of like faith and kindred spirit. The elder body shall allow the church membership to approve their decision on the distribution of the assets of the church. Approval shall be by a 75% majority vote of all eligible members present at a special-called meeting for that purpose.

SECTION 12. AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

The constitution and by-laws adopted by the church in a business meeting held on January 11, 2004 shall supersede all prior resolutions, precedents, and actions of the church not in harmony with its provisions.

The constitution and by-laws may be amended or changed by the elder body. Changes to Article III, Values and Confession of Faith will require a unanimous vote of the elder body. The elder body shall seek the formal affirmation of the congregation when changes or amendments to the constitution and by-laws are required (See ARTICLE VI, Section 9.B.1. for information about formal affirmations).

ARTICLE VI. ELDERS

The New Testament Scripture is clear about those who have the responsibility of rule, oversight, and care of the church. These men are called elders, overseers, and bishops. All three different titles are used to refer to the same spiritual office of leadership in the church and are interchangeable (**I Tim 3:1-7**). We know that Christ is the head of the church and that He mediates His rule through the shepherding of elders/pastors (**Acts 20:17-18, 28-31, I Pet 5:1-4**).

SECTION 1. RESPONSIBILITY OF ELDERS

A. TO SPIRITUALLY SHEPHERD THE CHURCH

1. To preach and teach God's Word (**Acts 6:2-4, I Tim 5:17, II Tim 4:2**).
2. To pray (**Acts 6:4**).
3. To maintain doctrinal purity in the church (**Gal 1:6-9, I Tim 1:3-7, Jude 3-4**).
4. To reprove, rebuke, and exhort the church with great patience (**II Tim 4:2, Titus 1:9-11**).
5. To be examples in the church (**I Pet 5:3**).

B. TO GOVERN AND OVERSEE ALL THE AFFAIRS OF THE CHURCH

1. To establish policies and practices for the church that are consistent with scripture and the purpose of the church (**I Tim 3:4-5**).
2. To direct and oversee all of the financial resources and expenditures of the church.
3. To direct and oversee the maintaining of adequate and correct accounts, books, and records of the business of the church.
4. To appoint officers and councils as needed to carry out the business of the church in an orderly and acceptable manner. Any officer or council appointed by the elders is directly responsible to the elders and shall serve as long as the elders see the need (**Acts 6:3**).
5. To select a pastor-teacher in accordance with the selection process established in these by-laws.
6. To appoint elders for the church in accordance with the selection process established in these by-laws (**Titus 1:5**).
7. To appoint deacons for the church in accordance with the selection process established in these by-laws (**Acts 6:2-6**).
8. To maintain open communication with the church body.

SECTION 2. QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

A. GIFTED BY GOD

An elder (pastor) must be a man who has been gifted by God to serve in the gospel ministry. The following are evidences of such gifting:

1. Confirmation of the gifting to the ministry by other believers (**II Tim 2:1-2, 3 John 1:12**).
2. Possession of the abilities necessary to serve (giftedness).
3. A deep desire to serve (**I Tim 3:1**).
4. A lifestyle characterized by moral integrity (**Titus 1:6-9, I Pet 5:1-3**).

B. ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP & CONFSSIONAL AGREEMENT

An elder must affirm and adhere to the membership covenant of this church (**Heb 10:25**).

Additionally, he must affirm with little or no exceptions the Sojourn Baptist Church Confession of Faith. If exceptions are taken, they must be deemed biblically tenable and acceptable to the elder body.

C. BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS

An elder must possess the qualifications described in **I Tim 3:1-7** and **Titus 1:6-9**.

He shall be:

1. Blameless as a steward of God; above reproach.
2. A "one woman man."
3. Temperate, sober, vigilant.
4. Sober-minded, prudent.
5. Given to hospitality.
6. Apt to teach; able to teach; he can exhort believers and refute false teaching.
7. Not given to wine.
8. Not violent; not pugnacious.
9. Patient, moderate, forbearing, gentle.
10. Not a brawler, not contentious; not soon angry or quick-tempered.
11. Not covetous; not a lover of money; not greedy of base gain.
12. Rules his own household well. His children are faithful; not accused of rebellion to God.
13. Not a novice; not a new convert.
14. Has a good report or reputation with outsiders.
15. Not self-willed.
16. Loves what is good.
17. Just, fair.
18. Holy, devout.
19. Self-controlled.

D. ORDINATION

An elder (pastor) should be ordained to the gospel ministry by this church or a church of like faith (**Acts 14:23**). Perspective elders must undergo an examination by the elder body to assess desire for the office, gifting by the Lord, and biblical qualification including personal piety and knowledge of the Scriptures.

SECTION 3. SELECTION OF ELDERS

A. INITIAL SELECTION OF ELDERS

In as much as the pastor-teacher has the responsibility of the spiritual equipping and oversight of the entire congregation, he shall present to the church body the initial group of men who make up the elder body.

B. ELDER SELECTION PROCESS FROM WITHIN THE CONGREGATION

The process by which elders are nominated and appointed to the body of elders is as follows:

1. The elders shall set aside men that they determine have met the qualifications and gifting of the office of elder. They shall be declared as being under consideration.

2. The elders shall then make it known to the church that a particular individual is being considered as a candidate for the office of elder.
3. For a period of time, not less than thirty (30) days, the congregation will have the opportunity to prayerfully consider the individual's qualifications for the office of elder. If members for any reason feel that the person may be unqualified, they should go to him in love and discretion and privately discuss their concerns (**Matt 18:15-18, Titus 1:7**). If after a discussion with the nominee, the members feel that their concern is unresolved, then they should approach the elders with their concern. During the time that a man is under consideration, there are several options:
 - a. **Option 1:** The man under consideration can withdraw himself from consideration and the process will cease.
 - b. **Option 2:** The elders may deem the man unqualified for whatever reason and the process will cease.
 - c. **Option 3:** The man and the elders agree that the process should continue.
4. After the time of consideration, the elders shall call a special meeting for the purpose of a formal affirmation of the congregation regarding the man under consideration.
5. After prayerful consideration of the counsel of the congregation, the elders shall vote and make known their decision regarding the man.
6. Upon elder body approval, the man shall immediately assume his position as an elder.

SECTION 4. NUMBER OF ELDERS

The number of elders shall be as many as are qualified and needed to carry out the ministry of elders in the church. The elder body shall determine that number.

SECTION 5. TERM OF ELDERS

The term of office for an elder shall be as long as he is qualified, capable, and desirous of fulfilling the duties of an elder.

SECTION 6. LEADERSHIP AMONG ELDERS

As demonstrated in the scriptures, even among the leadership of the church there is a leader. In as much as the pastor-teacher has the responsibility of the spiritual equipping and oversight of the entire congregation, of which each of the elders are a part, he shall serve as the chairman, moderator, and spokesman for the elder body to the church. He shall prepare the agenda for the elder meetings as well. He shall have but one vote in the elder body (**Acts 15:13-21**).

SECTION 7. ELDER BODY MEETINGS

Meetings of the elder body shall be held on a regular basis as determined by the elders. Anyone desiring to approach the elders on any matter or need may feel free to arrange to meet with them. Any elder may call special meetings of the elder body as needed, but all elders must be informed about the meeting and the subject matter to be discussed in advance. All major decisions require all elders to be informed and included in the decision whether by physical presence, phone, or submitted letter.

SECTION 8. THE AUTHORITY OF ELDERS

A. DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY

All the decision-making authority of the church is vested in the elders (pastors) who shepherd the church. The objective of any and all decisions made shall be to please the Lord regarding the matter at hand (**Acts 15:2-6, Heb 13:7**).

B. DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Decisions shall be reached after prayerful consideration in a spirit of humility, with each elder regarding one another before himself. Any proposed course of action must be stated such that a “yes” vote affirms the proposed course of action and a “no” vote rejects the proposed course of action. Each matter will be voted on twice, unless the proposal is unanimously affirmed or unanimously denied at which point the matter is settled.

When a decision is made by the elders, the decision making process will be as follows:

VOTE 1:

1. If all the elders vote “yes,” the proposal is affirmed and the matter is settled.
2. If all the elders vote “no,” the proposal is rejected and the matter is settled.
3. If elders are not unanimously agreed, then a second vote will be taken at a later time.
4. Before the second vote is taken, additional information, discussion, Godly counsel, and time as needed, will be allowed to go over the matter at hand. After considering the additional information, discussion, and counsel, the elders will then allow the time needed for prayer.

VOTE 2:

1. If 75% or more of the elders vote “yes,” the proposal is affirmed and the matter is settled.
2. If less than 75% of the elders vote “yes,” then the proposal is rejected and the matter is settled.

The elders all agree a decision on any specific matter will be determined by the second vote.

Statement of unity: Any decision made after following the agreed upon decision-making process will be a unified “yes” or “no” decision. All elders agree to be unified in the final decision, affirmation or rejection, in public and in private, even though it may not agree with their personal preference (**Acts 15:6-22**).

C. SPECIAL DECISIONS

The elder body shall seek the formal affirmation of the congregation when the following decisions are being made (**Prov 11:14**):

1. The selection of elders.
2. The installation of or removal of the pastor-teacher or pastoral staff.
3. The church’s annual budget.
4. Expenditures involving new property or new buildings and related indebtedness.
5. Any changes or amendments to the Church Confession or Constitution & By-laws.

D. AFFIRMATION OPTIONS

The elder body may choose at any time and on any matter to seek the affirmation of the congregation or any leadership group within the church such as deacons, teachers, etc. These affirmations may be formal or informal.

SECTION 9. CONGREGATIONAL AFFIRMATION

A. PURPOSE OF CONGREGATIONAL AFFIRMATIONS

The purpose of an affirmation from the congregation, deacons or any other group of the church is the wisdom of seeking godly counsel of many as taught in scripture (**Prov 11:14**). This type of counsel can be helpful to the elders in the determining the wisest course of action in a matter. We must remember that the purpose of an affirmation is not so that the many can make the decision (**Heb 13:17**). The elders will make all final decisions.

B. TYPES OF AFFIRMATIONS

1. Formal Affirmation:

A ballot vote of eligible members present at a meeting called for the specific purpose of affirming a decision being made by the elders on a particular matter. The meeting shall be called by the elders or pastor-teacher and publicly announced at least two weeks prior to the meeting. The results of all formal affirmations will be made public.

2. Informal Affirmation:

A vote taken using any method desired by the elders for the purpose of polling the counsel of the congregation or a leadership group (i.e. deacons, teachers, etc.) on any matter.

C. ELIGIBLE MEMBERS

A church member is eligible to cast a ballot in formal affirmations when he or she is present.

D. BALLOTS

The ballots used for voting shall provide the following choices:

After prayer on the matter at hand:

1. I affirm the proposed course of action.
2. I refuse the proposed course of action.
3. I am undecided on the matter.

SECTION 10. REMOVAL OF ELDERS

Any elder may be removed from office if he becomes physically incapacitated, spiritually unqualified, or his inability to serve is established by the remainder of the elder body. Any accusation or action against an elder must be presented to the elder body in accordance with scripture (I Tim 5:19-20).

ARTICLE VII. PASTOR-TEACHER

SECTION 1. THE POSITION OF THE PASTOR-TEACHER

The pastor-teacher is the teaching pastor of the church. He is responsible for the spiritual equipping and oversight of the entire congregation. He is the spokesman for the elder body to the congregation and is directly responsible to the elder body for the carrying out of his duties in the church (Acts 20:28, Eph 4:11-12, I Pet 5:2-4).

SECTION 2. DUTIES OF THE PASTOR-TEACHER

The duties and responsibilities of the pastor-teacher in order of their priority are as follows:

1. To pray (Acts 6:4).
2. To prepare and to preach the Word (Acts 6:4, I Tim 4:13, II Tim 4:2, Titus 1:5).
3. To protect the church from false doctrine (I Tim 4:16, Titus 1:9).
4. To see to the administration, oversight, and care of all church staff (Acts 20:34).
5. To lead in the selection of all church staff in accordance with the selection process established in these by-laws.

SECTION 3. AUTHORITY TO DELEGATE

The pastor-teacher may, at his discretion, delegate any task pertaining to the administration and oversight of the church staff. Delegation may be done through individuals or councils. In the event of the delegation of a task, those individuals or councils shall be directly responsible to the pastor-teacher, and the pastor-teacher shall remain responsible for the task. This provision is added with the following tasks in mind, but is not limited to this list.

1. The selection of pastoral and non-pastoral staff.
2. The annual financial support review of all church staff.
3. The compilation of an annual ministry church budget.
4. The review of ongoing and new church program possibilities and ministries.

SECTION 4. THE SELECTION OF THE PASTOR-TEACHER

The elder body shall select the pastor-teacher as follows:

1. The elders shall serve as the pastor search council, or select the pastor search council.
2. The elders shall set guidelines and procedures for the council to follow throughout the pastor search process.
3. The council shall consist of at least three men and shall have a member of the elder body as its chairman.
4. The council shall be directly responsible to the elders and shall keep them informed on its progress.
5. Upon the recommendation of the council and the approval of a specific pastor-teacher candidate, the elder body shall make known to the congregation all pertinent information about the pastor-teacher candidate.
6. A special meeting shall be set and announced publicly at least two weeks in advance when a pastor-teacher candidate is coming to be considered for employment.

7. At the special-called meeting, a formal affirmation of all eligible members shall be taken concerning the candidate for pastor-teacher. The results of this affirmation will be made public.
8. After consideration of the formal affirmation of the congregation, the elder body shall make the final decision regarding the candidate for pastor-teacher. Upon approval of the elder body, the man shall become the pastor-teacher. The elder body shall announce to the church the date that the new pastor-teacher's tenure shall begin.

SECTION 5. FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE PASTOR-TEACHER

The pastoral care council shall initially establish and continually review the pastor-teacher's financial support and benefit package (**Rom 10:14-15, I Cor 9:3-14, Gal 6:6, I Thes 5:12-18, I Tim 5:17-18, III John 5-8**).

1. The pastor-teacher shall receive his support package information in writing before he comes to the church to be considered for employment.
2. The pastoral care council shall initially establish the pastor's support and benefit package and submit its proposal to the finance council.
3. The pastoral care council shall also review the pastor's support and benefit package at least annually and submit its proposal to the finance council.
4. Any change in his support and benefit package shall be give to the pastor-teacher in writing.

SECTION 6. TENURE AND DISMISSAL OF THE PASTOR-TEACHER

1. The tenure of the pastor-teacher shall be indefinite in length.
2. The elder body has the authority to dismiss the pastor-teacher if he becomes physically incapacitated, spiritually unqualified, or his inability to serve is unanimously established by the remainder of the elder body.
3. Any accusation against the pastor-teacher must be in accordance with scripture (**I Tim 5:19-20**).
4. Dismissal may be immediate if so determined by the remainder of the elder body.
5. The pastor-teacher must give at least one-month's written notice if he intends to resign.
6. The time limit of resignation is subject to a lesser time if mutually agreed upon in writing by the pastor-teacher and the elder body.
7. Financial support shall continue to the end of the pastor-teacher's tenure.

SECTION 7. VACANCY OF THE PASTOR-TEACHER POSITION

In the event that the church is without a pastor-teacher, the elder body will:

1. Choose from among themselves an interim to serve as chairman, moderator, and spokesman for the elders of the church.
2. They shall choose an interim administrator to be over all church staff.
3. They shall be responsible for finding a preacher to fill the pulpit in the interim time.
4. They shall start the pastor search process as established in these by-laws.

ARTICLE VIII. CHURCH STAFF

SECTION 1. PASTORAL STAFF (ELDERS)

A. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The pastor-teacher shall establish the duties and responsibilities of each pastor in writing. The pastor-teacher may change these duties at the need arises. Any duties or changes in duties shall be given to each pastor in writing so that each pastor will know his duties and responsibilities to the church and the pastor-teacher.

B. UNDER AUTHORITY

Pastors shall be directly responsible to the pastor-teacher for the carrying out of their duties and responsibilities.

C. SELECTION OF PASTORAL STAFF

1. The pastor-teacher shall lead in the selection of all pastoral staff.
2. Pastoral staff selection shall be made in accordance with Article VII, Section 4.

D. FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF PAID PASTORAL STAFF

The pastoral care council shall initially establish and review each pastor's financial package.

1. The pastor shall receive his financial support package information in writing before he comes to the church to be considered for employment.
2. The pastoral care council shall initially establish the pastor's support and benefit package and submit its proposal to the finance council.
3. The pastoral care council shall also review the pastor's support and benefit package at least annually and submit its proposal to the finance council.
4. Any change in his support package is subject to elder body approval and shall be given to each pastor in writing.

E. TENURE AND DISMISSAL OF PASTORAL STAFF

1. The tenure of pastoral staff shall be indefinite in length.
2. Upon the recommendation of the pastor-teacher, pastoral staff shall be dismissed if they become physically incapacitated, spiritually unqualified, or their inability to perform their duties is established by the pastor-teacher and confirmed by the elder body.
3. Dismissal is subject to elder body approval.
4. Dismissal may be immediate if so determined by the remainder of the elder body.
5. Pastors must give at least one-month's written notice if they intend to resign.
6. The time limit of resignation is subject to a lesser time if mutually agreed upon in writing by the pastor and elder body.
7. Financial support shall continue to the end of a pastor's tenure (for paid pastoral staff).

SECTION 2. SUPPORT STAFF

A. DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The pastor-teacher shall establish the duties and responsibilities of all support staff in writing. He may change these duties as the need arises. Any duties or changes in duties shall be

given to the staff persons in writing so that they will know their duties and responsibilities to the church and the pastor-teacher.

B. UNDER AUTHORITY

Persons on support staff shall be directly responsible to the pastor-teacher or to the supervisor that the pastor-teacher designates for the carrying out of the duties and responsibilities.

C. SELECTION OF SUPPORT STAFF

1. The pastor-teacher shall lead in the selection of all support staff.
2. Support staff selection be subject to elder body approval.

D. FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF SUPPORT STAFF

The finance council shall initially establish and review the financial package of all support staff.

1. Persons on support staff shall receive their financial package information in writing before they begin their tenure.
2. The finance council shall review the support staff financial support and benefits package on an annual basis.
3. Any change in the package is subject to elder body approval and shall be given to the support staff in writing.

E. TENURE AND DISMISSAL OF SUPPORT STAFF

1. The tenure of support staff shall be indefinite in length.
2. Upon the recommendation of the pastor-teacher, support staff shall be dismissed if they become physically incapacitated, or their inability to perform their duties is established by the pastor-teacher and confirmed by the elder body.
3. Dismissal may be immediate if so determined by the elder body.
4. Support staff must give at least two weeks' notice if they intend to resign.
5. The time limit of resignation is subject to a lesser time if mutually agreed upon by the staff person and the pastor-teacher.
6. Financial support shall continue to the end of the staff person's tenure.

ARTICLE IX. DEACONS

The New Testament scripture teaches that deacons were set apart by the church as servants to minister to the needs of the Body of Christ. This ministry allowed the elders (pastors) to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word (**Acts 6:1-7**). The office of deacon is one of a servant to the Body of Christ. Any other concept does injustice to the New Testament record found in Acts 6 and I Tim 3. It is not a position or office to give a man in order to honor him.

SECTION 1. PURPOSE OF DEACONS

The purpose of deacons in the church is as follows:

1. To work and serve alongside the elders and staff to support, encourage, promote, and uphold their ministry (**Acts 6:3**).
2. To exemplify spiritual leadership in the fellowship of the church, in their family, personal, and business relationships (**I Tim 3:8-16**).
3. To be men of prayer and students of the Word of God (**I Tim 2:8, II Tim 2:14-15**).
4. To seek to lead the lost to the Lord Jesus Christ (**Matt 28:19-20**).

SECTION 2. QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS

A. ACTIVE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

A man must be an active member of this church for one year prior to the time of election to the deacon body unless the elder body approves a shorter time (**I Tim 3:10**).

B. BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS

A deacon must possess the qualifications described in scripture.

He shall be:

1. A man of good reputation (**Acts 6:3**).
2. A man full of the Spirit and wisdom (**Acts 6:3**).
3. A man of dignity, not doubled tongued, not addicted to wine, or fond of sordid gain (**I Tim 3:8**).
4. A man who holds the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience (**I Tim 3:9**).
5. A man beyond reproach (**I Tim 3:10**).
6. A man who is a "one woman man" (**I Tim 3:12**).
7. A man whose wife is the wife of one husband (**Matt 5:31-32**).
8. A man who is a good manager of his children and his own house (**I Tim 3:12**).
9. A man whose wife does not have a malicious tongue (**I Tim 3:11**).

SECTION 3. DEACON SELECTION PROCESS

The process by which deacons are selected is as follows (**Acts 6:1-7**):

1. The elder body shall determine if there is a need for additional deacons for the church.
2. When the elder body determines that there is a need for additional deacons, it shall select men qualified for service and allow the congregation to consult and interact with those men in view of installing them as deacons for no less than four weeks.

3. After the period of review, the elder body shall prayerfully consider each man and appoint those men that it determines are qualified for the office of deacon.
4. A special service shall be held so that the elders may present those men that they have appointed to the office of deacon and that the men may be formally ordained to the office of deacon by the laying on of hands.

SECTION 4. DEACON OFFICERS

The deacon body may choose from among themselves men to serve in the leadership positions noted below. These men shall serve for a period of two years at a time.

1. Chairman of deacons.
2. Vice-chairman of deacons.
3. Secretary

SECTION 5. DEACON MEETINGS

The deacon body shall meet as needed for the carrying out of its ministry in the church. The chairman of deacons or the elder body may call a meeting of the deacons.

SECTION 6. TERM OF OFFICE

The term of office for a deacon shall be as long as he is qualified, capable, and desirous of fulfilling the office and duties of a deacon.

SECTION 7. REMOVAL OF DEACONS

Any deacon may be removed from office if he becomes physically incapacitated, spiritually unqualified, or his inability to serve is established by the elders of the church.

ARTICLE X. MINISTRY TEAMS

SECTION 1. PURPOSE OF MINISTRY TEAMS

It is fitting, in keeping with our understanding that every member of this church is an active, participating member that the service of the church be organized. The following system will allow for cooperation among different members, allowing all to utilize their specialized giftings in service to the Lord. As each member participates underneath godly leaders, the result will be a coordinated effort with increased efficiency. There is no time for slackness on the part of the church. This will provide accountability and a broad range of opportunities for members to be involved.

SECTION 2. STRUCTURE OF MINISTRY TEAMS

The ministry teams shall be subdivided into categories in keeping with the church's purpose, with each category being led by an elder. Therefore, the following three umbrella categories will group together all of the other teams: Equipping, Edifying, and Administration. Great flexibility will be offered within these categories for expansion and transition, as needs arise and gifted people join the church. Everyone is valuable in the body of Christ, and each member is gifted by the Lord to serve with his or her unique spiritual gifting. An organizational flowchart will be maintained by the elder body to ensure accountability and a healthy, active church, all to God's glory! Regular attendance at quarterly meetings will be necessary for all members.