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Article 1: Organizational Matters

Section 1 – Name

The name of this corporation shall be Heritage Baptist Church of Lakeland, Florida, Inc. (“Heritage”). This corporation will be further referred to in these Bylaws as the “Church” and also may be referred to in these Bylaws and may do business as “Heritage” or such other name as the congregation shall determine from time to time.

Section 2 – History

The Church was established on August 20, 1978 upon the filing of Articles of Incorporation within the state of Florida, and is a not-for-profit corporation as set forth below. The Church’s not-for-profit status was established through the group exemption – GEN 2194, EIN 36-2310475 for the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches. The corporation has been operating under Articles of Incorporation and a Church Constitution and Bylaws originally adopted in 1978 and subsequently amended pursuant to the authority set forth therein. Concurrently with the adoption of this Church Constitution and Bylaws on [November 13, 2022], the Church has amended and restated its Articles of Incorporation.

Section 3 – Nonprofit Purpose

The Church is organized as a church exclusively for religious, charitable, and educational purposes within the meaning of *Section 501(c)(3)* of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Revenue Law), including, but not limited to, such purposes as: the establishing and maintaining of religious worship, the building of churches, parsonages, schools, chapels, rescue missions, print shops, day care centers and camps; the evangelizing of the unsaved by the proclaiming of the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; the educating of believers in a manner consistent with the requirements of Holy Scripture, both in Sunday and weekday schools of Christian education; the maintaining of outreach activities in the United States and any foreign country; the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under *Section 501(c)(3)*. In furtherance of such purposes, the Church shall have full power and authority to perform all acts necessary or incidental to the above to carry out the purposes of the Church as set forth in the Articles of Incorporation, including the exercise of all other power and authority enjoyed by corporations generally by virtue of the provisions of Florida law.

Article 2: Mission

The mission of the Church is to glorify God by making disciples. This mission is accomplished by means of gospel-centered worship, gospel-formed community, and gospel-driven service.

Article 3: Church Covenant

1. I will protect the unity of my church family

- ... by acting in grace and love toward others in the church
- ... by committing to deal biblically with conflict and refusing to gossip
- ... by following the leadership of the church
- ... by submitting myself to the care and correction of leadership should the need arise, and to do so with a humble spirit

2. I will share in the responsibility of my church family

- ... by praying for its health and impact
- ... by developing relationships with and inviting the churchless to attend
- ... by warmly welcoming those who visit and committing myself to community with those who attend
- ... by engaging in discipleship with individuals and growing in a small group community

3. I will serve the purpose of my church family

- ... by being equipped to serve by leaders and teachers
- ... by developing a servant's heart
- ... by discovering my gifts and talents
- ... by employing my time and talent for the benefit of the church and those far from God
- ... by intentionally growing and seeking to reproduce my devotion to Christ in others
- ... by seeking to impact the culture by living and sharing the gospel of Jesus

4. I will support the ministry of my church family

- ... by attending faithfully
- ... by living life as a fully devoted follower of Christ, seeking to grow toward holiness and away from the world
- ... by giving graciously and sacrificially as God has given to me

Article 4: Statement of Belief

The Church is an assembly gathering under the lordship of Jesus Christ. The Church is referred to in this Article 4 as “we/our/us.” We are committed to the primacy of Scripture and contending for the faith that was once and for all delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3). In keeping with the unity of the historic Christian church, we believe and affirm the Apostles’, Nicene, and Chalcedonian creeds as accurate representations of Scripture’s teaching. In addition to these historic statements, we are generally situated within the evangelical, Reformed and Baptist traditions.

The essential doctrines within our Statement of Belief represent what we believe to be core elements of biblical teaching. We expect all members of the Church to affirm these doctrines.

The historic distinctives within our Statement of Belief reflect what may distinguish us from other churches who would affirm the essential doctrines. These distinctives discernibly shape the way that the Church is led and the direction the Church is headed. Members should expect that the distinctions will be maintained in all ministry environments and humbly abide by them.

Section 1 – Essential Doctrines

The following points of our Statement of Belief represent those truths which believers through the ages have considered essential for orthodox Christian faith as given in the Scripture. We require affirmation of these truths for membership in the Church.

Scripture

We believe that the Scriptures, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, are the inspired Word of God and are without error in their original writings. We believe in the verbal, plenary (each and every word) inspiration of the Bible as the product of Spirit-controlled men; and therefore, its truth is without any admixture of error. We believe the Bible to be the true center of Christian union and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions shall be tried. *It is our privilege to seek to understand God’s message and apply it responsibly to our lives as well as to share it in relevant ways with others* (2 Timothy 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:19–21).

True God

We believe that there is one, and only one, living and true God, an infinite Spirit, 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 Spirit; equal in every divine perfection, and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption (Exodus 20:2–3; Matthew 3:16–17; Revelation 4:11).

God the Father

We believe that God the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, orders and accomplishes all things according to His own purpose and grace. As the only absolute and omnipotent Ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption. His fatherhood involves both His designation within the Trinity and His relationship with mankind. As Creator He is Father to all humanity, but He is spiritual Father only to believers. He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass. He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events. He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own. He saves from sin all who come to Him through Jesus Christ. He adopts as His own all those who come to Him, and He becomes, through adoption, Father to His own. *Though He has no needs, God passionately desires a relationship with us and towards this end continually invites us into a relationship of faith and a life of obedience, learning, and service* (1 Chronicles 29:11; Psalm 146:8–9; Romans 8:14–15; Ephesians 1:4–6, 11; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Hebrews 12:5–9).

God the Son - Jesus Christ

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God. He was not created but is the second Person of the Trinity. He became man, as foretold in the Scriptures, without ceasing to be God, having been supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful man. We believe in His bodily resurrection from the grave; His ascension to the right hand of God where He ever lives to make intercession for believers, and His personal, physical return at the end of the age. *Jesus is, therefore, the only way we can come to God and have a relationship with Him. In His life He modeled how He desires us to live* (Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; 9:6; 53:1ff; Micah 5:2; Matthew 1:23; Luke 1:35; John 1:1–2; Acts 2:22–26; Romans 3:25–26; Titus 2:13–14; Hebrews 1:1–3).

God the Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the Trinity, is a divine person equal with God the Father and God the Son and of the same nature; that He was active in the creation; that in His relation to the unbelieving world, He restrains the evil one until God's purpose is fulfilled; that He convicts of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; that He bears witness to the truth of the Gospel in preaching and testimony; that He is the agent in the new birth; that He seals, endures, guides, teaches, witnesses, sanctifies, and helps the believer, dwelling in every true child of God. *By dependence upon the Holy Spirit, we have the opportunity of demonstrating the power of God to create a new community that experiences and expresses the kingdom of heaven* (Genesis 1:1–3; Matthew 28:19; Luke 24:49; John 3:5–6; 14:16–17, 26; 16:8–11; Acts 11:15–16; Romans 8:14–17, 26–27; Ephesians 1:13–14; Hebrews 9:14).

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 and vicarious 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, compassionate and all-sufficient Savior. *The most important dividing line within humanity is between those who still live under God's judgment, and those who have been set free from condemnation through Jesus' death on the cross in their place. There are only two possible states of existence, with two radically different outcomes. This means the message of salvation through Jesus is the focal point of Christian teaching and mission* (John 3:3–7, 16; Acts 16:30–33; Romans 3:21–31; 10:9–13; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 1:7; 2:1, 5, 8–10; Hebrews 2:14–16; 1 Peter 1:18–21; 3:18; 1 John 4:10; 5:1).

Nature & Fall of Man

We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God, in holiness, under the law of his Maker; but by voluntary transgression fell from his sinless and joyful 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 (Genesis 1:26–27; 3:1–24; Romans 1:18–20; 5:10–19).

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, as His righteousness is imputed to us (Isaiah 53:11; Zechariah 13:1; Acts 13:39; Romans 5:1, 9; 8:1, 33; 2 Corinthians 5:18–21).

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 sincere, penitent, 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 (Romans 5:15; 6:23; 8:32; Ephesians 2:8).

Grace in Regeneration

We believe that, in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again; that the new birth is a new creation in Christ Jesus; that it is instantaneous and not a process; that in the new birth, the one dead in trespasses and sins is made a partaker of the divine nature and receives eternal life, the free gift of God; that the new creation is brought about in a manner above our comprehension, solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel; that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance and faith and newness of life (John. 3:3–7; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Ephesians 2:4–10; Colossians 2:13; Titus 3:5; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 5:1).

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. In repentance the sinner, having seen his or her sin, being moved by the power of the Holy Spirit, is led to grieve for and hate it as an offence against God, and apprehending the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, he or she lovingly turns to God and relies on Him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior. Repentance necessarily accompanies saving faith (Luke 15:7; Acts 2:37–38; 16:31; Romans 2:4).

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 appointed means; that it may be ascertained by its effects on 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 (Romans 8:28–30; 9:11–18; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1–2).

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 (Galatians 5:16–26; Ephesians 4:22–24; Philippians 3:12–16; Colossians 3:9–10; 1 Thessalonians 5:23; Hebrews 2:11; 2 Peter 1:5–8).

Perseverance of Saints

We believe that true believers endure unto the end; that their persevering attachment to Christ is the mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. All who are truly born again are sealed by the Holy Spirit and kept by God the Father for Jesus Christ (John 5:24; 6:37–40; 10:27–30; Romans 8:35–39; Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 7:25; 1 John 3:2–3; Jude 24).

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 Christ 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 all men both in and after death (Genesis 18:23; Proverbs 14:32; Malachi 3:18; Matthew 25:34–46; Romans 6:17–18, 23).

Holy & Fallen Angels

We believe that God created an innumerable company of sinless, holy angels. Although they are a higher order of creation than humanity, they are created to serve God and to worship Him.

We believe that Satan (or the Devil) is a created angel and the author of sin. He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator, by taking numerous angels with him in his fall, and by introducing sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve. He is the open and declared enemy of God and mankind. He is the unholy god of this age, and the author of all the powers of darkness, and is destined to the judgment of an eternal justice in the lake of fire. *We should expect that conflict with the Evil One should be a normal part of our lives, and that we need continual protection and provision from God in daily living* (Genesis 3:1–15; Isaiah 14:12–17; Ezekiel 28:11–19; Matthew 4:1–11; 25:41; Luke 2:9–14; 2 Corinthians 4:3–4; Ephesians 6:10–20; Hebrews 1:6–7, 14; 2:6–7; Revelation 5:11–14; 12:1–12; 19:10; 20:10).

The Church

We believe that the true church is a New Testament organism, established by Jesus Christ who is its sole Head, revealed, empowered and perpetuated by the Holy Spirit. The Church is His "body" for service and His "bride" for glory. Each local church is a visible extension of the body of Christ in a given place.

As Baptists we believe that a local church 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 officers are pastors/elders and deacons, whose qualifications, claims, and duties are clearly defined in the Scriptures. We hold that local churches have the absolute right of self-government. *As Christ's body, the church in both universal and local forms is to do on earth what Jesus would do if He were here. The community of believers who make up a local church are also to model their shared life through manifesting Christ's love toward each other and serving each other with the enabling gifts given by the Holy Spirit* (Matthew 16:18; 18:15–17; Acts 1:8; 2:41–42; 15:13–18; 1 Corinthians 12:12–13; Ephesians 1:22–23; 3:6, 10–12; 4:11–16; 5:23–24; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Peter 5:1–5).

Human Sexuality & Marriage

We believe that God created humans, male and female, in His image. Because God created all human life, it is of inestimable worth and to be valued and protected in all its dimensions from conception through natural death. In addition, because human life, sexual identity, and gender roles are aspects of God's creative design, any conduct with the intent to adopt a gender other than one's birth gender is immoral and therefore sin.

From creation, marriage is an exclusive covenant between only one man and one woman that is a sacred relationship and honorable for all. Marriage is used as an illustration or a picture of the union of Christ and His Church. What therefore God has joined together, let not man separate. We believe that Scripture forbids a believer from entering into marriage with an unbeliever. *We believe that any sexual relationship outside of the confines of marriage (as described above) is contrary to God's design and the clear teaching of Scripture.* (Genesis 1:27; 2:18–25; Psalm 139; Romans 1:18–32; 7:2; Ephesians 5:21–25; Hebrews 13:4).

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 as set forth in Scripture, who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the Prince of the kings of the earth. *Although we recognize the limits of civil government in bringing about eternal change, we affirm involvement in government as a way to be used by the Lord to impact the souls of men and the culture in which we live* (2 Samuel 23:3–4; Acts 5:29; 23:5; Rom. 13:1–7; Revelation 19:16).

Section 2 – Historic Distinctives

Within Christian history, divergent views on doctrinal issues have emerged even among true, Christian believers. This Church, recognizing its responsibility to teach the whole counsel of God, affirms the following distinctives as accurate expressions of biblical truth, and will teach only these views of the subjects in question. Members must abide under these teaching positions. In cases where different groups of Christians may hold other views, we will hold our views with love.

Ordinances

We believe that there are two church ordinances, or observances, that were given by the Lord Jesus to the church: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water to show forth in a solemn emblem, our faith in the crucified, buried, risen Savior, with its effect, in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life. As baptism by immersion is a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible Body of Christ, it is a prerequisite for church membership.

We believe that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of His death until he comes and should be preceded always by self-examination. Whereas the elements of communion are only representative of the flesh and blood of Christ, participation in the Lord's Supper is nevertheless an important part of fellowship with the risen Christ, who indwells every believer, and so is present, communing with His people. *Baptism and Communion provide two powerful testimonies of the saving work of Christ. Baptism serves as a public declaration of the beginning of a new life while in Communion the believer continually reaffirms his faith in God's salvation* (Matthew 3:16; 28:19–20; Luke 22:14–20; John 3:23; Acts 2:38, 41; 8:36–39; 10:47–48; Romans 6:3–5; 1 Corinthians 11:23–28; Colossians 2:12).

Gifts of the Spirit

We believe that God is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts and that the gifts are God's provision for the edification of the saints today; that there were temporary sign gifts given during the early days of the Church to authenticate the apostles as Jesus' representatives but were not intended to be a pattern for the present day. *God gives spiritual gifts for the benefit of the local body of Christ* (Romans 12:3–8; 1 Corinthians 12:12–31; 2 Corinthians 12:12; Ephesians 4:11–16; Hebrews 2:4; 1 Peter 4:10–11).

Complementarianism

Men and women are equal in essence, dignity, and value but are distinct by divine design. As part of God's good created order, men and women are to have different yet complementary roles and responsibilities in the home and church. *Complementarianism recognizes that the gift of leadership can reside in both men and women. This leadership can be exercised within various capacities of the local church; however, the office of elder is reserved for qualified men.* (Genesis 2:18–24; 1 Timothy 3:1–13; Titus 1:5–9).

Creation

We believe that God created the heavens and the earth in six days, including all life, "each after its own kind," by direct act, according to the Genesis account. Humankind is created in the image and likeness of God. *God's creatorship means that He owns the earth and all its inhabitants. As stewards of both our lives and the earth, we value life and are accountable to Him for the way we invest our lives and treat His creation* (Genesis 1:1–2:3; John 1:3; Colossians 1:15–17).

Future Things

We believe that the future victory of God's kingdom is assured. Jesus has promised to return for His people in triumph at the end of history. Following the bodily resurrections of the saved and unsaved, God will judge all those who are not His children. He will sentence them to a never-ending, conscious punishment in the lake of fire. Those who are God's children have the promise of a never-ending life in His presence in what is called heaven and the new heavens and the new earth.

We believe in the imminent, bodily, and personal coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for His redeemed ones. *Our confidence in God's final triumph allows us to face the uncertainties of today with the assurance that they cannot undo the promises of God ultimately to reward faithfulness, to welcome us into His presence, and to overcome all evil and pain with good and joy* (Matthew 25:31–34; 1 Thessalonians 4:13–18; Revelation 19–20).

Section 3 – Moral and Societal Concerns

The Church recognizes its responsibility to speak to its generation concerning the great moral and social questions of the day, applying biblical truth to the questions at hand. The Church may adopt positions on such questions as needs arise as an appendix to this document pursuant to Article 5, Section 1. We recognize that, as time passes, these statements may or may not address then-current concerns; thus, they are not placed within our Statement of Belief, but listed in an appendix. They will, however, reflect the official position of the Church and will be considered binding on the Church's leaders and Congregation.

Article 5: Government

Section 1 – Nature

Under the authority of Jesus Christ and the Word of God, the membership of the Church (the “Congregation”) is the final authority within this local church. This authority is normally exercised by the Congregation through the election of Elders to govern the Church (the Elders of the Church are also referred to as “Directors”). However, the vote of the Congregation as provided in this Constitution and Bylaws, shall be required to effect the following actions:

- Approve new members of the Church;
- Discipline members of the Church by dismissing them;
- Hire/Elect leaders of the Church, including, but not limited to those serving as Elders of the Church (“Vocational Elders” and “Non-Vocational Elders”; the Vocational and Non-Vocational Elders are hereinafter referred to as the “Council of Elders”);
- Elect individuals to assist the Council of Elders with the administration of the affairs of the Church (“Deacons”);
- Dismiss Vocational Elders, Non-Vocational Elders, and Deacons by removing them from office;
- Buy or sell real property;
- Buy or sell personal property in excess of \$100,000;
- Take on indebtedness in excess of \$100,000;
- Approve annual budgets of the Church;
- Accept, reject, or otherwise dispose of any matter submitted to the Congregation by the Council of Elders, or raised through following the processes provided in this Constitution; and
- Adopt, amend, or repeal the Articles of Incorporation, Constitution, and Bylaws of the Church

Section 2 – Offices

The Church shall be governed by Elders recognized by the Council of Elders and elected by the Congregation. Deacons shall be nominated by the Congregation, recognized by the Council of Elders, and elected by the Congregation. The purpose of the officers of the Church is to lovingly govern, care for, and equip the Congregation to do the work of the ministry.

The leadership of the Church shall be vested in the Council of Elders. The Council of Elders shall be composed of both Vocational and Non-Vocational Elders with the total number of Elders to be no more than seventeen (17) at any time, as determined by the needs of the ministry and by the qualifications of men in the Church. The majority of the Council of Elders shall always be comprised of Non-Vocational Elders. The Council of Elders is responsible for governing the Church, teaching the Word of God, praying for and tending to the flock of God in this Church. In addition, the Elders shall be equal in authority but may be specialized in function, with the Lead Pastor serving as the first among equals.

Deacons shall assist the Council of Elders by performing services of advice, administration, implementation, and benevolence. While Deacons are to be recognized by the Council of Elders, all Deacons must be elected by the Congregation prior to performing services for the Church.

Article 6: Offices

Section 1 – Council of Elders

The Florida Not for Profit Corporation Act requires that a not for profit corporation be governed by a Board of Directors. The Council of Elders shall function as the Board of Directors of the Church. The Council of Elders shall conduct the business activities and affairs of the Church and shall be empowered to exercise all corporate power unless limited by the Articles of Incorporation or this Constitution and Bylaws.

1.1 – Qualifications

The minimum qualifications for election to the Council of Elders shall not be less than those listed in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:6–9, including without limitation the requirement that they be men. In addition to the minimum qualifications given in Scripture, each Elder must accept and adhere to the Church’s Statement of Belief, Constitution and Bylaws, and Church Covenant and be actively involved in the ministry and activities of the Church. Non-Vocational Elders must be active members of the Church for no less than three (3) years prior to election to the Council of Elders.

1.2 – Definitions

Vocational Elders

Vocational Elders are those who, in response to God’s call and upon confirmation of the Congregation, devote their full-time energies to the service of God’s people and will receive financial support from being employed by the Church. Those recognized by the Church to fill a pastoral capacity within their approved job description must meet the qualifications of an Elder and will serve as members of the Council of Elders upon election by the Congregation. Vocational elders shall not be subject to the term limitations (see Article 6, Section 1.3).

Non-Vocational Elders

Non-Vocational Elders are members of the Church not employed by the Church as full-time staff members. They must meet the qualifications of an Elder and will serve as members of the Council of Elders upon election by the Congregation.

1.3 – Election

Vocational Elders

A search committee will be appointed by the Council of Elders. The search committee shall consist of a minimum of five (5) men and/or women who are members of the Church in good standing. The role of the search committee is to identify and vet potential candidates for Church leadership. The vetting process includes, but is not limited to, the evaluation of résumés, the contacting of references, conducting of a background check, and interviewing of potential candidates. After a satisfactory candidate is found, the search committee will recommend him to the Council of Elders for consideration of employment.

The Council of Elders will interview and evaluate the potential candidate. The candidate will be made available to the Congregation in multiple settings and environments. Opportunities for observation of the candidate will include, but are not limited to, teaching of the Scriptures, interviews with the candidate, and social activities. The candidate, before he is recommended to the Congregation, shall be required to state to the Council of Elders his acceptance of and adherence to the Statement of Belief, Constitution and Bylaws, and Church Covenant. The Council of Elders will vote on whether to recommend the candidate to the Congregation to be hired as a pastor of the Church and elected as a Vocational Elder.

If the Council of Elders recommends the candidate by a two-third majority, then both written and verbal public notice will be given to the Congregation on two (2) Sundays immediately preceding the date of the special meeting of the Congregation to elect the new Vocational Elder. A majority of the Congregation present and voting at the duly called special meeting shall be necessary to elect and offer a position to the candidate as a Vocational Elder. Vocational Elders shall serve as Elders until they resign or are removed from office.

Non-Vocational Elders

The Council of Elders shall identify and recommend candidates for the position of Non-Vocational Elders. Each candidate must complete an Elder orientation process organized by the Council of Elders to ensure that he meets the qualifications of a Non-Vocational Elders and is equipped to function as a Non-Vocational Elder. The Elder orientation process includes but is not limited to a background check and interviews of people who know the candidate intimately.

Upon completion of an Elder orientation process, a candidate for Non-Vocational Elder will be presented to the Congregation in a Sunday gathering to be recognized and elected as a Non-Vocational Elder. In the case that a member of the Church should have just cause to question the qualifications of the candidate, thirty (30) days will be allotted for the member to approach the candidate in the spirit of Matthew 18 (see Article 7, Section 4). If the matter is not resolved to the member's

satisfaction, the cause will be brought to the Council of Elders. Thereafter, the member and the Council of Elders (or a representative group of the Council of Elders) shall approach the candidate. Final determination of the qualifications of the candidate shall reside with the Council of Elders.

If the Council of Elders recommends the candidate by a two-third majority, then both written and verbal public notice will be given to the Congregation on two (2) Sundays immediately preceding the date of the special meeting of the Congregation to elect the new Non-Vocational Elder. A majority of the Congregation present and voting shall be necessary to elect the candidate as a Non-Vocational Elder.

Once elected as a Non-Vocational Elder of the church, he will be eligible to serve on the Council of Elders for a three-year term. All terms will be staggered. A Non-Vocational Elder may serve two consecutive three-year terms, after which a one-year sabbatical from the office is required.

1.4 – Duties; Meetings; Election of Officers

Council of Elders

The duties of the Council of Elders shall include, but not be limited to, overseeing the general direction of the Church, conducting the worship services, administering the ordinances of baptism and communion, ensuring a biblical process of Church membership and discipline, coordinating and promoting the ministries of the Church, overseeing the work of the Deacons and appointed Church agents and committees, and recognizing and recommending gifted men and women to the Church for vocational ministry. Worship services and ordinances of Baptism and Communion shall be overseen by the Vocational Elders who shall be assisted by the Non-Vocational Elder.

The shepherding responsibilities of the Council of Elders shall include, but not be limited to, caring for the spiritual welfare of the Church, ensuring that all who minister the Word of God are members of the Church and share the core theological convictions of the Congregation, equipping the saints for the work of the ministry, guarding the doctrinal integrity of the Church, directing the Church to fulfill the purposes of the Gospel, and mobilizing the Church for local and global missions.

The Council of Elders has the authority to create and dissolve committees and positions to which it may delegate any specified aspect of its responsibility. The Council of Elders also has the authority to appoint Elders, Deacons, or other members of the Church to serve as members of such committees and to act as its agents in such positions. The Council of Elders shall recommend wages and benefits for employees of the Church. Wages and benefits for the Vocational Elders shall be recommended and approved by the Non-Vocational Elders and affirmed by the Congregation as part of the annual budget process (see Article 9). Wages and benefits for other employees of the Church shall be recommended and

approved by the Council of Elders and affirmed by vote of the Congregation as part of the annual budget process (see Article 9).

Meetings

The Council of Elders shall organize itself to achieve the mission of the Church. The Council of Elders must meet regularly—no less than once per quarter. 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.

Special meetings of the Council of Elders may be called by the Chairman, the President, or at least four (4) members of the Council of Elders. Notice of the time, place, and purpose of any special meeting shall be given to each Elder at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to the special meeting.

Notice of any meeting of the Council of Elders may be given by first class mail, personal delivery, facsimile, or electronic mail at any address provided by the Elder.

The transactions of any meeting of the Council of Elders, held without the prescribed notice, shall be valid as though held at a duly noticed meeting if either before or after the meeting, each of the Elders not present signs a written waiver of notice and consent to the meeting or approves the minutes of the meeting. All such waivers shall be filed in the corporate records of the Church or made a part of the minutes of a meeting.

At all meetings of the Council of Elders, the presence of a majority of the Elders shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. In the absence of a quorum, the Elders present may adjourn a meeting until a quorum shall be present. If a quorum is present when a vote is taken, the affirmative vote of a majority of the Elders present shall be the action of the Council of Elders. Only Elders may vote at meetings of the Council of Elders and proxies shall not be valid for voting.

Any action required or permitted to be taken by the Council of Elders under any provision of law, the Articles of Incorporation, or this Constitution and Bylaws may be taken without a meeting by the collective consent of all of the Elders, in writing, for the action taken. Such written consent action shall have the same force and effect as the unanimous vote of the Council of Elders.

An Elder who is present at a meeting of the Council of Elders when corporate action is taken is deemed to have assented to the action unless he objects, upon his arrival at the meeting, to holding the meeting and transacting the specified affairs at the meeting, or unless he votes against the action taken.

Officers

The Council of Elders shall elect officers of the Church, including a President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer from the Non-Vocational Elders serving on the Council of Elders. In addition, the Council of Elders may appoint one or more Vice-Presidents, in the sole discretion of the Council of Elders. The officers shall serve for one (1) year terms, and shall be elected at the first meeting of the Council of Elders held after the annual meeting of the Congregation each year. Although unanimity is desired, a majority vote of the Council of Elders will prevail except as otherwise set forth herein. Any officer may be removed and replaced at any time by a majority vote of the Council of Elders at a regular or special meeting of the Council of Elders. Any officer vacancy may be filled by the Council of Elders for the unexpired portion of the term, by a majority vote of the Council of Elders at a regular or special meeting.

The President, who shall serve as Chairman, shall be responsible for presiding over all regular and special meetings of the Council of Elders and shall perform other customary duties of a chairman. In addition, he shall have the authority to sign all documents as required by law or at the direction of the Council of Elders, and shall perform other customary duties of a president.

The Vice-President shall perform the duties of the President in the absence of the President, and shall perform other customary duties of a vice-president.

The Secretary shall be responsible for maintaining the books and records of the Council of Elders and the Church, shall have the authority to attest all official documents of the Church, and shall perform other customary duties of a secretary.

The Treasurer shall be responsible for overseeing the finances of the Church and keeping the financial records of the Church, and shall perform other customary duties of a treasurer.

Special Duties of Vocational Elders

Vocational Elders are responsible for overseeing Church staff and employees, overseeing the daily operation of the Church, and ministering to the Congregation by preaching and teaching the whole of counsel of God.

1.5 – Compensation

Non-Vocational Elders shall receive no compensation for their services on the Council of Elders. However, Non-Vocational Elders may be reimbursed for reasonable and actual out-of-pocket expenses, including travel expenses, incurred by them related to the performance of their duties as Elders, subject to the approval of the Council of Elders.

Vocational Elders shall be employees of the Church. Serving on the Council of Elders shall be a part of their job description, and therefore Vocational Elders shall not receive any additional compensation for their services on the Council of Elders. Vocational Elders may be reimbursed for reasonable and actual out-of-pocket expenses, including travel expenses, incurred by them related to the performance of their duties as Elders, subject to the approval of the Council of Elders.

1.6 – Conflict of Interest

Members of the Council of Elders shall not use their position on the Council of Elders for financial, political, or other self-interest that could be interpreted as not being in the best interests of the Church. Each Elder shall disclose to the entire Council of Elders his financial interest in any matter under consideration by the Council. If, in the view of the Elder or the Council of Elders, such interest may interfere with the exercise of his unselfish loyalty to the Church, or may pose a conflict between duty and self-interest, the Elder shall neither vote on the issue nor participate in the discussion, and shall leave the room in which the meeting is being held until that matter has been decided by the other Elders. The minutes of the meeting in which the conflict arises shall reflect that the Elder neither voted nor participated in discussion on the issue.

1.7 – Rights of Inspection

Each Elder shall have the right at any reasonable time to inspect the books, records, and documents of the Church in accordance with the provisions of the Florida Not For Profit Corporation Act.

1.8 – Resignation/Removal; Vacancies

Vocational Elders

A Vocational Elder shall continue in office until he resigns or is dismissed by a majority vote of the Congregation present and voting at a special meeting called for that purpose (see Article 8, Section 3). Public notice shall be given on the two (2) Sundays immediately preceding the date of the special meeting.

A Vocational Elder shall give the Council of Elders and the Church not less than thirty (30) days' prior written notice of his intent to resign. The Church shall give a Vocational Elder not less than thirty (30) days' prior written notice of dismissal, unless there are moral or orthodox doctrinal issues which may result in immediate dismissal. The Council of Elders will determine the appropriate dismissal date and severance, if any.

Non-Vocational Elders

A Non-Vocational Elder shall continue in office until his term expires, or he resigns or is dismissed by a majority vote of the Congregation present and voting at a special meeting called for that purpose (see Article 8, Section 3). Public notice shall be given on the two Sundays immediately preceding the date of the special meeting.

A Non-Vocational Elder shall give the Council of Elders and the Church not less than thirty (30) days' prior written notice of his intent to resign.

Vacancies

A vacancy on the Council of Elders shall be deemed to exist in case of the expiration of a term of an Elder, resignation before the expiration of a term by an Elder, death of an Elder, or removal of an Elder from the Council of Elders. An election to fill vacancies resulting from the expiration of the term of an Elder shall be held at the annual meeting of the Congregation. An election to fill any other type of vacancy may occur at other times at a duly noticed special meeting of the Congregation. There shall be no need to hold a special meeting of the Congregation to elect Elders for vacancies so long as the number of Non-Vocational Elders on the Council of Elders is greater than the number of Vocational Elders on the Council of Elders.

Section 2 – Deacons

Florida law does not require the appointment of Deacons. Deacons serve at the pleasure of the Congregation, under the oversight of the Council of Elders, to assist the Council of Elders in carrying out their duties as set forth above.

2.1 – Qualifications

The minimum qualifications for election as a Deacon shall not be less than those listed in 1 Timothy 3:8–13. Deacons must be active, serving members of the Church for no less than two (2) years, and fully subscribe to the Church's Statement of Belief, Constitution and Bylaws, and Church Covenant.

2.2 – Election and Term of Office

The number of Deacons shall be determined by the needs of the ministry, by the qualification of those in the Church, and recommended by the Council of Elders. Deacons shall be nominated by the Congregation, recognized by the Council of Elders, and elected by the Congregation to a term of three (3) years. All terms will be staggered. A Deacon may serve two consecutive three-year terms, after which a one-year sabbatical from the office is required.

The Council of Elders will appoint a nominating committee made up of no less than two (2) Elders and two (2) then-serving Deacons for the purposes of recommending proposed Deacons. The nominating committee will gather nomination from the Congregation.

Upon completion of the nominating process, a candidate for Deacon will be presented to the Congregation in a Sunday gathering. In the case that a member of the Church should have just cause to question the qualifications of the candidate, thirty (30) days will be allotted for the member to approach the candidate in the spirit of Matthew 18 (see Article 7, Section 4). If the matter is not resolved to the member's satisfaction, the member may bring the cause to the Council of Elders. Thereafter, the member and the Council of Elders (or a representative group of the Council of Elders) shall approach the candidate. Final determination of the qualifications of the candidate shall reside with the Council of Elders.

The candidate shall be elected at a Sunday gathering of the Congregation by written and verbal notice given on two (2) Sundays immediately preceding the date of the meeting. A majority of the Congregation present and voting shall be necessary to approve a candidate as a Deacon.

2.3 – Duties

Deacons shall advise and be ready to assist the Council of Elders in any service that shall support and promote the ministry of the Word, new and existing ministries of the Church, and care for the Congregation. Their responsibilities may include, but are not limited to:

- 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 property;
- Administering the ministry of benevolence toward those in need;
- Coordinating visitation for members of the Church under care at home or in medical facilities; and
- Assisting in areas such as administration, finance, missions, and Christian education

2.4 – Organization

Deacons shall be organized in such a way to best achieve the mission of the Church. The Council of Elders may designate any specific Deacon or group of deacons to specialize in a particular function (e.g., Deacon Service Teams) to assist the Council of Elders in performing its duties. Meetings of Deacon Service Teams (or representatives thereof) shall be held as needed to best administer the responsibilities and duties of the Deacons, and reports of such meetings shall be delivered to the Council of Elders.

2.5 – Resignation/Removal; Vacancies

A Deacon shall continue in office until their term expires, or they resign, or is removed by a majority vote of the Congregation present and voting at a special meeting called for that purpose (see Article 8, Section 3). Public notice shall be given on the two (2) Sundays immediately preceding the date of the special meeting.

Vacancies

A vacancy shall be deemed to exist in case of the expiration of a term of a Deacon, resignation before the expiration of a term by a Deacon, death of a Deacon, or removal of a Deacon. There shall be no need to replace a Deacon unless the Council of Elders wishes to do so, in which case the Council of Elders shall recommend a new Deacon under the process set forth above.

Article 7: Membership

Section 1 – Qualifications

Membership in the Church shall consist of persons who have placed their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, have been baptized by immersion, and affirm their willingness to submit to the Statement of Belief, Constitution and Bylaws, and Church Covenant.

Section 2 – Procedure

The Council of Elders shall be responsible for determining each person's qualification for membership in the Congregation. In making this determination, they may rely on a person's profession of faith, or such other evidence, as the Council of Elders deems appropriate. Candidates may be recommended for membership by the Council of Elders at any regular meeting of the Church, where they may be received into membership by a majority vote of the Congregation present. Once received, the candidate shall be granted the rights and privileges of membership in the Congregation.

Section 3 – Duties

The Church Covenant described in Article 3 of this Constitution sets forth the obligations assumed by every member of the Congregation. Frequent reading of the Church Covenant and Statement of Belief as set forth in this Constitution and Bylaws by every member of the Congregation is recommended.

Section 4 – Discipline

Any member of the Church consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so opposing the welfare of the Church, shall be subject to the admonition of the Council of Elders and the discipline of the Church, according to the instruction in Matthew 18:15–17 and the example of Scripture (Matthew 18:15–20; 1 Corinthians 5:1–13, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 11–15). Discipline may be applied, when necessary, to any member of the Church who persists in holding false or heretical doctrine or who lives in continual and/or unrepentant sin.

The process for discipline and restoration of a member of the Church who is living in unrepentant sin will be as follows:

- (1) A member in a spirit of gentleness and humility should lovingly confront his or her brother or sister in Christ who is caught up in sin (Galatians 6:1–2). If he or she repents, the matter is resolved.
- (2) If the person does not repent, the Church member should contact a member of the Council of Elders, and together they should again confront the person. If he or she repents, the matter is resolved.
- (3) If the person still refuses to repent, the Council of Elders will bring the matter before the Congregation. The Congregation will be encouraged to confront the person living in sin and call him or her back to relationship with Christ. If he or she repents, the matter is resolved.
- (4) If the person still refuses to repent within a week after the matter is presented to the Congregation, he or she will come under Church discipline. This means that the person is no longer considered to be a member of the Congregation and is to be removed from the rolls of membership. The person may attend the Church services and other activities but is no longer under the care of the Church. Members are to refuse to have normal fellowship with the person due to his or her sin; however, they should continually encourage the person to repent and seek restoration. The person is to be treated as an unbeliever; thus, he or she may continue to attend Church services with the hope that the preaching of the Word would bring him or her back to Christ. However, in order to keep the person from eating or drinking judgment upon him or herself, he or she will not be permitted to participate in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:27–29).
- (5) A person who has been removed from the Congregation may be restored to membership in the Congregation upon recommendation by the Council of Elders and affirmative majority vote by the Congregation, after such person has provided acceptable evidence of honest repentance and has made full confession of wrongdoing.

Section 5 – Removal

Membership is reviewed and renewed on a periodic basis. Members of the Congregation may be removed as a result of any of the following:

- Death
- Voluntary resignation of membership by one in good standing
- Extended non-attendance
- A decision by the Council of Elders as a result of the disciplinary process and affirmed by a majority vote of the Congregation. The Council of Elders and Congregation shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation or transfer of membership to another church, either for the purpose of proceeding with a process of Church discipline, or for any other biblical reason.

Article 8: Meetings

All public gatherings arranged under the auspices of this Church shall be under the oversight of the Council of Elders.

Section 1 – Worship

A public, corporate worship service shall be held each Sunday. The ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper shall be celebrated at regular intervals on Sundays and at such other times as the Council of Elders may determine. Other Church services or gatherings may be approved by the Council of Elders for the advancement of the work of the Church (e.g., small group ministries, education ministries, outreach ministries, et. al.).

Section 2 – Annual Meeting

The annual meeting of the Congregation shall be held during the last quarter of the fiscal year of the Church for the purpose of electing and reaffirming the members of the Council of Elders, Deacons, reviewing proposed budgets, and other business. The term of any Non-Vocational Elders and Deacons elected at the annual meeting shall commence at the beginning of the new fiscal year. The vote of a majority of the Congregation present at the annual meeting shall suffice to approve any business presented at the annual meeting except as specifically set forth herein.

Section 3 – Special Meetings

The Council of Elders may call for special meetings of the Congregation at any time. Notification of the special meeting and the purpose thereof must be made in writing and verbally at least two (2) weeks prior to the special meeting. The vote of a majority of the Congregation present at the special meeting shall suffice to approve any business presented at the special meeting except as specifically set forth herein.

Section 4 – Rules of Order

Robert's Rules of Order shall be observed in the transaction of all business of the Church and the Council of Elders.

Article 9: Finances and Facilities

Section 1 – Fiscal Year

The Council of Elders shall establish the fiscal year for the Church.

Section 2 – Property and Assets Usage

The Church property and other assets of the Church shall be used at the discretion and approval of the Council of Elders and/or their appointees. The Council of Elders shall establish a Facility Usage Agreement and all facilities usage, whether by members of the Church or others, should be consistent with the scope and mission of the Church.

Section 3 – Financial Matters

The Council of Elders and/or their appointees will present a proposed annual budget to the congregation for approval at the annual meeting each year. The budget must be approved by the Congregation at the annual meeting. The Council of Elders will determine the timing and scope of financial reviews. A report of the previous year's results and financial condition of the Church will be made available to the Congregation within ninety (90) days of the end of the fiscal year.

Section 4 – Financial Obligations

After the annual budget (operating and capital) has been approved for a fiscal year, there shall not be any additional financial obligation placed upon the Church, either as a mortgage, note, or outstanding bill, in excess of five percent (5%) of the total amount of the annual budget for that fiscal year without consent of the Council of Elders and subsequent approval by the Congregation at a special meeting called for that purpose.

Section 5 – Special Offerings and Designated Gifts

All special offerings to the Church shall be disbursed for the purposes specified. The Council of Elders may open the treasury for designated gifts. Should anyone designate a gift that is deemed inappropriate by the Council of Elders, that gift shall be returned to the donor.

Article 10: Affiliations

Section 1 – Global and Local Missions

The Church shall be actively engaged in the global task of missions through the recruitment and commissioning of members as missionaries, and through supporting missionaries from other congregations of like faith and practice. The Church may also enter into global and local affiliations with ministries that are furthering the advance of the Gospel. The Council of Elders and/or their appointees will ensure the essential doctrinal agreement of all supported missionaries and supported agencies.

Section 2 – Associations

The Church is autonomous and maintains the right to govern its own affairs according to biblical principles. Recognizing, however, the benefits of cooperation with other churches in the fulfillment of its purposes, the Church may voluntarily affiliate with other churches, ministries, or organizations upon approval of the Council of Elders for the purpose of fulfilling the mission of the Church (Hebrews 13:17).

Article 11: Indemnification

All those serving in the Church, whether employees, other staff, or ministry volunteers, shall be indemnified consistent with the Church's liability insurance in connection with the defense of any action, suit, or proceeding to which they have been made a party by reason of being or having been such a worker. The Church shall maintain comprehensive liability insurance coverage. This protection shall not extend to matters in which an employee, other staff member, or volunteer is deemed to be liable for gross negligence or willful misconduct in the performance of their duties.

Article 12: Dissolution and Distribution of Assets

Section 1 - Dissolution

Any dissolution of the Church shall be approved by a vote of seventy-five percent (75%) of the Council of Elders and a vote of seventy-five percent (75%) of the Congregation at a duly called special meeting (see Article 8, Section 3). Upon the dissolution of the Church, all of its debts shall be fully satisfied.

Section 2 – Distribution of Assets

Upon the dissolution of the Church and satisfaction of any debts, any remaining assets shall be distributed as set forth in the Amended and Restated Articles of Incorporation.

Article 13: Amendments

This Constitution and Bylaws may be amended at any time, upon a vote of seventy-five percent (75%) of the Council of Elders and a vote of seventy-five percent (75%) of the Congregation present and voting at a duly called special meeting (see Article 8, Section 3). The text of any approved amendment(s) may not vary from the text of the proposed amendment(s) provided in writing to the Congregation prior to the special meeting called for that purpose.

Article 14: Constitution Adoption

When adopted by the Church, this Constitution and Bylaws shall cancel and supersede any previous Constitution and Bylaws, and all amendments thereto.

Article 15: Appendices

Appendices to this Constitution and Bylaws may be added at any time after the Constitution and Bylaws has been approved. Any appendix must be approved by a majority vote of the Council of Elders and a majority vote of the Congregation at a duly called special meeting (see Article 8, Section 3).

CERTIFICATE OF ADOPTION

WHEREFORE, this Constitution and Bylaws has been approved by the vote of the Congregation at a duly called meeting on the [13th day of November, 2022].

Pastor

President

Secretary