

# Bethlehem Baptist Church

## Bylaws Revisions

*This document shows details of the revisions presented to the Congregation at the October 29, 2017, Quarterly Strategy Meeting*

### ARTICLE I

### MEMBERSHIP

#### Section 1

#### GENERAL PROCEDURE

All actions regarding membership, either of admission or dismissal, shall be by vote of the Church upon recommendation of the Council of Elders. At any of the regular meetings for worship, the Church may, without special notice, **receive new members**. ~~act upon the reception of members, or upon transfer of members to other churches. Reception of members may, without special notice, be acted on by groups, within the Church, more limited than the full membership of the Church, using procedures specifically authorized by vote of the Church at a regular business meeting upon recommendation of the Council of Elders.~~

#### Section 2

#### ADMISSION BY BAPTISM

~~Any person professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, giving evidence of change of heart, and having accepted the faith, aims and ideals of this Church as expressed in the affirmation of Faith and Church Covenant, may be received into membership by baptism, upon recommendation of the Council of Elders~~

#### Section 3

#### ADMISSION BY LETTER

~~Members from other Baptist churches holding like faith may be received as members with us upon presentation of letters of transfer from such churches, and upon acceptance of the faith, aims and ideals of this Church as expressed in the Affirmation of Faith and the Church Covenant. If such credentials be of older date than six months prior to their presentation, the applicant may be required to furnish additional information.~~

#### Section 4

#### ADMISSION BY EXPERIENCE OR RESTORATION

~~All applicants for membership other than by baptism or by letter of transfer, that is by Christian experience if previously baptized, or by restoration, shall be received into the church in the same way as those by baptism, except the ordinance shall not be administered.~~

## **Section 2 5**

### **INSTRUCTION TO NEW MEMBERS**

All persons uniting with this Church in any of the ways set forth in Sections 2 through 4 above shall previously, by the Council of Elders, be made acquainted with the Church Covenant and the **Membership** Affirmation of Faith. New members shall pledge themselves to fulfill their stewardship obligations as to **regularly attend** worship, **and participate in** service, and giving, when they make public profession of faith and join the eChurch.

## **Section 3 6**

### **DISMISSAL **REMOVAL** OF MEMBERS**

a. Members **may be removed from membership upon recommendation by the Elders and a majority vote of the members present at any business meeting.**

**b. Members in good standing who have fulfilled their obligations to the Church, or satisfactorily arranged the same with the Elders, shall upon **may** request be granted a letter of recommendation to present to a different church. Members who unite with another Church will be removed from the membership roll. transfer to unite with such Baptist Church as they may designate. Such letter of transfer shall be sent to the Pastor or the Clerk of the Church the member intends to join and shall be valid only for six months, but may be renewed after that time by vote of the Church upon recommendation of the Council of Elders if satisfactory reasons be given for the non-use. These limitations of time shall be included in the letter of transfer. Members who shall unite with another church without such letter shall be dropped from the Church roll. Members in good standing who have fulfilled their obligations to the Church, or satisfactorily arranged the same with the Elders, and who desire to unite with a church of another denomination, shall receive a certificate of character and be dismissed.**

**c. Members who are found to be inactive in the worship, fellowship and ministry of the Church will be removed from the membership roll. It is the responsibility of the Council of Elders to remind members of their duties in this respect.**

**b. Members who move from this city shall supply the Church with their new address and apply for a letter of dismission within one year provided there be a church of the same faith and order in the place to which they move. If necessary, it shall be the duty of the Council of Elders to remind such member of their duties in this respect. In case there is no such church in the place, or there are circumstances which render it inadvisable to change membership, the member shall report to the Church as often as once a year at least, in person or by letter and by contribution. All non-resident members who do not so report shall be subject to dismissal by the Church after appropriate efforts have been made to contact the member and remind them of their duties.**

**d. Members whose conduct consistently or grievously contradicts the commitments outlined in the Church Covenant may be subject to Church discipline under the leadership of the Elders.**

*Edits were applied to correct Section 3b on 11-22-17*

# Article II

## CHURCH GOVERNMENT

### Section 1

#### ~~GENERAL STATEMENT~~ OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH

~~The Biblical offices of the Church shall be elders and deacons. All officers must be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities.~~

~~a. Officers. The Biblical offices~~ Officers of the Church ~~are~~ shall be a Council of Elders ~~and the Deacons~~. Officers ~~Elders and Deacons~~ shall be called to office by vote of the membership of the Church as ~~described~~ provided for in Article II, Sections 2–3 of these By-Laws. All officers ~~Elders and Deacons~~ of the Church shall be members of the Church in good and regular standing. The Council of Elders shall be composed of men only, the Deacons may be composed of both men and/or women. Except as provided in paragraphs (b) and (c) below, the Council of Elders and the Deacons are the only bodies and positions created by these By-Laws. ~~b. The Church also recognizes the administrative positions of Clerk, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary and may employ additional personnel, as described in Article III of these By-Laws. The Church, upon nomination by the Council of Elders shall elect at the annual meeting, members to the positions of Church Clerk, Treasurer and Financial Secretary. The functions of Treasurer and Financial Secretary shall not be performed by one member. The Treasurer and Financial Secretary shall be bonded by the Church in a suitable amount. The Elders shall provide a written description of duties to the Clerk, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary.~~

~~c. Committees and Appointees. The Council of Elders has the authority to create committees and positions to which it may delegate any specified aspect of its responsibility. The Council of Elders has the authority to dissolve any committee or position which it created. 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 Deacons may nominate candidates for any committee or position, with appointment by the Council of Elders. The Council of Elders may delegate to the Deacons the authority to appoint Deacons or other members of the Church to serve as members of such committees and as agents of the Council of Elders in such positions. Every committee shall have a chairperson, responsible for the overall operation of the committee, who shall be appointed by the Council of Elders. The Council of Elders may delegate the responsibility for selecting the chairperson to the Deacons or to the committee. (For example, such committees and positions may include a Missions Committee and a Christian Education Committee, among others.)~~

### Section 2

#### VOCATIONAL PASTORS AND MINISTERS ~~ELDERS~~

~~a. Definition. Vocational Pastors are the ordained Elders of the church, who in response to God's call, have devoted their vocational lives to the ministry of the Word and prayer in the service of the church of Christ. Vocational Ministers are the non-ordained ministers of the church who, in response to God's call, serve the church of Christ as their primary vocation. Both~~

~~Vocational Pastors and Vocational Ministers are supported financially by the church in return for their vocational labors.~~

~~b. Duties. In addition to the duties of their office as described in Sections 4 and 5 below, Vocational Pastors and Ministers shall perform the duties determined by the Council of Elders and approved by the congregation. The duties shall be in writing at the time of the call to service, and substantial changes shall be approved by the church. The church's call of a Vocational Pastor is a call to the Eldership of the church. Therefore Vocational Pastors shall be members of the Council of Elders and have all the Biblical qualifications of an Elder. Vocational Ministers are not necessarily called to the Eldership, but as assisting partners in the ministry. Vocational Ministers may, when appropriate, be called by the church to the Council of Elders.~~

**a. Qualifications**

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

**b. Responsibilities**

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

**c. Composition**

The Elder Council shall be comprised of Staff and Non-Staff Elders. Staff Elders are men who receive financial compensation from the Church as they fulfill God's call to the specific ministries of the Word, prayer and shepherding the flock. In addition to the duties of their office as described in Section 'b' above, Staff Elders shall perform the duties determined by the Council of Elders and approved by the congregation. The duties shall be in writing at the time of employment and substantial changes shall be approved by the Church. Non-Staff Elders are men recommended by the Council of Elders and called by the Church who serve voluntarily without financial support from the Church as they fulfill God's call to the specific ministries of the Word, prayer and shepherding the flock.

**d. ~~e. Vocational~~ Call by the Church.**

The members shall call ~~Vocational Pastors and Ministers~~ **Staff Elders and Non-Staff Elders** (1) by ballot upon recommendation of the Council of Elders and (2) by at least a two-thirds majority of those members voting at the meeting with at least ten percent (10%) of the membership of

the Church present. Oral notice of any such meeting, stating its object, shall be given from the pulpit on the next two successive weekends preceding the meeting. Notice shall also be given by mail (electronic or otherwise) to the resident membership at least one week before the meeting. ~~Vocational Pastors and Ministers~~ Elders shall stand for reaffirmation not later than the third annual meeting following their call or previous reaffirmation. Reaffirmation of a ~~Vocational Pastor or Minister~~ Elders shall be by two-thirds vote of those members present and voting at the meeting.

#### e. Organization

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

#### d. Termination of Vocational Call by the Church. *[Note: Essentials elements of this section have moved to Section 4 (below).]*

~~1. By resignation. The question of terminating the vocational call of a Vocational Pastor or Minister shall be considered at any time by the church upon the presentation of the Pastor's or Minister's resignation.~~

~~2. Grievance. Where a grievance exists against a Pastor or Minister, either due to his preaching or teaching contrary to the beliefs of the Church as set forth in Article II of its Constitution or to alleged conduct on his part unfitting an Elder or Deacon, such grievance may be brought before the Council of Elders by any two members in good standing, following the procedure prescribed in Article V of these By-Laws. If the Council, after thorough investigation and consideration, believes the grievance to be true and substantial, then the vocational call of the Pastor or Minister may be terminated at any business meeting upon the recommendation of the Council of Elders when supported by closed ballot of a majority of those members of the Church present and voting with at least ten percent (10%) of the membership of the church present at such meeting. Oral notice of any such meeting, stating its object, shall be given from the pulpit on two successive weekends next preceding the meeting. Notice shall also be given by mail (electronic or otherwise) to the resident membership at least one week before the meeting.~~

~~3. Lack of reaffirmation. If a Vocational Pastor or Minister fails to be reaffirmed to the office of Elder or Deacon as provided in paragraph (c) above, a special business meeting shall be called to consider the question of terminating the vocational call with that Pastor or Minister. The vocational call shall be terminated only if supported by closed ballot of a majority of those members of the Church present and voting with at least ten percent (10%) of the membership of the church present. Public notice of any such meeting, stating its object, shall be given on two successive weekends next preceding the meeting. Notice shall also be given by mail (electronic~~

~~or otherwise) to the membership at least one week before the meeting. Removal from office and termination of the vocational call by this means shall not be considered disciplinary action.~~

~~e. Licensing and Ordination. In the matter of licensing and ordaining any person to the Gospel Ministry, the church shall follow, as far as possible, the procedure recommended by the Council of Elders.~~

## **Section 3**

### **LAY OFFICERS DEACONS**

#### **a. Qualifications**

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

#### **b. Responsibilities**

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

#### **c. Composition**

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

#### **d. Call by the Church**

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

#### **e. Organization**

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

~~a. Definition. Lay officers are the non-Vocational Elders and Deacons of the Church.~~

b. Duties. Lay Elders and Deacons shall have the duties of their offices as described in Sections 4 and 5 below.

c. Calling. The Council of Elders shall recognize, interview, and investigate candidates for lay Elder and Deacon. The Council shall provide for individual members of the Church either to nominate candidates or to present themselves to the Council as candidates for office and for the Council's further investigation. In no instances shall any individual be considered a nominee for the office without the nominee's consent. In those cases where the Council of Elders concludes that a nominee is not qualified for office they shall so inform the nominee stating the reasons for this conclusion.

The Council of Elders shall present a ballot of candidates for calling or reaffirmation as Elders or Deacons to the congregation at the annual meeting. The Council of Elders may also nominate candidates for election to office at any quarterly or special meeting, provided that the written ballot of nominees is available for review in the church office at least ten days in advance of the meeting and is announced publicly to the church by mail (electronic or otherwise) to its members or in the weekend worship services at least ten days in advance of the meeting.

*[Note: Essentials elements of this section have been incorporated into the above to sections concerning Officers.]*

Lay Elders and Deacons shall be called by the Church for a normal term of three years. They shall stand for reaffirmation not later than the third annual meeting of the church following their call or previous reaffirmation. Calling or reaffirmation of a lay Elder or Deacons shall be by two-thirds vote of those members present and voting at the meeting. Lay Elders shall serve no more than two consecutive terms. Following two consecutive terms the Elder will not serve actively in office for a period of one year. Following this period they are again eligible for nomination as Elder or Deacon. For purposes of this provision a term during which an Elder serves not more than one year shall not be considered a term in office.

d. Removal.

1. Resignation. An officer may resign his office at any time if he finds he is no longer able to discharge the duties of the office.

2. Grievance. Where a grievance exists against an officer of the Church either due to the adherence to and propagation of beliefs contrary to the beliefs of the Church as set forth in Article II, Sections 1 and 2 of its Constitution or to alleged conduct on his part unfitting an Elder or Deacon, such grievance may be brought before the Council of Elders by any two members in good standing, following the procedures prescribed in Article V of the By-Laws of this Church. If the Council, after thorough investigation and consideration, believes the grievance to be true and substantial, then the officer may be removed from office upon the recommendation of the Council of Elders when supported by closed ballot of a majority of those members of the Church present and voting at any annual, quarterly, or special meeting with at least ten percent (10%) of the membership of the church present at such meeting. Oral notice of any such meeting, stating its object, shall be given from the pulpit on two successive weekends next preceding the meeting. Notice shall also be given by mail (electronic or otherwise) to the resident membership at least one week before the meeting.



~~3. Lack of reaffirmation. If a Lay Elder or Deacon stands for reaffirmation and fails to be reaffirmed, the Elder or Deacon shall be removed from office. Removal from office by this means shall not be considered disciplinary action.~~

## **Section 4**

### **COUNCIL OF ELDERS REMOVAL**

#### **a. By resignation.**

Elders or Deacons may resign their office at any time if they find they are no longer able to discharge the duties of the office.

#### **b. Grievance.**

Where a grievance exists against an Elder or Deacon due to teaching contrary to the beliefs of the Church as set forth in Article II of its Constitution or to alleged conduct on their part unfitting an Elder or Deacon, such grievance may be brought before the Council of Elders by any two members in good standing. If the Council, after thorough investigation and consideration, believes the grievance to be true and substantial, then the call of the Elder or Deacon may be terminated at any business meeting upon the recommendation of the Council of Elders when supported by closed ballot of a majority of those members of the Church present and voting with at least ten percent (10%) of the membership of the Church present at such meeting. Oral notice of any such meeting, stating its object, shall be given from the pulpit on the two successive weekends preceding the meeting. Notice shall also be given by mail (electronic or otherwise) to the resident membership at least one week before the meeting.

#### **c. Lack of Reaffirmation.**

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

~~a. Composition, Term, and Calling. The Council of Elders shall be composed of men only, both Lay Elders and Vocational Elders. The Council of Elders shall be composed of at least seven members, with the number of Elders at any time determined by the needs of the ministry and by the call and qualification of men in the church. There shall be at least twice as many Lay Elders as Vocational Elders. Each Elder shall be called by the membership of the Church to a term of three years. That call and any reaffirmation(s) shall be conducted as provided in Article II, Sections 2 and 3 of these By-Laws.~~

~~b. Qualifications. Elders and nominees for Elder shall be qualified for the office as specified in the Bible. Relevant texts include I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9 and I Peter 5:1-4.~~



~~Elders are also required to be in agreement with the Bethlehem Baptist Church Elder Affirmation of Faith.~~

~~The Bethlehem Baptist Church Elder Affirmation of Faith shall only be amended by a recommendation of the Council of Elders to the church, following the same procedure to amend the By-Laws.~~

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

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

## **Section 5**

### **DEACONS LICENSING AND ORDINATION**

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

~~a. Composition, Term, and Calling. The Deacons may be both men and/or women, both Vocational and Lay Deacons. The number of Deacons shall be determined by the needs of the ministry and by the call and qualification of men and women in the church. Each Deacon shall be called by the membership of the Church to a normal term of three years. The call and any reaffirmation shall be conducted as provided in Article II, Sections 2 and 3 of these By-Laws.~~

~~b. Qualifications. Deacons and nominees for Deacon shall be qualified for the office as specified in the Bible. Relevant texts include I Timothy 3:8-12.~~

~~c. Responsibilities. The Deacons shall advise and be ready to assist the Elders in any service that shall support and promote the ministry of the Word, new and existing ministries of the Church, and the care for the members of the congregation. Their responsibilities may include:~~

~~1. administering a fund to assist the poor and needy and otherwise providing aid in times of crisis or distress;~~

~~2. the greeting and welcoming ministries of the church;~~

~~3. assisting in administering the ordinances of the Gospel;~~

~~4. assisting at fellowship gatherings of the church;~~

~~5. caring for and maintaining the Church properties;~~

~~6. administering the business affairs of the Church that pertain to its material assets.~~

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

## **Article III**

### **CHURCH EMPLOYEES**

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