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CONSTITUTION  
OF  
TRUTH BAPTIST CHURCH  
OF  
HARTFORD COUNTY, CONNECTICUT

Adopted by the Church--10/84  
Amended 7/85, 1/88, 5/93, 2/03, 9/05, 12/19

OUR CHURCH: A body of committed followers of Jesus Christ

OUR VALUES: Connect—to meet & belong; Grow—to learn & serve; Thrive—to lead and disciple.

OUR MISSION: To reveal God and His love through clear Bible teaching aimed at empowering and equipping believers to use their gifts in reaching and discipling others.

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ARTICLE I NAME

The name of this church shall be called Truth Baptist Church of Hartford County, Connecticut.

ARTICLE II PURPOSE AND METHOD

SECTION 1--PURPOSE

A. The primary purpose of this church shall be to glorify God by exalting and obeying our Lord Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 3:20,21; 1 Peter 4:11, 5:10, Romans 11:33-36)

B. As such this congregation is organized as a church exclusively for charitable, religious, 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 those ministries listed in Section 3.B "below".

SECTION 2--METHOD

The method in which this church shall set forth to fulfill this purpose is by obeying the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ who is the Savior and Head of the church.

"And Jesus came and spoke unto them, saying, 'All authority is given unto Me in heaven and earth. Go ye, therefore, and teach [literally--make disciples of] all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you; and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the age. Amen.'" (Matthew 28:18-20. See also Mark 16:15,16; Luke 24:47,48; Acts 1:8)

SECTION 3--INTERPRETATION OF PURPOSE AND METHOD

A. We understand the foregoing Commission to establish that:

1. Jesus Christ has all authority over all persons, kingdoms, dominions, realms, nations, and universes; both temporal and eternal, both physical and spiritual. He is sovereign over all.

2. He commands the church to:

a. "Go...and make disciples of all nations"-Every member of the church shall be encouraged and expected to use their spiritual gifts and influence to take the gospel of Christ to the lost both directly in this area and through missionaries to the end of the earth.

b. "Baptizing them"--After leading people to salvation through faith in Christ, we shall instruct them as to their duty to obey Christ by being baptized in water by immersion.

c. "Teaching them to observe all things"--We shall endeavor to teach new Christians to obey all these things commanded by Jesus Christ, which consists of the full counsel of the Word of God. (Matthew 5:17-19; John 14:26, 16:13)

B. We understand that it is our responsibility to fulfill this commission using any and all means consistent with the principles and precepts set forth in the Bible. The means by which we purpose to carry out this commission includes but is not limited to regular or irregular congregational meetings, worship services, revival meetings, Bible conferences, Sunday schools, week day schools for children and adults, house to house visitation, bus ministry, home Bible studies, missions for the

destitute, orphanages, missionary hospitals, cemeteries, parsonages, day care centers for young and old, nurseries for children of teachable age throughout the week and nurseries for children of all ages whose parents and guardians are in a meeting of the church, homes for widows indeed, ministries to the deaf, blind, retarded and destitute, street preaching and witnessing, business men's and women's meetings, children's meetings and ministries, teenage meetings and ministries, counseling, fellowships, recreational activities with a Bible emphasis, founding and supporting of home and foreign missionary endeavors, printing, publishing and distributing of tracts, books, leaflets, newspapers and other materials consistent with our purpose, printing and distributing of Bibles, radio and television broadcasting, ministries of good will, and all other activities, services, meetings, and ministries whereby the gospel of Christ is propagated and those who are saved are brought to a mature knowledge of God's will as revealed in His Word.

### ARTICLE III AUTHORITY

The revealed Word of God, comprised of the 39 Old Testament books and the 27 New Testament books, the Bible, shall be accepted as the final authority on all matters relating to faith and practice by this church. (Mark 7:6-13; Matthew 5:18; 2 Peter 3:16)

### ARTICLE IV GOVERNMENT

#### SECTION 1--HEADSHIP, AUTHORITY, AND CONTROL

A. This church shall be an independent body in submission to the will of Jesus Christ who is recognized as its Head, Savior, and Chief Shepherd. The human government of the church exists only to determine and carry out our Lord's will. The final human authority lies with its membership, who as a body is responsible to determine and obey Christ's will. (Ephesians 5:23-29; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 4:14-17; 6:1ff)

B. This church shall never be subject to the control of any denomination, association of churches, or any other ecclesiastical body. It shall voluntarily submit to all rules, laws, and ordinances of human government unless specifically commanded to violate clear Biblical commands and principles. (Colossians 1:18; Romans 13:1-7; Acts 4:13-20, 5:27-29)

#### SECTION 2--HUMAN LEADERSHIP

A. The pastor is God's chosen human overseer, shepherd and leader responsible to God for the direction, purity, edification and motivation of the church. It is the responsibility of the church to lovingly submit to the direction and leadership of the pastor as long as such direction and leadership is Biblical and to rebuke, and if necessary, remove the pastor if such direction and leadership becomes non-Biblical. (1 Peter 5:1-4; Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1,4,5; 1 Thessalonians 5:12,13; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Timothy 5:17-20)

B. The church may, as it deems necessary, elect other persons to perform various needful tasks as required by the Word of God and in conformance with its purpose. Such elected persons shall be approved by the pastor and shall be in conformance with the requirements for leadership as explained in Article IX, of this Constitution. (Acts 6:1-7)

### ARTICLE V DOCTRINAL BELIEFS

#### SECTION 1--THE SCRIPTURES

A. We believe that the Bible, both New and Old Testaments, has been given to man by God Himself and that every word is perfect, eternal and without the slightest error in the original writings.

(2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Psalm 119:89, 138:2; Proverbs 30:5)

B. We believe that the Bible is in truth God's Word and that it is the supreme and final authority upon earth for all faith and practice. (Mark 7:1-13, Matthew 5:18, Luke 16:17)

1. We believe that neither the will of God nor the leading of the Spirit of God ever contradicts the revealed Word of God. (Deuteronomy 13:1-5; Malachi 3:6; 2 Peter 1:19-21)

2. We reject as error any belief, "revelation", tradition, or doctrine that contradicts any clear teaching of the Bible. (Mark 7:5-13; Deuteronomy 13:1-5; Romans 16:17; Galatians 1:8,9)

3. We also reject as unbiblical any person, group, or movement that believes that the Bible is not totally and perfectly sufficient to equip God's people to do any and every work that is good, acceptable, and pleasing in God's sight. (2 Timothy 3:16,17; 4)

4. We also reject as heretical the belief that God is continuing to give wisdom, guidance, or revelation in our day of equal

authority with the Bible. (Proverbs 30:5,6; 2 Peter 1:15-21; 2 Timothy 3:16,17, 4:1-4; Revelation 22:18,19)

C. We believe that God has preserved His Word through the ages in existing and available Greek and Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible and that not one Word of God's Word has been lost through copying or human error. (Matthew 24:35; Mark 13:31; Luke 21:33)

1. We believe that honest, conservative, and literal English translations (not paraphrases) of the Bible, prepared by saved translators who believe in the inerrancy and authority of the scriptures, are sufficient for the doctrine, instruction, and edification of the Body of Jesus Christ.

2. However, where any question arises regarding a translation, we believe that the Greek and Hebrew manuscripts of the Bible are the final authority.

## SECTION 2--GOD

A. We believe in one God, eternally existing in three distinct persons: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. (Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 1 Peter 1:2; Zechariah 14:3,4; Genesis 1:26, 3:22, 11:7, 19:24)

B. We believe that these three have precisely the same nature, attributes, and perfections. (Hebrews 1:3; Colossians 2:9; Leviticus 19:2 compare Hebrews 7:26 and Ephesians 4:30)

C. We believe that there exists a voluntary, willing, loving submission between the persons of the Godhead--the Son to the Father (John 14:31, 15:10, 17:23-26; 1 John 4:16) and the Holy Spirit to the Father and the Son (John 14:26, 16:13,14)

D. We believe that Jesus Christ:

1. Is eternal (Micah 5:2; Isaiah 9:7)

2. Is fully God (Isaiah 9:6; John 1:1, 20:28; Acts 20:28; Colossians 2:9, Titus 2:13; Hebrews 1:8)

3. Became also fully man through the virgin birth (Galatians 4:4; Isaiah 7:14. Compare Matthew 1:23; 1 John 1:1, 4:2,3)

4. Has two natures and these two natures exist together without fusion or confusion, without mixture or admixture--He is perfectly God and perfectly man. (Colossians 2:9; 1 John 2:22, 4:2; Isaiah 9:6; Galatians 4:4; Hebrews 4:15, 9:14)

E. We believe that the Holy Spirit:

1. Is a person--He searches, knows, speaks, testifies, reveals, convicts, commands, strives, moves, helps, guides, creates, regenerates, sanctifies, inspires, makes intercession, orders the affairs of the church, performs miracles, raises the dead, appoints overseers and missionaries, etc. (Romans 8:26,27; John 14:26, 16:8,13; Acts 8:29, 13:2, 16:7, 20:28, Romans 8:16, 1 Thessalonians 5:19)

2. Is fully God--He is declared to be God (Acts 5:3,4), He does the same works, has the same attributes and receives the same honor as the Father and Son (1 Corinthians 3:16 compare 6:19, 2:10; Romans 8:11,27)

3. Is unchanging and always works in perfect harmony and accordance with the Word of God. (1 John 4:1; Malachi 3:6; 2 Peter 1:15-21; John 16:13-15; 1 Corinthians 14:37)

## SECTION 3--MAN

A. We believe:

1. That man was created directly by God Himself in the image of God. (Genesis 2:7,18-22, 9:6; Matthew 19:4; Psalm 8:5; Colossians 3:10) By image we mean that:

a. Man has personality involving self-consciousness and self-determination; making man responsible for his choices. (Ezekiel 33:8,9, 18:1-18)

b. Man has a moral nature involving the ability to know right from wrong. (1 Timothy 2:13,14; John 14:15)

c. Man has the ability to know God.

(Exodus 33:13)

2. That man willfully sinned (disobeyed God's revealed will), thereby incurring the curse of both physical and spiritual death and marring the image of God in man. (Genesis 2:16,17 compare 3:6,19; Romans 5:12-21)

3. That all people are born into this world with a sinful nature and are now sinners by birth and by choice, positively inclined to evil. (Psalm 51:5, 58:3; Ephesians 2:3; Romans 3:23, 8:7)

4. That man, apart from salvation, can do nothing pleasing to God or meriting His favor. (Isaiah 64:6; Romans 5:6, 8:8)

5. That all men therefore, upon reaching accountable age, are under just and deserved condemnation to certain eternal punishment in hell without defense, excuse, or strength to save himself. (John 3:18, 3:36; James 2:11; Romans 3:19, 1:20,

5:6, 8:3; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Matthew 25:41,46; Revelation 19:20 compare 20:10,15, 21:8; Matthew 18:14; 2 Samuel 12:23)

B. We believe that God commands all men everywhere to admit their sinful, guilty, helpless condition to God (repentance) and to trust Jesus Christ and His shed blood as their only hope of salvation. (Acts 17:30; Luke 13:3,5; Galatians 3:22; Acts 3:19)

#### SECTION 4--SALVATION

A. We believe that God in perfect holiness, hates all disobedience to His revealed will and is compelled by His justice to punish all sin with constant, eternal punishment.

(Revelation 21:27, 19:20 compare 20:10,11-15; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9; Matthew 25:41,46; Mark 9:43-48)

B. We believe that God, in perfect love, came in the person of Jesus Christ to shed His blood and died as the substitute and representative for all mankind. (Romans 5:8,9; 1 Peter 2:24, 3:18; Isaiah 53:4-6; 1 John 3:16)

C. We believe that Jesus Christ was raised bodily from the dead proving that He had completely and perfectly satisfied the demand of God that sin be punished.

(Romans 3:25, 4:25, 10:9; 1 John 2:2, 4:10; Isaiah 53:11)

D. We reject the doctrine of limited atonement and hold that Christ's shed blood is sufficient to totally satisfy God's wrath for the sins of all men. (1 John 2:2, 4:14; Titus 2:11; 1 Timothy 2:4,6, 4:10; John 1:29, 3:16, 4:42; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21; Romans 5:12-21)

E. We believe that Jesus Christ has promised to save any persons who will repent of their sins (admit their guilty, helpless, hell-deserving condition to God) and trust Him by faith to save them. All who so trust Christ are instantly born again by the Holy Spirit and become children of God. (Luke 13:3; John 1:12,13, 3:3-7,14-18,36, 6:40,47; Acts 20:21, 10:43; Romans 10:13)

F. We believe that salvation is wholly of God's grace in response to our faith in Christ and has nothing whatever to do with our own "good works", status, religion, church affiliation, or merit. (Ephesians 2:8,9; Titus 3:5; Matthew 7:21-23; Romans 4:5)

G. We reject such doctrines of God's grace that eliminate the necessity of man to exercise his own will to be saved. (Luke 13:3; John 1:11,12, 3:14-16, 11:26; Acts 2:37, 16:30; Romans 10:13)

H. We believe that the salvation is perfectly a matter of Divine Sovereignty and also perfectly a matter of man's responsibility and free-will. We reject any system of theology that attempts to reconcile these two truths by emphasizing one at the expense of the other. (Acts 2:37 compare 2:39; 2:23; John 6:37, 6:64,65 compare 3:16; Acts 13:48 compare 13:46; Romans 11:25 compare Matthew 23:37)

I. We believe that a person once saved is eternally secure from all fear of condemnation or punishment for sins. (John 5:24, 3:18, 10:28; Romans 4:5-8; Ephesians 4:30; Philippians 1:6; Romans 6:8-10)

J. We believe that a truly saved believer can be perfectly certain of his salvation at all points in his life since his salvation depends only upon his faith in the person and work of Christ and not to the slightest degree upon his own worth and works. (1 John 5:11-13; Galatians 2:16, 3:2,3, 5:4,5, 2:21, 5:13-16, 6:1; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14,15; 1 Corinthians 5:3-5; 11:30)

K. We believe that all who trust Christ for salvation are commanded to make public profession of this faith by being baptized by immersion in water, that this baptism is an act of obedience after salvation and has NO saving power, and therefore only those old enough to repent, believe, and obey are proper subjects for Bible baptism.

(Matthew 28:18-20; 3:16; Mark 16:16; John 3:23; Acts 2:38 compare 3:19, 10:43; 8:36-39; 10:44-48; 16:30-34; 1 Corinthians 1:17; Ephesians 1:13,14)

L. We believe that evangelism is God's means of pointing lost men to the Savior and that this activity is both commanded by God and is essential to the saving of souls in this age. (Romans 1:16; 10:13-17; Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Ephesians 1:13; 1 Corinthians 1:17; 9:19-22; Jude 22,23; Philippians 1:12-18; Acts 4:12; 5:42; John 14:6 compare Acts 1:8; Mark 13:26-29)

#### SECTION 5--THE CHURCH

A. We believe that two aspects of the church are taught in the New Testament:

1. The Church as the Body of Christ in Total

a. Definition--We believe that the Church in this sense began at Pentecost and will be removed from the earth by Jesus

Christ prior to the Great Tribulation and consists of all persons saved from Pentecost to the rapture. (1 Corinthians 12:13; Ephesians 3:6; 1:13-14 1:22,23; 5:23-32; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18)

b. We reject as heretical such doctrines of the "Body of Christ", "Universal Church", or "Invisible Church" which leave out or depreciate the God-commanded responsibility of every believer to be a member of, take an active part in, and submit to the ministry of a scriptural local church as described below. (Acts 2:41- 47; Ephesians 4:11-16, Hebrews 3:13, 10:24,25)

## 2. The Church as the Local Body of Christ

a. Definition--The local church is a local body of baptized believers who have voluntarily joined together to glorify our Lord Jesus Christ by fulfilling all aspects of the Great Commission (see Article II), observing the ordinances (see below), and having a government as described in Article IV.

b. We believe that the local church is the only organization upon earth that God has ordained with the responsibility to defend the faith and spread His Word to the ends of the earth. (1 Timothy 3:14-15; Acts 13:1,2 compare 14:21-23; 14:26-28; Acts 20:17,28; Romans 16:1,34,5,16,22-23; 1 Corinthians 3:4-17; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1 compare 4:15; Colossians 1:2 compare 4:16; James 1:1 compare 2:1-4; 1 Peter 1:1 compare 5:1-4)

c. We believe that all saved persons upon earth are commanded to be an integral part of the ministry of a scriptural local church, including assembling together regularly, exercising their individual gifts for the edification of the church, submitting to one another in love and to scriptural leaders, supporting the work of the church with prayer and finances, observing the ordinance of the Lord's Supper regularly, agreeing together upon and carrying out church discipline, caring for the needs of widows indeed as well as the needs of the fellow believers, and striving for doctrinal purity and unity in the church.

(Hebrews 10:24,25; 1 Corinthians 11:20; 12:14-30; 5:4,5,11; 6:1-6; 1 Peter 5:1-5; Hebrew 13:17; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:12,13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14; 1 Timothy 5:3,17; John 13:34,35; 1 Peter 4:10,11)

B. We believe that Christ has commanded the local church to observe and administer two ordinances--Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

1. Baptism--(See Article V Section 4K)

2. The Lord's Supper--We believe the Lord's Supper is commanded by the Lord to remind us of His broken body and shed blood to pay for our sins and, to cause us to examine the present purity of our lives, and to encourage us of His promised return. We do not believe that the Lord's Supper has any saving power. (1 Corinthians 11:23-26; Matthew 26:29)

## SECTION 6--FUTURE EVENTS

A. We believe in the future bodily resurrection of the dead; both of the saved and lost. (John 5:28,29)

B. We believe that the spirits of the unsaved at death descend immediately into hades where they are kept under punishment until the final day of judgment (Luke 16:19-31; 2 Peter 2:9), at which time their bodies shall be raised from the dead, they shall be judged according to their works, and cast into the place of final and everlasting punishment. (Revelation 20:11-15, 21:8; Daniel 12:2)

C. We believe that the spirits of the saved at death go immediately to be with the Lord until the rapture of the church at which time their bodies are resurrected and made after the likeness of the resurrected body of Jesus Christ and are taken up from this earth to be continually in the presence of the Lord forever. (2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23, 3:20,21; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44,51-54)

D. We believe in a future literal 7 year period of terrible tribulation upon earth preceded by the rapture of the church and followed by the literal return of Jesus Christ to the earth to reign from Jerusalem for 1000 years, after which the present earth and heavens (the created celestial bodies) shall be totally destroyed and the final judgment will take place. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 2:7; Revelation 4:1, 7:14; Matthew 24:21; Daniel 9:26,27)

E. We believe in a literal heaven with streets of gold and gates of pearls; the light of which is God Himself. We believe heaven is a place of unimaginable beauty and joy which will last for eternity. (1 Peter 1:4; Revelation 21:9-22:5; 1 Corinthians 2:9)

F. We do not believe that there is any hope for any human being to have his eternal destiny changed after his physical death. (Hebrews 9:27; Luke 16:19ff)

G. We believe in the "blessed hope"--the personal, bodily, pretribulational, premillennial, and imminent return of our Lord Jesus Christ in the air to rapture His bride the church.

(1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-55; John 14:1-3)

## SECTION 7--SATAN

A. We believe that Satan is a literal demonic spirit of great power, totally evil, and bent upon the eradication of all knowledge and worship of God from the earth. We believe that his great desire is to be worshiped and glorified as god by all creation. (Matthew 4:4-11; Luke 4:1-13; John 8:44; Revelation 12:9; Isaiah 14:12,14,16,17)

B. We believe that Satan's wicked career is revealed in the Bible and can be divided into periods as follows:

1. Period of Holiness--The period after his creation in which he was holy by creation and by his own choice. (Ezekiel 28:11)

2. Period of Liberty (Rebellion)--The present period when he is allowed by God to roam the heavens and earth deceiving and destroying, head a huge demonic organization, and control the world's system. (Job 1:6-27; Revelation 12:10; Ephesians 6:10-13, 2:2,3; 2 Corinthians 4:4; 1 John 5:19) During this period he experiences 3 judgments:

a. Judgment of Ezekiel 28:16 when he is cast out of God's presence, thus ending his holiness and beginning his period of liberty and rebellion.

b. Cross Judgment when his future execution and doom were sealed. (John 16:11, 12:31; Genesis 3:15; 1 John 3:8)

c. Mid-Tribulation Judgment when he and his forces lose the battle with Michael and his forces and is cast out into the earth. (Revelation 12:7-10)

3. Period of Wrath--The 3 1/2 year period of great wrath beginning in the middle of the Great Tribulation; a fit of emotional anger. (Revelation 12:12)

4. Period in the Abyss-- The 1000 year period when he is shut in the abyss during Christ's reign on earth. (Revelation 20:1-3)

5. The Short Period--The short season in which he is loosed from the abyss and permitted to head a world-wide conspiracy and rebellion against God's people. (Revelation 20:3,7-9)

6. The Lake of Fire--The final period of unending horrible torment in the lake of fire. (Revelation 20:10; Matthew 25:41)

C. We believe that Satan is perfectly evil and is using every available means to deceive the world into believing "The Lie", including religion, education, government, the media, the occult, music, vice, lies, sin, violence, miracles, prophecies, sins of all kinds and any other natural and supernatural means which violate principles of God's Word. (John 8:44; Romans 1:25; 2 Thessalonians 2:9-12; 2 Corinthians 11:13-15, 4:2-4; Ephesians 6:12, 5:1-12; Matthew 24:24, 7:21-23; Deuteronomy 13:1-5)

D. We believe that Satan can be resisted by believers through the power of the Holy Spirit using the means, armor, and weapons that God in grace has provided for them. (1 John 4:4, 5:18; Ephesians 6:10-18; James 4:7; Matthew 4:4-11)

E. We believe that God will not permit an obedient believer to be tempted or oppressed by satanic forces beyond that person's wisdom or ability to resist. (1 Corinthians 10:13)

F. We believe that God perfectly hates the devil and has commanded every person to resist the devil and to separate from all sin and fellowship with satan-influenced activities. (Ephesians 5:11; 2 Corinthians 6:14-17; James 4:7)

## SECTION 8--SEPARATION

A. We believe that God has called the saved to holy life separate from sin (1 Thessalonians 4:7) and from communion with this world in at least three areas: Personal Separation, Separation in Questionable Things, and Ecclesiastical Separation.

1. Personal Separation

a. We believe that at least three tests of true love for God are given in scripture:

(1) Willingness to obey Christ's commands (John 14:15,21,23,15:10-14)

(2) Willingness to separate from all known sin. (1 Thessalonians 4:7,8; 1 John 5:2,3 compare 3:410;1 Peter 1:14-16)

(3) Hatred for the satanic world system (1 John 2:15,16; James 4:4)

b. We believe that this separation is to be:

(1) Passive--not participating in supporting or taking vicarious pleasure in things which God hates and opposes. (1 Peter 2:11; Romans 1:32; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-6; James 1:27b)

(2) Active--exposing, warning, and resisting evil by our life and influence (Ephesians 5:11; 1 Timothy 4:11, 6:2b; 2 Timothy 4:2; Titus 1:11,13; Romans 12:21)

(3) Positive--thinking on, listening to, watching, doing, and using only things that are true, honorable, just, pure, lovely, of good report, virtuous, and praiseworthy. (Philippians 4:8;1 Peter 2:12,15)

(4) Negative--putting off evil so that we can put on good. (Ephesians 4:22-27)

c. We believe that personal separation involves at least the following areas:



- (1) Our speech. (Ephesians 4:31, 5:3; Colossians 4:6)
- (2) Our behavior. (1 Peter 2:12)
- (3) Our moral principles. (1 Thessalonians 4:7; Exodus 20:1-17)
- (4) Our appearance and dress,. (1 Thessalonians 4:6,5:22; Deuteronomy 22:5; 1 Corinthians 11:14,15; 1 Timothy 2:9,10; 1 Peter 3:16)
- (5) Our choice of friends. (Proverbs 13:20)
- (6) Our choice of counselors. (Psalm 1:1)
- (7) Our occupation. (1 Thessalonians 4:11,12)
- (8) Our choice of things we do, read, see, and listen to. (Philippians 4:8)

## 2. Separation in Questionable Things

a. We believe in the individual priesthood of the believer.

(1) This means that God has given to every person the privilege of direct access to God. (1 Timothy 2:5; Hebrews 4:16; 1 Peter 2:9; Revelation 1:6)

(2) This means also that every person has the right to interpret the Scriptures for himself in order to discover its facts and truths and to establish his own beliefs,

convictions, and practices from this study. (2 Timothy 2:15; Acts 17:11; Galatians 5:1)

(3) This does not mean that an individual has the liberty to twist, doubt, or disobey the original intent of the Scripture as God has revealed it in the Bible. We also believe that a local church and/or another believer has the liberty to disagree with and if necessary not accept into fellowship those deviating from sound doctrine and practice. (2 Peter 3:16; Matthew 5:17-20; 1 Corinthians 5)

(4) This does not mean that our liberty in Christ extends to the point of:

(a) sin (Ephesians 5:11,12; 1 Thessalonians 5:8)

(b) carnal behavior (Galatians 5:13-15, 1 Peter 2:16)

(c) behavior that may tempt or weaken the faith of others (see "d." below)

b. We believe that it is not God's will for believers to judge one another with respect to things indifferent to God. (By "things indifferent" we mean things about which God has given no clear statement or principle in His Word, or things that He has said in His Word that make no difference to Him. (Deuteronomy 29:29) In things indifferent the following principles apply:

(1) The strong should receive the weak and not argue with them about their opinions. (Romans 14:1-3a)

(2) The weak should not judge the strong because things indifferent have nothing to do with our standing before God. (Romans 14:3b-12)

(3) God deals with each according to his own conscience in things indifferent and God has called all believers to peace in such matters. (Romans 14:5b,19,22,23)

c. We believe that as believers we are called by God to limit our liberty in Christ in certain ways and at certain times in matters that we may not consider to be sin but could tempt others to sin or that would be considered to be sin. (1 Peter 2:16; Romans 14:13; 1 Corinthians 8:9,13; 1 Thessalonians 5:22)

(1) Several principles to govern our conduct in this area would be as follows: (a) Does it glorify the Lord? (1 Corinthians 6:20, 10:31)

(b) Could it be a stumbling block to other believers? (Romans 14:13,20,21; 1 Corinthians 8:9,13)

(c) Will it harm my body? (1 Corinthians 6:19,20 ; Ephesians 4:30)

(d) Do I want to reap this later in my life and in the lives of my children? (Galatians 6:7,8)

(e) Will it build and strengthen my Christian life? (1 Corinthians 10:23, 6:12)

(f) Does it clearly identify me with or turn my heart toward the world system (1 John 2:15,16, James 4:4)

(g) Do I have doubts about whether it is right or not? (Romans 14:22,23)

(h) Does it seem evil or questionable to others? (1 Thessalonians 5:22; 1 Corinthians 10:23-33)

## 3. Ecclesiastical Separation

a. We believe that God desires love and unity among all true believers and that this unity be based upon the doctrinal truths of His word. (John 13:34,35, 17:21-23 compare 17:17; 1 Corinthians 13:6; Philippians 1:9,10; Deuteronomy 13:3,4)

b. We believe that God has commanded all believers to:

(1) Form no spiritual unions with unbelievers. (2 Corinthians 6:14-17)

(2) "Mark" and "avoid" those who cause divisions or teach doctrinal error regardless of their "good words and fair

speeches"(Romans 16:17-20)

(3) "Withdraw" from those who:

(a) do not consent to the words and teachings of our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Timothy 6:3; Titus 1:16-2:15)

(b) teach doctrine not promoting godliness. (1 Timothy 6:3; John 9:11)

(c) become argumentative over unimportant questions. (Titus 3:9-11; 1 Timothy 6:4)

(d) believe that material gain is a sign of godliness and God's approval. (1 Timothy 6:5)

(4) "Rebuke sharply" those whose behavior does not conform with sound faith and doctrine appropriate for believers. (Titus 1:13-2:15; 1 Timothy 6:1,2,5)

c. We therefore disavow the position both of those organizations and fellowships:

(1) Where unbelief and error has developed to the point where apostasy is recognizable and indisputable, and

(2) Where the position of separation does not conform with that stated above since any other position constitutes an unscriptural compromise which will lead to apostasy and sin, we believe it is permissible to pray for and associate with on a personal or political level those true Christians who hold this error but we believe it is wrong to work with or cooperate with them on an ecclesiastical level.

d. We stand in opposition to programs between churches and people not of like precious faith and practice.

e. We believe in faith, miracles, and divine healing, (James 5:14-15) but we believe that the apostolic sign gifts of miracles, healing, and tongues are no longer normative and must not contradict scriptural doctrine. . (2 Timothy 3:16,17; 2 Peter 1:15-21; 1 Corinthians 13:8-10; 14:27-40 especially verse 37; Deuteronomy 13:1-5, 18:20-22; Matthew 7:21-23)

## SECTION 9--MARRIAGE, FAMILY AND CHILDREN

A. We believe that marriage is an institution designed and ordained by God that began with Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden and will continue until the termination of this physical universe. (Genesis 2:18 -25; Matthew 19:4-6, 22:29,30; Ephesians 5:31-33)

B. We believe that marriage between a man and a woman is honorable in God's sight and the sexual relationship in marriage is good, honorable, and pure. (Genesis 1:27,28; Hebrews 13:4; Proverbs 18:22, 19:14, 5:18,19)

C. We reject any and all other sexual relationships as being contrary to scripture, clearly sinful, and facing the certain and inescapable judgment of God. These include fornication, adultery, incest, homosexuality, lesbianism, bestiality, etc. (Hebrews 13:4; 1 Corinthians 6:16-18, 6:9-11; Leviticus 20:10-23; Deuteronomy 22:10-30; 27:20-23; Matthew 5:27-32)

D. We believe that God has ordained a definite, undeniable, and purposeful structure for the family that will glorify God and evoke His blessing and help. The Biblical order for the family is as follows:

1. The husband is given the responsibility before God of being the head of the home and is charged with the responsibility to lovingly lead, sacrifice, teach, protect, and provide for his family. (Genesis 18:19; Ephesians 5:25-33; 1 Corinthians 11:3-10; 1 Timothy 5:8; 1 Peter 3:7; Psalm 75:6,7)

2. The wife is given the responsibility before God of being the supporter of her husband, to respect his God-given leadership as head of the home just as the church submits to Christ, to be keeper of the home, and to love her husband and her children. (Ephesians 5:22-24,33; 1 Peter 3:1-6; Titus 2:4,5; 1 Timothy 5:14)

3. The parents have the responsibility to carefully and lovingly teach and discipline the children in accordance with scriptural commands. (Genesis 18:19; Deuteronomy 4:9, 6:5-9; 2 Timothy 3:15; Ephesians 6:4; Proverbs 22:6, 3:11,12, 13:24, 19:18, 22:15, 23:13,14, 29:15,17)

4. The children are commanded to honor their father and mother and to obey them. (Exodus 20:12; Ephesians 6:1-3; Colossians 3:20; Proverbs 1:8,9; Exodus 21 15-17; Leviticus 20:9; Deuteronomy 21:18-2)

E. We believe that children belong to the Lord (Psalm 24:1; 100:3; 127:3; 139:13-16; 1 Chronicles 29:11-14) and that He has entrusted them to the parents to raise, teach, and discipline in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. We reject as contrary to scripture the doctrines of humanism that teach that children belong to the state and that it is the state which has the right and responsibility to raise and educate children. (Psalm 127:3; Deuteronomy 4:9; 6:7-9; Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 6:4; Matthew 18:6-14)

F. We reject as unscriptural any organization, government, movement, school, publication, philosophy, or social action group that seeks to weaken, change, or destroy God's order for the family and home as taught in the Bible and as set forth

in this Constitution. (Deuteronomy 27:26; 7:10; Matthew 7:15-20,24-27)

G. We believe that marriage is binding until death. The only exceptions for divorce and remarriage among Christians are adultery, total desertion, or abuse by an unbelieving spouse. We believe even in these cases that reconciliation is always God's desire. (Matthew 19:9-10; 1 Corinthians 7:15-16, compare Romans 6:22-7:8; Hosea 1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:10-14)

#### SECTION 10--EDUCATION

A. We believe that the only and ultimate purpose of all education upon earth is to enable a person to more fully do the will of God and thus glorify Him.

(1 Corinthians 10:31, 6:20)

B. We believe that education is an integral part of the Christian life intended by God to be a lifelong process and includes the learning and teaching of God's will enabling us to glorify Him with our lives. (Hebrews 5:11-14; Matthew 28:19,20; Proverbs 27:23; compare 1 Samuel 16:17,18; Exodus 31:1-11; 1 Kings 4:32-34)

C. We believe that the only means God has given the church upon earth to promote His kingdom and glory is through communication of truth to others with prayer and an attitude of genuine love and concern--not by force, violence, government, deceit, gimmicks, etc. (Matthew 28:19,20, 13:1-9,18-23 especially verse 19, 13:24-30,36-43, 26:52; John 13:34,35).

D. Thus, we believe it the duty of our church to engage in any type of instruction, ministry, classes, schools, institutes, programs, studies, newspapers, etc., that will enable us the opportunity to communicate essential truth to others without violating other principles of scripture.

E. Thus, we also believe it our duty in love to avoid and expose as unbiblical the teaching or "truth" so-called by any organization, agency, body, government, church, teacher, or entity, which contradicts the true teachings, doctrines, and principles of scripture. (Romans 16:17; Titus 1:9-11)

F. As to content, we believe that God expects His people as a church, corporately and individually, to actively communicate that information to others that will most enable them to know and do God's will.

1. This means prudently tailoring the content being communicated with the learner's spiritual state, desire, ability, and willingness to learn. (John 16:12; 1 Corinthians 3:2; Isaiah 28:9,10)

2. This means prudently expanding or limiting the scope and intensity of our teaching in accord with the relationship and influence God has given us with the learner. (John 2:24, 2 Timothy 2:2, Deuteronomy 6:7)

3. This means prudently balancing the scope and intensity of our teaching of others by the time, abilities, and other responsibilities that God has given us. (John 4:40 compare Luke 4:42,43; Mark 3:14; Matthew 4:19,20)

4. In application this means that:

a. to unbelievers--we speak the gospel (Mark 16:15)

b. to carnal Christians with a limited willingness to listen--we speak the basic truths (1 Corinthians 3:2)

c. to the mature and obedient--we speak the deeper truths of God's Word (Hebrews 5:11-14)

d. to faithful disciples capable of teaching--we speak everything that we ourselves have the time and ability to communicate to them for fruitfulness in the ministry (2 Timothy 2:2)

e. to our own children--we speak and train them in everything necessary for life and godliness (Deuteronomy 6:6,7; Proverbs 3:1-4, 4:1-13, 5:1-2, 6:1-15, 6:20ff, 7:1ff, etc.)

5. In application, we do not esteem one day above another with respect to our responsibility to teach and propagate the truth to others. (Acts 5:42, 17:11; Luke 9:23; Matthew 28:19-20; Deuteronomy 6:7) We do esteem it our responsibility to tailor the content taught during any teaching opportunity to that which will most effectively help the learner to know and do God's will.

6. In application this also means that in general, the more personal and individually tailored that the training can be, the more effective and fruitful will be that disciple's life.

Compare: Christ's training of the 12 (and the 3 inner circle) disciples, Moses' training of Joshua, Elijah's training of Elisha, and Hanani's training of his son Jehu.

G. We do not believe in the so-called distinction between "spiritual" truth and "secular" truth as we believe that all genuine truth, regardless of subject matter originates with God and is clean and profitable to learn.

(Genesis 1:1, 4:20-22; Exodus 35:30-36:1; 1 Kings 4:32-34; Job 38:41; Matthew 6:25-33; John 14:6; Philippians 4:8a)

H. However, since no human being can learn all the truth that God has both revealed and permitted man to discover,

discretion must be exercised also what subject areas, to what extent, at what point in life, and what intensity of study will best help the student to reach God's goal for his life. (Isaiah 55:8,9; Ephesians 5:15-17.)

1. We believe that the ultimate responsibility for the above decisions and how an individual redeems the brief time God has given him upon earth lies with that individual. (1 Corinthians 3:13-15; Ecclesiastes 12:14; Matthew 12:36; Luke 12:2,3.)

2. We also believe that until a child is capable of using such discretion, God ordains that others make educational decisions for the child. (Proverbs 29:15b, 22:6,15; Ephesians 6:1-4; Matthew 18:5-10,14)

a. We believe that God holds the parents primarily responsible for these decisions.

(1) This truth is seen:

(a) by the commands of scripture (Deuteronomy 4:9,10, 6:7; Ephesians 6:4

(b) by the fact that parents are always stated in scripture to be in authority of and responsible for the children (1 Timothy 3:4,5; Genesis 18:19; Galatians 4:2)-- thus the commands to children to "honor" and "obey" their parents. (Exodus 20:12; Leviticus 19:3; Proverbs 3:11,12; Numbers 30:3-5; Ephesians 6:1-3) (see also Section 9.E.)

(c) because the parents best know and are most concerned of all people upon earth for the welfare of their children (1 Thessalonians 2:7; Exodus 2:1-4 compare Hebrews 11:23)

(d) because God's judgment for the way children are raised falls primarily on the parents (Proverbs 29:15,17; Genesis 18:19; 1 Samuel 2:12,29-34)

(e) by the almost direct relationship between the character of the parents and the character of the children (Exodus 20:5; Leviticus 20:1-5 especially verse 5; Joshua 7:24

(2) In application we believe that God commands parents to fully control the education and training of their children.

Deuteronomy 6:6-7 especially verse 7, commands parents to teach their children diligently when they sit in their house, when they lie down at night, and when they rise up in the morning.

(a) We do not believe that this mandate prohibits the parent from delegating a portion of their child's education to others. It does however, require that the parents maintain control, access, and authority over who, what, how, when, in what manner, in what environment, and from what philosophical perspective the child is being taught. (Galatians 4:2; Acts 22:3; Exodus 23:13 compare Numbers 32:37,38; Deuteronomy 12:3,29-31; Psalm 106:34,35 compare verse 40ff)

(b) We believe that no parent has the right before God to willingly relinquish control of these things. We consider any agency, organization, or state that attempts to usurp this authority from the parent to be unscriptural and operating outside the bounds of their responsibilities. (2 Chronicles 26:16-21)

b. We believe that the church as a whole, and its spiritual leaders in particular, have definite responsibilities before God in the education of children. (Hebrews 13:17, Acts 20:28)

(1) The church's responsibility lies on one hand toward the parent; and this responsibility is fulfilled by:

(a) teaching the parents the importance of thorough Christian education for their children. This is accomplished by:

(i) showing the parents the scriptural commands for such an education as set forth in this section of our constitution.

(ii) showing the parents God's aversion toward having our children educated by professed unbelievers as defined in scripture (Proverbs 14:7, 9:6 compare 1:7,22,29,30; 18:2, 28:26; Ephesians 5:11 ; Titus 1:10,11)

(iii) showing the parents God's aversion toward having our children associate with fools. ( Proverbs 13:20 compare 15:20, 10:23, 12:16, 15:2,14, 18:6,7, 29:11, 23:9, 26:6, etc.)

(b) helping one another to accomplish the task of Christian education in as much as is God's will for the church or an individual to do so. This "helping" may involve:

(i) personal involvement (Galatians 6:2; Titus 2:3-5; Matthew 18:5) (in other words: teaching or encouraging)

(ii) using our resources (houses, buildings, office equipment, technical equipment, libraries, etc.) for educational tools. (1 John 3:17)

(iii) using our gifts, abilities, skills, knowledge, etc. (Romans 12:5,13)

(iiii) administrating and coordinating the combined efforts of our church to educate our children--the degree of involvement being subject to the will of God, as determined corporately by the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 5:17)

(2) The church's responsibility lies on the other hand toward the child. This responsibility is seen:

(a) by the commands of scripture (Matthew 28:20; Acts 20:27,28)

(b) by the fact that church leaders are stated in scripture to have authority over those of their flock (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2; 1 Timothy 5:17)--thus the commands to all people of the church including the children to "honor" and "obey" their pastors.

(3) We believe that the church's degree of involvement in the education of children is limited by:

(a) the will of God for the church at that point in time

(b) the willingness of parents to delegate a portion of the child's education to the church

(c) the parents' willingness to conform to any requirements that may be established by the church for either the parents or children.

## ARTICLE VI CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

### SECTION 1--MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS

The membership of this church shall be constituted of persons who:

A. Are Saved Persons who confess to the church that Jesus Christ is their only hope of eternal salvation and whose lives give evidence of regeneration.

B. Desire to Unite Persons who express a desire to unite with this church and who desire to abide by its Covenant (See Article VII).

C. Are Baptized Persons who have been baptized by immersion after salvation.

D. Love Jesus Christ and His Church Persons who have evidenced before the church their love for Jesus Christ and His church by:

1. attending faithfully various public services of the church and contributing in various ways to the work of this church

2. exhibiting a desire to become more Christlike in holiness and Christian maturity.

E. Agree with the Church

Persons who express an affirmative response to the views of faith and practice held by this church.

F. Are Accepted by the Church Persons who have been accepted by a vote of the church.

### SECTION 2--PROCEDURES FOR MEMBERSHIP

#### A. Membership

1. Any person desiring to unite with this church must enroll in a class to study the beliefs, doctrines, and practices of our church.

2. At the end of sufficient time of faithful attendance and having demonstrated an understanding of the beliefs and practices of our church in the membership class, the candidate must meet with a team comprised of two or more deacons with regard to their personal experience of salvation, beliefs, and practices.

3. If approved, the deacons will recommend the person to the church for membership. The person shall become a member upon a 3/4 vote of the church.

4. No person shall be received into membership on the basis of a letter of recommendation or transfer from another church, but shall be received upon their profession of faith, and as outlined in 1,2, and 3 above. If a person who has previously been a member in good standing moves back into the area, the Membership Committee can waive the above requirements if the person has continued in faithfulness in a church of like faith and practice during the time they lived away from this area.

#### B. By Restoration

1. If having been removed from membership by church discipline, a repentant person may be restored to full membership following the instructions of Article VIII--Church Discipline.

2. Sufficient time shall elapse after the public confession to permit the church to evidence the sincerity of the confession.

The Membership Committee will then submit the person to the church for restoration and the person shall be restored to full membership by a 3/4 vote of the church.

All questions with regard to interpretation or clarification of these membership requirements or matters not directly covered should be directed to the Membership Committee of the deacons who will decide on an appropriate course of action.

### SECTION 3--DISMISSAL FROM MEMBERSHIP

A. A member of this church shall be automatically dismissed from membership in the following events: -death -their request

-joining another church (except as noted above) - moving to another area -church discipline

B. A person who without just cause or reason satisfactory to the deacons, fails to attend and contribute to the work of the church for a reasonable period of time or whose attendance has become very sporadic, shall be taken off the membership list. Such a person shall be reinstated to full membership when he evidences the desire by faithful attendance of the regular services of the church for several months.

## ARTICLE VII COVENANT OF TRUTH BAPTIST CHURCH

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit:

To walk together in Christian love;

- To strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and encouragement;
- To faithfully assemble ourselves together unless providentially hindered;
- To promote its spiritual success and prosperity;
- To sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines;
- To contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of its ministries and expenses, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth.

We also engage:

- To do what is necessary to cultivate fully devoted hearts for the Lord both personally and as individual families;
- To order our personal lives;
- To seek the salvation of our relatives and friends;
- To diligently educate and train our children in the way of the Lord;
- To walk circumspectly in the world;
- To be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements and exemplary in our deportment;
- To be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We also engage:

- To abstain from sin and shameful behavior;
- To watch over one another in brotherly love;
- To remember each other in prayer;
- To aid each other in sickness and distress;
- To cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech;
- To be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation;
- To heed the instruction of God's Word and the admonitions of our Savior.

We moreover engage that when we move away from this area we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

## ARTICLE VIII CHURCH DISCIPLINE

### SECTION 1--IMPORTANCE AND PURPOSE

A. The Scripture demands a Bible-believing local church to exercise church discipline in the case of sinning members for several reasons among which are: (see 1 Corinthians 5:1- 8 compare 2 Corinthians 2:3-11; 7:8-12)

1. To prevent the testimony of the church of Jesus Christ from being marred in the community, (1 Corinthians 6:1-8)
2. To purge sin out of the church so that the entire church does not become defiled, (1 Corinthians 5:6,7, Haggai 2:12-13)
3. To promote godly sorrow and repentance in the sinning person so that he can be restored, (2 Corinthians 2:6-11)
4. To intensify self-examination in the church with respect to sin and ungodliness, (2 Corinthians 7:8-11; Acts 5:11)
5. To prove that the leaders love and care for the flock. (1 Corinthians 7:12; Titus 1:9-11)

B. By discipline we mean:

1. Removing the person from membership and thus from any offices or places of service in the church, (1 Corinthians 5:13; 2 Thessalonians 3:14)
2. Refusing to admit the person to partake of the Lord's Supper with the church, (1 Corinthians 5:11; 11:29-31)
3. Exhorting all the members of the church to avoid eating and fellowshiping with the person until that person is repentant (1 Corinthians 5:9-13), while being careful not to treat that person as an enemy but as a wayward brother (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15).

## SECTION 2--SINS THAT MUST BE DISCIPLINED BY THE CHURCH

Summary-Matters of formal accusation shall be:

- Irresolvable disputes between members
- Persistent teaching of false doctrine and/or stirring up of strife
- Active, ongoing, full-knowing, unrepentant sin and immorality

A. Irresolvable Disputes Between Members Disputes between church members should be handled privately, and then only publicly if the dispute proves to be irresolvable. The following steps should be followed in any dispute between members:

1. If you have sinned against someone or offended them--go immediately and confess your fault, ask forgiveness and make restitution. (Matthew 5:23,24)
2. If someone else sins against you--overlook it, forgive him and pray for him. (1 Peter 4:8; Proverbs 17:9; Luke 17:3,4 compare Matthew 18:21ff)
3. If someone sins against you or offends you and you feel compelled to deal with it to help the brother and protect the name of Christ--go to him and rebuke him (appeal to his conscience). If he repents, forgive him as often as genuine forgiveness is sought. (Matthew 18:15)
4. If someone sins against you and you rebuke him, but he will not repent-- follow the procedure of Matthew 18:15-17:
  - a. Go tell him his fault between him and you alone.
  - b. If he will not hear you, take two other members (with wisdom and a desire to resolve the problem) and go talk to the person, being careful to establish every word (get the whole truth).
  - c. If he will not hear them, then it should be taken to the church. The church leaders will then approach the individual in an attempt to solve the problem. (See Section 3)

If the individual will not hear them, the individual must be dropped from church membership.

5. If a private dispute proves irresolvable because both persons believe themselves to be right:
  - a. Try to resolve the problem in the manner outlined above.
  - b. If the problem cannot be resolved by the "two witnesses" then the pastor should be informed. He will inform the deacons and they will appoint 2 or 3 men of wisdom to hear both sides of the case. These men will then make a decision which will be considered as binding upon everyone involved. (See 1 Corinthians 6:1-3)
  - c. If one or both persons refuse to accept the decision of the official church representatives, then the schismatic person or persons must be put out of the church. (Matthew 18:17)

B. Persistent Teaching Of False Doctrine And/Or Stirring-up of Strife Titus 1:10,11 and 2:1-12 make it clear that their mouths must be stopped as Satan uses false doctrine and strife to destroy churches and people's souls. (See also Jude 3,4) The process to be followed should be as outlined below:

1. Mark those causing division and strife contrary to the doctrine taught by the church. (Romans 16:17,18; Titus 3:9,10)
2. Give them a warning to stop teaching their doctrine and/or stirring-up people in the church. (Titus 3:9,10)
3. Give them a second warning. (Titus 3:9,10)
4. If they persist in their sin, the church must avoid them (exercise church discipline). (Romans 16:17,18; Titus 3:9,10)

C. Sin And Immorality A church must maintain its purity before God if it would have God's blessing and power, and its purity before the world if it would be able to attract lost people to Christ. Ephesians 5:11 says, "And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness but rather reprove them." The sins especially pointed out in scripture to be exposed and disciplined are listed as follows: (From 1 Corinthians 5:11)

1. Fornication--A general term referring to all kinds of sexual immorality including adultery, premarital sex, incest, bestiality, etc. (See Matthew 5:27-30.)

2. Covetousness--Having an obsession to gain more of this world's goods, eager and greedy to get more, prioritizing money and possessions openly before God (thus an idolater, see Ephesians 5:5).
3. Idolatry--Bowing down before, praying to or through, or worshiping idols, statues, icons, images, or pictures. Placing any thing, person, goal, or desire openly before God and His will.
4. Slander -- abusive language, blasphemous or reproachful speech; persisting in running down, defaming, or verbally abusing others.
5. Drunkenness--Intoxication from alcoholic beverages.
6. Extortion--Taking things by force, robbery, plunder; one who seizes, is greedy. (From 1 Corinthians 6:9,10)
7. Effeminateness--Men and boys intentionally acquiring characteristics generally attributed to women, wearing women's apparel, or cultivating unisexual or homosexual tendencies; delighting in sensuality, and lustful gratification of the body. (See 1 Corinthians 11:4-14)
8. Abusers of themselves with mankind-Homosexuality, lesbianism (Romans 1:26-28) and other perverted sexual relationships. (See Deuteronomy 27:20-23.)
9. Stealing--Taking possessions belonging to another, burglary (Exodus 22:2), carelessness which results in loss to another without restitution (Exodus 22:5,6,7), changing property landmarks (Deuteronomy 19:14), refusal to pay debts (Proverbs 3:27,28), refusing to help another avoid a loss when it is in your power to do so (Exodus 23:4,5), etc. (From Acts 5:1-11)
10. Deliberate lying to the church (From 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15)
11. Refusing to work or look for a job--A man who will not work to provide the needs of his family or aged parents. (See also 1 Timothy 5:4,8)
12. Being a busybody--Prying into the private affairs of others and spreading gossip. (See also 1 Timothy 5:13-15; 2 Timothy 3:6) (From Various Scriptures)
13. Murder, hatred, contempt and shameful disobedience to parents, divorce without scriptural grounds, etc. (Matthew 5:21,22,31,32; Romans 1:29-32)

### SECTION 3--PROCEDURES FOR CARRYING OUT CHURCH DISCIPLINE

A. Members committing open, plain, willful, sinful acts such as fornication, murder, robbery, etc., should be dealt with as indicated in 1 Corinthians 5:1-13.

1. Get the facts. Is it true?
2. If necessary, exercise immediate discipline, i.e. exclude the individual from church membership and from fellowship at the Lord's Supper. This decision shall be made by the church through the pastor and deacons who are the representatives of the church. The person shall be notified of this decision and based on the discretion of the pastor(s) and deacons it shall be noted publicly in the church that the person(s) is no longer a member of the church.
3. Confront the individual with the sin with the desire to see the individual repent.
  - a. If the person repents (as evidenced by a genuine shame for his/her sin and agrees that the church has acted properly by excluding him/her to protect the name of Christ):
    - (1) allow sufficient time to see if his/her repentance is genuine as evidence by his life. (If the pastor(s) and deacons are so led of God to believe a public confession is best, no details should be given. The repentant person may simply stand before the church while the pastor reads a simple statement of confession prepared by the offender.)
    - (2) the church should fully forgive the person, restore the individual to full fellowship and church membership. (2 Corinthians 2:6-11; 2 Thessalonians 3:1)
  - b. If he refuses to repent:
    - (1) all church members should be exhorted to avoid social contact with the person, not eating or having company with him, (1 Corinthians 5:11), while being careful not to treat that person as an enemy but as a wayward brother (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15),
    - (2) the church should pray for the person.
  - c. The pastor and the deacons, as the representatives of the church shall be responsible to fulfill these duties. Other church members shall have no authority to make statements or speak in behalf of the church in church discipline matters.

B. Members committing sins that involve a period of time to become worse and be recognized by all the members such as covetousness, railing, becoming homosexual or lesbian, refusing to work or look for a job, being a busybody, etc., should be dealt with as outlined in Section 2 under the heading B: "Persistent Teaching of False Doctrine and/or Stirring-up Strife."



C. In all cases involving differences between individuals the procedure of Matthew 18:15-17 shall be carefully followed. A person bringing a matter into the public attention of the church shall be subject to rebuke.

1. Before any matter of discipline is made public, the pastor must first be notified and he will then notify the deacons. After this notification the pastor and deacons shall take the following steps:

2. They shall carefully determine that the instructions and procedures of Section 2 of this Article have been carefully followed.

3. The pastor and deacons shall select 2 or 3 men to carefully interview the person(s) in question to establish the facts and to resolve the conflict if a dispute is involved. (1 Corinthians 6:1-8) Failure on the part of the accused to appear for such an interview or hearing shall not prevent the pastor and deacons from examining the case and rendering a verdict in accordance with the testimony received.

4. If one or both parties involved in a dispute refuses to heed the decision of those given authority by the church for hearing the problem and presenting an equitable solution, then they shall "tell it to the church" (Matthew 18:17) by informing the pastor and deacons who are the representatives of the church. The pastor and deacons shall then review the facts and inform those involved of the church's decision.

5. If the person fails to heed the church's decision, the church shall then withdraw membership and fellowship from such person. The person shall be notified of this decision and it shall be noted publicly in the church that the person(s) is no longer a member of the church.

D. In any church discipline matter, the pastor and deacons can choose to bring the matter to a congregational vote if they deem this to be in the best interest of the church.

## ARTICLE IX CHURCH OFFICERS

### SECTION 1—OFFICERS

A. The elected officers of this church shall consist of the Pastors, the Deacons, Treasurer, and Church Clerk.

B. The non-elected officers shall be considered as servants of the church and are charged with the responsibility to carry out the will of the church as directed through the pastors, deacons, and other leaders appointed by the church.

C. All officers of the church shall be faithful members in good standing.

D. Any officer failing to faithfully attend the regular church services or the meetings that his office requires, without reasonable excuse, shall be dismissed from that office.

E. No member can become an officer of the church unless that person has been a member of the church for at least one year.

F. Whenever dismissal proceedings maybe in order against any officer, whether elected or appointed, on grounds of proven immorality, heresy in doctrine, apostasy, failure to attend his duty, or other matters detailed in Article VIII--Church Discipline, he may be dismissed by a 2/3 vote of the membership in a duly-called business meeting of this church. Such a meeting may be called by the pastor, deacons, or upon written petition of 1/3 of the church membership.

### SECTION 2--PASTORS

#### A. Purpose and Duties

1. Three New Testament words are used to describe the purpose and duties of the pastor:

a. Pastor (literally-shepherd; Greek-poimen)--describes his duties to the church. The verb is translated "feed" 7 times and "rule" 4 times in the New Testament. He is to be the spiritual shepherd of God's flock, its leader, protector, teacher, and example. Jesus is called the Chief Shepherd; the pastor is its human shepherd. (Ephesians 4:11; 1 Peter 5:1-4)

b. Bishop (literally-overseer; Greek-episcopos)--describes the office in the church. He is commanded to take the oversight of the church and is responsible for its direction and administration. (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4)

c. Elder (literally-elder; Greek-presbuteros)--describes the person in the office of the overseer doing the work of a pastor. (See Acts 20:17 compare 20:28, and 1 Peter 5:1-4 where "feed the church of God" is literally to "pastor or shepherd" the flock of God.)

1. The pastor is to shepherd, oversee, supervise, administrate, rule over, and care for the affairs of the church. (1 Timothy 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 5:12,13; 1 Timothy 5:17; Acts 20:17,28; Hebrews 13:7,17)

2. He shall be moderator of the church and shall preside at all business meetings. He is in charge of the pulpit ministry

and is responsible for the supply of speakers. In legal matters he shall act as the president.

3. He shall be ex-officio member of all committees and organizations of the church. He shall have authority to vote as a member of any committee, board, or organization.

4. The pastor shall hire and dismiss all employees with the approval of the deacons.

5. The pastor shall approve all speakers for church organizations.

6. The pastor shall only approve and invite those guest speakers who subscribe to the doctrinal statement of our church.

B. The qualifications of the pastor are found in the following verses: 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; and 1 Peter 5:1-4

1. A man

2. Blameless with regard to anything that could cast a reproach upon the cause of Jesus Christ

3. Not divorced

4. Temperate, self-controlled in food, luxuries, and the things of this world (KJV-vigilant)

5. Sober minded, prudent, thoughtful, having common sense

6. Of good behavior, orderly, respectable, honorable

7. Given to hospitality, able to get along well with people, hospitable to strangers, willing to open his house to people in need.

8. Skillful teaching, having the spiritual gift of teaching

9. Not "given to much wine," or not "addicted to wine," i.e. not a drunkard.

10. No striker, not a contentious or quarrelsome person

11. Not greedy of filthy lucre, not consumed with the desire for material possessions

12. Patient, involves willingness to yield personal rights which may genuinely be demanded, sweet reasonableness, gentleness, not making a determined stand for one's just due

13. Not a brawler, not fighter or contentious

14. Not covetous, not a "lover of money"

15. One that rules his own house well, one who has well ordered, and arraigned his home such that his family is worthy of respect

16. Not a new Christian, an experienced mature Christian

17. One blameless morally and ethically before the world

18. One who holds fast the faithful word, does not cave in to opposition

19. Able to bring forth conviction and confession by carefully teaching the Word of God

20. One who willingly takes the oversight and responsibility for the church without having to be exhorted to do so

21. One who leads by example and not by force or coercion

22. One who can subscribe without reservation to the doctrinal beliefs of this church

#### C. Call

1. Whenever it is necessary, by the resignation or dismissal of the pastor, the church shall proceed without delay to secure a new pastor. The deacons shall be responsible to form a pulpit committee to contact and invite a minister to candidate for the church pulpit. They may seek the aid and advice of outside ministers and others Christian leaders to help them in this task.

2. Only one candidate may be considered at a time. A vote must be taken by the church to either accept or reject each candidate before another can be invited to candidate.

3. An invitation to extend a call to a minister may be voted upon at a duly-called business meeting. Voting shall be by secret ballot and a 3/4 majority vote shall be required to call a pastor.

#### D. Support

1. The church members are expected to care for the pastor and his family by praying for them and by supporting them financially. (1 Timothy 5:17,18; Galatians 6:6,7; 1 Corinthians 9:7-14 compare Deuteronomy 12:19, 14:27, 18:3-5; Matthew 10:10)

2. The pastor's salary and benefits shall be determined by the deacons and approved by the church on an annual basis along with the church budget or as special needs arise.

3. Other needs not covered in the church budget may be submitted by the pastor to the deacons for consideration and approval. Such needs may include emergency circumstances, periodic pastor's conferences, meetings, classes, or

seminars that would enhance the ministry of the church.

4. The pastor shall be granted the privilege of conducting special meetings in other places based upon a mutual agreement of the pastor and deacons so long as these meetings do not hinder the work of this church.

E. Resignation or dismissal of the pastor A pastor shall continue in this office indefinitely either until his death, resignation, or dismissal.

1. A pastor shall be free to resign if he deems this to be God's will, but out of Christian courtesy he should give a sixty (60) day written notice to the church.

2. In the event the congregation votes the pastor's services to terminate abruptly, the salary involved shall continue for forty five (45) days.

### SECTION 3--ASSISTING PASTORS, EXECUTIVE PASTORS, YOUTH PASTORS

#### A. Call

When the need for assisting pastors occurs, the pastor and the deacons shall examine the candidates and upon approval by both, present them to the church. They shall be voted into office by a three-fourths (3/4) vote at any duly-called business meeting. Their salary and other forms of compensation and benefits shall be agreed upon at the time of election and may be changed at any business meeting.

#### B. Qualifications

1. They shall meet the same qualifications as those of the pastor.

2. They shall be able to subscribe without reservation to doctrinal statement of this church.

C. Duties The assisting pastors shall be responsible to the church through the pastor. They shall be directly under the supervision of the pastor for their duties.

D. Resignation or Dismissal of the Assisting Pastors 1. An assisting pastor shall continue in this office indefinitely either until his death, resignation, or dismissal.

2. An assisting pastor shall be free to resign if he deems this to be God's will, but out of Christian courtesy he should give a thirty (30) day written notice to the church.

3. In the event the assisting pastor's services are terminated abruptly, the salary involved shall continue for forty-five (45) days.

### SECTION 4--DEACONS

#### A. Purpose

1. The English word "deacon" is derived from the Greek word "diakonos". This word is used 29 times in the New Testament and is translated "deacon" 3 times, "servant" 7 times, and "minister" 19 times; showing that a deacon is primarily a ministering servant. The verb form of this word (diakoneo) is used 36 times and is translated "ministered unto" 22 times, "serve" 10 times, "administer" 2 times, and "use the office of a deacon" 2 times. (see Mark 10:45, Acts 6:2). The root meaning of the word involves a servant or an apprentice who serves by "hastening after" or "running after" things.

2. In Acts 6:1-6, the first servants of the church were chosen by the church and were appointed to those tasks which would free the apostles from serving (diakoneo) tables in order that they could give themselves "continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word". (Acts 6:4)

3. Therefore the primary duty of the deacons in this church will be to serve the church by attending to matters that will relieve the pastor of duties not associated with the Word of God and prayer and to other matters as appointed to them by the church.

B. Duties: The deacons shall serve the church and help the pastor by:

1. Assisting the pastor in promoting the spiritual welfare of the church, in helping as needed to maintain orderliness in the public worship services, and in serving the Lord's Supper.

2. Visiting the sick, sorrowing, distressed, needy, and wayward.

3. Striving to win the lost to Christ, guard the church and pastor against gossip, lies, and false accusations.

4. Providing the leadership of the church when it is without a pastor.

5. Considering all applicants for membership and letters of dismissal before making recommendations to the church.

6. Reviewing the church roll prior to the annual business meeting.

7. Handling requests for the use of church facilities.
8. Carrying out the procedures of church discipline as outlined in this Constitution.
9. Meeting monthly or as determined necessary by either themselves or the pastor. The pastor shall conduct the deacon's meetings at which he is present.
10. Maintaining oversight of the church's property, keeping the same in good repair, and managing its general financial concerns, making provision for payment of all salaries, wages, and other obligations. They shall keep, through the treasurer, accurate account of all monies received and disbursed by the church. They shall cause accurate and detailed reports of all finances to be rendered to the church at the annual meeting and at other times as seem prudent and necessary.
11. Approving the engagement and dismissal of all paid employees except as herein otherwise stated.
12. Being servants of the church at all times and in all matters, handling church business as discussed in Article XII Church Business.

C. Qualifications The qualifications of a deacon are given in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Additional characteristics are seen in Acts 6:1-7. A deacon must be:

1. A man.
2. Reverent: Showing proper respect towards both God and man.
3. Not double-tongued--a person who says one thing but means another, one way with one group of friends but another elsewhere, through and through the same.
4. Not "given to much wine," or not "addicted to wine," i.e. not a drunkard.
5. Not greedy for money.
6. Holding the mystery of the faith – adhering to proper doctrine with a clear conscience with regard to morality and ethics.
7. Full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom - both spiritually minded and practically minded.
8. First proved--men whose lives have been open before the church for sufficient time to determine their genuine Christian character.
9. Blameless, of good reputation--having nothing condemnable in their lives that would bring a reproach upon the testimony of Jesus Christ.
10. A man whose wife is reverent; not a slanderer or a gossip; temperate and self-controlled, without a craving for luxuries and desire for material possessions; faithful in all things, a woman who is faithful both in her own personal devotion to God and in attending to her duties with respect to the church.
11. Not divorced.
12. A man that rules his own family well, whose wife and children are orderly and who respect his authority as the leader of his family.
13. A man whose children are honorable and obedient.
14. A man whose life conforms with Section 7-Standards for Officers and Teachers and whose family upholds the spirit of the Church Covenant.

D. Number and Election

1. The number of deacons shall be determined from need by the pastor and the deacons.
2. Deacons shall be elected by the congregation at the annual meeting at the beginning of each fiscal year. One-third of the deacons shall be elected for 3 year terms. After serving a three-year term a deacon is not eligible for reelection for one year. The man receiving the most votes of those not elected will be designated the "alternate deacon" and shall be asked to serve if a vacancy should occur between elections.
3. Nominations to fill the positions available may be submitted by any member to the pastor for approval. Those receiving the most nominations who are then approved shall be given opportunity to decline if they are unqualified or unwilling to fill this position.
4. If there are no men qualified or willing to fill a vacant position, it shall remain vacant until such time as a qualified candidate is willing and approved.
5. A deacon may be dismissed by:
  - a. Death

- b. Signed written request
- c. Removal (see Section 1.D)
- d. Church Discipline
- e. Joining another church
- f. moving to another area

## SECTION 5--CHURCH TREASURER AND CHURCH CLERK

A. Church Treasurer The treasurer shall receive and take charge of all monies and disburse the same in accordance with orders of the church. He shall keep a full and faithful account of all monies received and paid out specifying the purposes for which they are received and expended.

He shall make a financial report to the church at least quarterly and annually, and to the deacons and pastor as often as he may be required to do so. He shall have no authority to spend or disburse any funds without previous authorization from the church, deacons, or pastor. The treasurer shall be appointed every two years by the pastor and deacons, and be approved by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the church if deemed prudent by the pastor(s) and deacons. The church treasurer can be elected by majority vote of the church, if deemed prudent by the pastor and deacons.

B. Church Clerk If deemed prudent by the pastor(s) and deacons, a church clerk shall keep a full and careful record of all doings of the church in the church minute book including the minutes of church business meetings, attendances, events, etc. The clerk shall also keep a complete register of the names and addresses of church members, admissions, dismissals, marriages, deaths, baptisms, ordination services, etc. If deemed prudent by the pastor(s) and deacons, the church clerk shall be appointed every two years by the pastor and deacons and be approved by a 3/4 vote of the church. The church clerk can be elected by majority vote of the church, if deemed prudent by the pastor and deacons.

## SECTION 6--NON-ELECTED OFFICERS, LEADERS, AND TEACHERS

### A. Leaders

1. As the Lord opens doors for various ministries to be established, leaders shall be chosen by the pastor to be responsible for those ministries.
2. Leaders shall be responsible to set an example of Christian maturity, zeal, promptness, and skill in the performance of their work and shall willingly conform with the Standards for Teachers and Officers established by the church.
3. Leaders are responsible to ensure that the policies of the church are carefully followed by each of the teachers and workers under their supervision.
4. Leaders shall ensure that any ministry under their authority is conducted in a safe and prudent manner that will ensure the safety of the workers and students and protect the testimony of the Lord and of the church. Leaders shall familiarize themselves with and abide by any laws which may affect the conduct of their ministry.

### B. Teachers

1. All teachers of the various ministries of the church shall be chosen by the leaders of those ministries only after careful consideration, prayer, and approval of the pastor.
  2. The primary duties of the teachers shall be:
    - a. to diligently prepare and teach Spirit-filled lessons designed to most effectively help their students know and do God's will.
    - b. to pray regularly, fervently, and effectually for each person in the class.
    - c. to attend any teachers' meetings and such other meetings as their ministry leader may deem needful.
    - d. to continually work as they are able at becoming more skillful in the exercise of the gift of teaching by diligent preparation, reading books, observing skillful teachers, and attending teacher's meetings, seminars, and workshops recommended by the pastor or their ministry leader. (1 Peter 4:10,11)
  3. All teachers shall be responsible to set a proper Christian example at all times. They shall willingly follow the "Standards for Officers and Teachers" for the sake of their students, the testimony of our church, and the honor of our Savior.
- C. Other Workers and Church Employees All persons serving the Lord through this church in an official capacity shall be expected to do their best in their service, to "obey them that have the rule over them", and set a proper Christian example at all times. They shall be expected to willingly abide by the "Standards for Officers and Teachers".

## SECTION 7--STANDARDS FOR OFFICERS AND TEACHERS

### A. Purpose and Explanation

1. There are three ways in which the scripture warns us that the following standards and requirements should not be used; namely:
  - a. to evaluate a person's salvation; since salvation comes as a free gift through faith and not by "good works" in any sense. (Ephesians 2:8,9)
  - b. to judge or compare the spirituality of one Christian with another. "Spirituality" is a question of how "controlled" a person is by the Holy Spirit and not a question of what level of maturity he has reached or what convictions he has developed. Such things as motives, gifts and abilities, past and present, amount of exposure to the truth a person has been entrusted with, personal strengths and weaknesses, maturity in the Christian life, and God's personal calling all enter into the question of "spirituality". Therefore the question of "how spiritual a person is" must be left in the hands of the Lord to be revealed at the Judgment Seat of Christ. It is perfectly impossible and presumptuous for Christians to judge the spirituality of one another by external standards. (2 Corinthians 10:12; 1 Corinthians 4:3,4; 3:13-15; Luke 12:48, Romans 12:3,6a; compare also Paul circumcising Timothy but not Titus: Acts 16:1-4; Galatians 2:1-5)
  - c. to "help" people become "more spiritual". External standards and convictions have no strength whatever to help a person to become more spiritual. (Galatians 3:3, Romans 7:8:3,10,11) A "perfectly spiritual" (Spirit controlled) Christian needs no external standards (Galatians 5:18) since God's Spirit would only direct him to do things that would be honoring to God and proper to man. (Galatians 5:13,14,16)
2. There are however, several reasons why we believe it scriptural and essential to expect every Officer and Teacher of our church to carefully abide by the various expectations set forth in this Constitution. These reasons are:
  - a. because scripture plainly sets forth higher expectations for officers of a church as well as warns those who desire to be teachers that they will be judged by a stricter judgment. (1 Timothy 3:1-7; 8-13; James 3:1)
  - b. because God expects leaders to willingly limit their Christian liberty in questionable areas that may prove to be a stumbling block to the weaker brethren or to the unsaved. (See Article V, Section 8. "Separation in Questionable Things"; compare Paul's example in 1 Corinthians 8:9,13; Acts 16:1-4)
  - c. to protect the testimony of the Lord and of our church before the community. (1 Peter 2:15,16; Titus 2:8; 1 Timothy 3:7,10)
  - d. because the actual manifestations of sin vary in different periods (Greek "aion") and societies. (Ephesians 2:2, 1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4) Therefore God expects discerning leaders to detect and expose the Satanic philosophies and movements in each age by word and example. The world will always think these convictions and cautions foolish. But we must seek God's approval, not man's. (Galatians 1:10; compare also God's approval of the Rechabites and their convictions in Jeremiah 35.)
  - e. to prevent a new Christian from being hurt by being given too much responsibility too soon. If changing of life habits is a "real burden" for perspective teacher or leader, it may be that, that Christian is not ready for additional pressures at this time. Many good Christians have been hurt by being placed in positions of responsibility too quickly (1 Timothy 5:22,3:6).
3. Therefore, the qualifications for officers and teachers presented below are not for the purpose of determining salvation, judging spirituality, or "helping" a person to become spiritual. They are primarily to protect the testimony of the Lord, the church, the students, and the teacher. Every person desiring to be a teacher or officer should honestly evaluate whether it is truly God's will for them to apply for or accept a position of leadership in this church. (Luke 9:23)

### B. List of Expectations and Requirements

1. These are general requirements for all officers, teachers, and leaders of Truth Baptist Church. The pastor of the church or the leader of a particular ministry may develop more specific requirements for those under their authority as they may deem necessary. The general rule is: the more responsibility a person is given the greater the expectation. The leaders of Truth Baptist Church are expected to set the tone of consecration and holiness for those under their leadership.
2. All officers and teachers of this church, unless providentially hindered are expected to:
  - a. to be faithful to the public services of the church
  - b. to do what is necessary to cultivate a fully devoted heart for the Lord
  - c. set an example in discipleship living
  - d. practice systematic, proportional, and sacrificial giving
  - e. actively strive to win souls for the Lord

- f. faithfully attend the officer's, teacher's, or leader's meetings.
  - g. pursue holiness and avoid things that might damage the testimony of the Lord and the reputation of the church.
  - h. dress in a manner consistent with the Biblical principles for men and women including modesty, distinction of sexes, neatness, godliness, reserve (1 Corinthians 11:14,15; 1 Timothy 2:9,10; 1 Peter 3:1-4; Deuteronomy 22:5; Proverbs 31:30; 2 Kings 9:30-37)
  - i. to do their best at all times in the exercise of their gifts and in the performance of their duties. Half-heartedness is unacceptable. (1 Peter 4:10,11)
3. Helpers and workers who are learning or are in training are encouraged to conform with the standards set forth here and are expected to abide by any requirements that the leader of their ministry may require for helpers and workers.
  4. All leaders and teachers are required to be members of Truth Baptist Church.
  5. We encourage the service of women in all aspects of church life and work other than pastoral positions, leadership roles entailing ordination, or formally teaching the Bible in a congregational gathering of a mixed gender adult group. In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women and equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing roles within the church are restricted to men. (Gal 3:28, I Cor 11:2-16, I Tim 2:11-15)

## ARTICLE X ORDINANCES

### SECTION 1--THE LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper shall be observed by the church every three to four months and at other times as deemed appropriate by the pastor. (1 Corinthians 11:26) Those who are members in good standing in this church and local churches of like faith and practice as well as those who are not yet members but who agree substantially in faith and practice are considered proper communicants of the Lord's Supper by our church (see Article V for the doctrine of the Lord's Supper).

### SECTION 2--BAPTISM

Baptism shall be administered upon request according to Article V.

## ARTICLE XI FINANCES

### SECTION 1--MEANS OF SUPPORT

The entire program of this church shall be supported by the tithes and offerings of the members of Truth Baptist Church and by those Bible-believing Christians outside this church who are led by the Holy Spirit to contribute to its support. (2 Corinthians 9:6-8, Luke 6:38) At no time may this church be permitted to use any unscriptural methods to raise funds. At no time shall this church appeal to the unsaved or the general public for financial support of this church. (Genesis 14:21-23; Ezra 8:21-23; 2 Chronicles 16:7-9; 1 Corinthians 16:2).

### SECTION 2—DESIGNATIONS

From time to time the Church, in the exercise of its religious, educational, and charitable purposes, may establish various funds to accomplish specific goals or receive offerings that are notated with suggested designates by the contributor. We believe that once a gift has been given, the giver relinquishes all rights to direct the use of that gift. (Acts 5:4) Contributors may suggest uses for their contributions but all suggestions shall be deemed advisory rather than mandatory in nature. All contributions made to specific funds or otherwise designated shall remain subject to the exclusive control and discretion of the Pastor and the Deacons. No fiduciary obligation shall be created by any designated contribution made to the Church other than to use the contribution for the general furtherance of any of the purposes stated in Article II--Purpose.

### SECTION 3--DISCLOSURE

A. All giving by individuals of this church will be kept confidential and at no time will this information be disclosed by the treasurer of the church without the expressed desire for this to be done by the member himself. The treasurer will keep a record of individual contributions to give each person at the end of each calendar year if such information is requested.

B. The church shall provide regular statements showing the income, disbursements, and financial status of the church. Additional details shall be provided to any member upon request to the church treasurer.

#### SECTION 4--BUDGET

Money received shall be disbursed by the treasurer in accordance with the approved church budget. The budget shall be prepared annually by the pastor, deacons, and treasurer.

The budget may be modified at any time during the year by the pastor and deacons. Major modifications shall be brought before the church for approval. Special offerings may be taken for designated purposes if approved by the pastor and/or the deacons.

#### SECTION 5--DEBT

A. The use of debt shall not be incurred for operation of the church, equipment, materials, short-term depreciating items, etc. The principle to be followed in this matter is learning to "be content" and to "wait patiently upon the Lord". (Philippians 4:11, 1 Timothy 6:6-8; Hebrews 13:5,6.) This course of action will permit the Lord to provide through prayer the needs of the church and enable His will to be clearly known in financial matters. No member, officer, or any other person shall have authority to incur such a debt in the name of this church.

B. The use of debt for appreciating items such as land and buildings shall be undertaken only with extreme caution and prudence in accord with the guidelines set forth below.

However, believing that specific rules may at times hinder the direction of the Lord in extenuating circumstances, a 3/4 vote of the church shall be sufficient to overrule the guidelines set forth below. However such overruling should be done with extreme caution and much prayer.

1. Debt should not be incurred:

- a. in cases where the church could not meet the proposed debt payment with the existing offerings over the last 6 months.
- b. in cases where the land, property or buildings, in the opinion of the lending institution, could not easily be resold for more than the debt load.
- c. exceeding 25% of the regular tithes and offerings of the church.
- d. in cases where the proposed debt period is greater than 10 years.

2. The principles involved in these stipulations are:

- a. "The rich ruleth over the poor and the borrower is servant to the lender." (Proverbs 22:7) The scripture plainly teaches that Jesus Christ is the sole Head and authority of the church. Therefore the church has no right or authority to incur such debts as may place the church under the control of a secular institution should the church not be able to make the mortgage payments. (Ephesians 5:23,24)
- b. "Provide things honest in the sight of all men." (Romans 12:17; 2 Corinthians 8:22) If a church must declare bankruptcy this brings a great reproach on the name of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
- c. "Owe no man anything but to love one another." (Romans 13:8) If the church, through careless debts must renege on the repayment of those debts resulting in the financial loss to the investors of the lending institution, this could not be construed to be love toward these persons.

### ARTICLE XII CHURCH BUSINESS

#### SECTION 1--HANDLING OF BUSINESS

A. Most routine business and administration should be handled by the pastor and his assistants as he is designated the "overseer of the church". Other routine business shall be performed by those specifically designated by the church to do various tasks, especially as set forth in this constitution.

B. Non-routine business or business deemed of a more critical nature shall be handled by the pastor and deacons.

C. If the decisions involved are of such nature that a larger consensus is advisable, then the business should be brought before the men of the church in a men's meeting.

D. In all matters regarding major decisions of the church, disbursal of large sums of money, purchasing or disbursing of property and buildings, election of a pastor or officers, approval of missionaries, all matters of proposed debt, and any other matter deemed necessary by the pastor and deacons shall be brought before the church for final decision.



E. No person shall have no authority to obligate the church legally or financially unless authorized as noted above.

## SECTION 2--BUSINESS MEETINGS

A. An annual business meeting of the church shall be held as soon as possible after the close of the fiscal year to approve the church budget and, if necessary, to elect deacons

B. Special business meetings may be called by the pastor and/or deacons by giving at least one week public notice in a regular church service. The only business attended to in any business meeting shall be that which is placed on an agenda at least one week prior to the meeting.

C. During business meetings, members should conduct themselves according to the following scriptures:

1. Everything should be done decently and in order. (1 Corinthians 14:40,33)

2. Everything should be done in love. (1 Corinthians 16:14)

3. The glory of God and His reputation should be the primary concern (1 Corinthians 6:20; 10:31)

D. Unless specified elsewhere in this constitution, all business shall be decided by a majority vote.

E. The pastor shall be moderator at all meetings except that of a meeting called for his dismissal. In such event, a deacon chosen by the deacon board shall moderate.

F. In a business meeting, no person will be allowed to speak twice unless each one who wants to speak has spoken once.

G. A quorum shall be considered as a minimum of one-third (1/3) of the active membership of the church qualified to vote.

## SECTION 3--VOTING

A. The minimum voting age for any church member shall be eighteen (18) years of age.

B. All voting shall be done by secret ballot.

## ARTICLE XIII ORDINATION

It is our hope that Spirit-filled men will be called out from among us to proclaim the gospel of the grace of God. When the pastor and deacons are fully persuaded in their conviction that the candidate has scriptural qualifications, suitable gifts, necessary training, and the blessing of God upon his public ministry, they shall submit the man to the church for ordination. Prior to the vote of the church the candidate shall be examined by the pastor, deacons, and any other concerned member of the church with regard to his doctrinal position and orthodoxy. Upon successful completion of this examination, the candidate shall be brought before the church and shall be officially ordained to the gospel ministry by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the active members present and voting.

## ARTICLE XIV MISSIONS

### SECTION 1--PURPOSE AND AFFILIATION

It shall be the policy of the church to support only missions engaged directly in establishing or helping local New Testament churches. They shall be in agreement with our Confession of Faith, both in doctrine and practice.

### SECTION 2--APPROVAL

Any mission or missionary to receive support shall be approved by the church in a duly-called business meeting.

## ARTICLE XV AMENDMENTS

This constitution may be altered or amended at any duly called business meeting by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the active members present and voting, providing the notice of such alterations or amendments is presented to the church in written form at least one month before action is taken.

ARTICLE XVI DISSOLUTION No part of the assets of this church shall ever inure to the benefit of any donor, member, director, or officer of the church or any individual. Upon dissolution, any assets of the church must be distributed to one or more organizations recognized by the United States Government as being exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific, literary, or educational purposes. These organizations must be scripturally and doctrinally sound and evangelistic in

outreach.