

# Constitution of Berean Baptist Church

## Grand Rapids, Michigan

Adopted, April 13, 2014; Amended May 21, 2017

### Preamble

Believing that the local church is an institution established by the Lord, and believing that it is His will that everything should be done decently and in order, we the members of Berean Baptist Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan (referred to herein as the “church”) set forth this constitution (which serves as the bylaws) by which we agree to be governed.

### Article I – NAME

This church is incorporated under the laws of the State of Michigan and is known as Berean Baptist Church of Grand Rapids, Michigan. Berean is an independent and autonomous church, which works in fellowship with other churches of like faith and practice in the Grand Rapids area. It is affiliated regionally with Converge MidAmerica and nationally with Converge Worldwide.

### Article II – PURPOSE

The purpose of Berean Baptist Church is to glorify God by becoming and making disciples of Jesus Christ who **honor** God, **grow** together, and **serve** others.

We seek to **honor** God by obeying and worshipping him as individuals, as families, and as a community of believers. We seek to **grow** together in spiritual discipleship by preaching and sharing the gospel, studying and teaching the Bible, and developing Christ-centered relationships. We seek to **serve** others by reaching out to help and disciple others both near and far, exerting a moral and Christian influence in the community, and generating a missionary spirit worldwide.

### Article III – CONFESSION OF FAITH

- A. We believe in one **God**, the creator and sovereign Lord of all things. He is an infinite, personal spirit. He is holy, perfect, and worthy of all honor, confidence, and love. God eternally exists in the unity of three persons, the Trinity: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. They are equal in divine perfection and self-giving love, and they play unique but harmonious roles in the work of creation, providence, and redemption.
- B. We believe that God has revealed himself in the books of the Old and New Testaments. The **Bible** is verbally inspired, truth without error in all it affirms, and it serves as our final authority for faith and practice.
- C. We believe that **humans** are created in the image of God and first lived in innocence with God, but we are now sinners by nature and choice, separated from God and under his just condemnation.

- D. We believe that **Jesus Christ** is God's Son. He who is eternally and fully God became also fully human. He was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of a virgin. He lived a sinless life of perfect obedience to God the Father and proclaimed God's reign in word and deed. He satisfied the just demands of a holy and righteous God by shedding his blood and laying down his life on the cross for our sins. He rose bodily and triumphantly from the dead, he ascended into heaven where he now intercedes on our behalf as Savior and Lord, and he will physically return to reign on earth.
- E. We believe that our only hope for **salvation** is Jesus Christ's perfect sacrifice for our sins and his victorious resurrection by which he defeated the power of sin and death. Those who repent of their sins and trust in Jesus Christ as Savior pass from death to life as they are regenerated by the Holy Spirit.
- F. We believe the **Holy Spirit** convicts the world of sin and gives new life to those who come to Christ, baptizing them into his body. The Spirit indwells believers and uses God's Word to convict and inspire us to live new lives of holiness and joyful obedience to God. The Spirit has given gifts to believers to glorify God and edify other believers. The Spirit also enables us to love God supremely by pursuing what God values and by serving others with self-giving love.
- G. We believe that the **universal church** is the body of Jesus Christ. It is made up of all regenerated believers and these believers tangibly represent Jesus Christ in the world. The **local church** is made up of a fellowship of believers in Christ who associate for worship, discipleship, and service. Christ has given two ordinances to the local church: water baptism by immersion as a testimony of faith and the Lord's Supper as a communion with our Savior and with other believers.
- H. We believe that the **mission** of the church is to disciple people from every culture to love and obey Jesus Christ and to experience the richness of new life in him. As disciples of Jesus, we depend on the Holy Spirit and prayer to become more like Christ in faith as manifested in thoughts, character, and good works.
- I. We believe the **Lord Jesus Christ will return** in power and glory to establish his kingdom forever. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead, the final judgment, the everlasting fellowship of the righteous with God, and the everlasting punishment and separation of unbelievers from God. Christ's return will be personal and imminent and it inspires believers to live faithfully for him. Until that day he keeps us in his perfect care.
- J. As followers of Jesus Christ, **we covenant together** to love God and love one another. We seek to honor God through worshipping, praying, confessing and repenting of our sins, and living in faithful obedience to him. We seek to grow together in Christ through saturating our minds with God's Word, living holy lives, and seeking to mentor and encourage others in the faith. We seek to serve others through living hospitably, giving generously, influencing our communities and the world for Christ, and caring for God's creation.

- K. As followers of Christ, we believe that marriage is the spiritual and physical union of one man and one woman according to Scripture. It is an institution ordained by God for the benefit of humanity and the passing on of the faith to the next generation.

#### **Article IV – MEMBERSHIP**

In this constitution, “church” refers to the membership. Actions by the church will be actions by its members, except when authority for action is granted to the church board.

##### **A. Basis of Membership**

1. Personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
2. A credible public confession of faith in Christ.
3. Baptism by immersion after salvation.
4. The desire to follow Christ and become more like him.
5. Acceptance of the constitution of this church.

##### **B. Reception of Members – Individuals desiring to become members must do the following:**

1. Be examined and recommended by members of the Congregational Care Committee and other members of the board.
2. Be recommended by the board to the church for membership.
3. Give testimony of their faith in Christ.
4. Be received for membership by a majority vote of the members present in a regular church service.

##### **C. Classification of Members**

1. Regular members – Members in good standing, 18 years of age or older, will have the right to a voice and vote in church transactions and will have the privilege of full participation in the life and work of the church.
2. Associate members – Eligibility is determined by the board and designed for members under 18 years of age or persons in special circumstances, such as students who attend school in the area but who also wish to retain membership in their home church. All normal membership requirements and privileges apply except that associate members will not have the privileges of voting or of holding office.

##### **D. Conflict Resolution and Discipline of Members**

1. Any differences between members will be settled by the procedures outlined in Matthew 18:15-17 with the objective of restoration, as explained in detail below in Appendix I - Church Policy on Conflict Resolution and Church Discipline. All members of the church are subject to this policy on conflict resolution and church discipline.

2. Matters of discipline are normally the responsibility of the church board. The goal of church discipline is restored obedience to Christ and fellowship with the church. Matters that may result in discipline may include heretical doctrine, immoral lifestyle, and sowing discord among the membership.

E. Termination of Membership

1. Any member may voluntarily terminate their membership by requesting this in writing to the church, by becoming a member of another church, or by failing to confirm their membership.
2. If a member fails to participate in the spiritual life of the church for a period of time greater than one year, then the board, by affirmative vote following procedures that they may adopt, may terminate the member's membership. The board may periodically require any member to confirm their membership.
3. The board, as a disciplinary measure, may dismiss a member. A dismissed member will be removed from the membership list and may be restored only by the procedure outlined in Section B above, "Reception of Members."

F. Letters of Standing and Christian Character

1. The church may inquire of previous churches concerning the standing and Christian character of those applying for membership.
2. The church may respond to inquiries from other churches concerning the circumstances of membership and Christian character of anyone who has been a member of this church.

**Article V – MEETINGS**

A. Congregational Services

1. The church will meet regularly for worship on Sunday.
2. The church will provide regular opportunities for prayer, discipleship, education, fellowship and service.
3. The Lord's Supper will be administered on a regular basis at least once a month.
4. Believers will be baptized by immersion, administered by the senior pastor or by others authorized by the pastor and/or board as occasions arise.

B. Business Meetings

1. The church's fiscal year is July 1 to June 30.
2. The church's annual meeting will be held before the first day of the new fiscal year. The board will give notice of the date, time, and purpose of the meeting by a written announcement, delivered at a weekly worship service held no fewer than fourteen (14) calendar days before the date of the meeting. The primary purpose will be for the

presentation and approval of the annual budget for the immediately following fiscal year. Other items may be considered that the board decides to include in the agenda.

3. The board may call special business meetings to consider specific subjects. These may include the election of officers, periodic reports, the review of finances or other items that the board decides to include in the agenda. The board will give notice of the date, time, and purpose of the meeting by a written announcement, delivered at a weekly worship service held no fewer than fourteen (14) calendar days before the date of the meeting, except for the admission of new members.

#### C. Procedures for Business Meetings

1. Business meetings will be held at the church facility and the board is responsible for setting the agendas.
2. The moderator will have the authority over matters of procedure and may adopt a form suited to the business being conducted. If the procedure chosen is challenged, *Robert's Rules of Order* will become the rule of parliamentary procedure.
3. Voting for a senior pastor, other full time salaried pastors, and deacons will be by ballot. All other votes may be accomplished by voice or visible methods. Ballots may be requested.
4. Voting privileges are extended to all regular members.
5. Absentee ballots will be permitted for elections and for matters decided in special business meetings for members unable to personally attend. Completed absentee ballots must be in the hands of the moderator before the election takes place.
6. A quorum will be required for the valid transaction of church business. The quorum will consist of those voting members who are present at a properly called business meeting.
7. Unless specified otherwise, all business matters require a majority vote to pass. Exceptions include the following:
  - a. Calling a pastor requires a three-fourths majority.
  - b. Authorizing the purchase, sale, or conveyance of any real property, or any interest therein, requires a two-thirds majority.
  - c. Amending this constitution requires a two-thirds majority.
  - d. The board may specify a level above majority for other items of business.

#### **Article VI – CHURCH BOARD**

A. Members – The board will consist of the senior pastor and the deacons. The senior pastor and each deacon will be a director of the church. The chair-elect members of various committees are considered ex officio, non-voting members of the board.

#### B. Qualifications

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1. Scripture establishes the qualifications for deacons as leaders of the church (1 Timothy 3:1-13 and Titus 1:6-9; 1 Corinthians 8:9). Deacons should be mature believers who demonstrate these spiritual qualities in growing measure in both life and service, in accordance with our covenanting together (see Article III.J).
  2. Deacons will be active members of the church for at least one (1) year.
  3. Deacons will be at least 25 years old.
- C. Responsibilities – The pastor and deacons are responsible for the following:
1. Caring for the poor (in finance, emotion, knowledge, and spirit).
  2. Overseeing the ministries and resources of the church and the spiritual condition of church members.
  3. Establishing policies that address spiritual oversight, governance, and organization.
  4. Providing oversight for the board committees and establishing their responsibilities and duties.
  5. Approving the leadership and creation of all other church organizations, including task committees, and teams. Task committees and teams are created for specific purposes for specific times of service.
  6. Interviewing and recommending candidates for church membership.
  7. Administering the finances of the church. This includes preparing and presenting the annual budget for the church's approval and supervising both budgeted and non-budgeted church funds as well as designated funds established for special giving (such as the benevolent fund). The board may authorize any non-budgeted expenditure or series of non-budgeted expenditures, the sum of which does not exceed one percent (1%) of the total annual budget, for items that the church has not approved in the annual budget.
  8. Selecting a church clerk responsible for records of church action, an accountant to maintain the church financial records, and a treasurer to oversee all church financial records and transactions. The church will keep records of accounts, minutes of the proceedings of its members, and a record of names and addresses of its members.
  9. Creating and appointing other officers deemed necessary and beneficial for the ministries of the church.
  10. Carrying out the provisions of church discipline through the Church Policy on Conflict Resolution and Church Discipline (Appendix I).
  11. In the absence of a senior pastor, providing for pulpit supply, creating a pastor search committee, and overseeing the presentation of pastoral candidates.
- D. Organization
1. The board will consist of the senior pastor, the deacon chairman, the deacon vice chairman, the deacons serving as chairmen of the committees, and the chair-elects of

committees. The board will appoint one of its members to serve as board secretary who will be responsible for maintaining all board records.

2. There will be at least ten (10) deacons. The church will elect one deacon as board chairman and one as board vice chairman. The senior pastor, chairman, and vice chairman will serve as ex officio members of each committee. The church will elect each of the other deacons to serve as a chairman of a specific committee. If the board chairman is unable to moderate a meeting, the vice chairman will serve in that capacity.
3. Deacons will normally serve for a 3-year term. If elected, they may serve for a second consecutive term. They may not serve for more than two (2) consecutive 3-year terms without one (1) year intervening during which they did not serve as a deacon. The term of office is calculated for each individual deacon, not for the specific committee that they may chair.
4. The board will establish a process for recommending a slate of members as new chair-elects for committees where the deacons are serving the final year of their term of service. The board will approve the slate of nominees to serve a term of up to one (1) year as the chair-elect for particular committees where the deacons are serving the final year of their term of service. The board will present the slate of nominees to the church at either the annual meeting or at a special meeting. The church will elect those members who will serve as chair-elect. In the succeeding fiscal year, the chair-elect will begin to serve as chairman of that particular committee for a 3-year term.
5. The same election process will be used as necessary to replace any chair-elects or deacons who do not complete their term of service. The newly elected deacon or chair-elect will complete the remainder of the fiscal year and then begin their own 3-year term with the beginning of the new fiscal year.
6. The board may, with the consent of the deacons affected, reassign deacons as chairmen of the various committees. Normally the church will elect about one-third of the deacons each year. On occasion, the deacons may recommend a slate of nominees for terms of less than three (3) years.
7. The current eight (8) board committees are the following: congregational care; facilities, systems and grounds; finance; local outreach; missions; personnel; spiritual formation; and worship. The church board may add additional committees or rearrange or delete committees when deemed necessary. Committee responsibilities are included in paragraph F below.
8. The board executive committee will consist of the senior pastor, the board chairman, the vice chairman, and the chairmen of the finance, personnel, and spiritual formation committees. The executive committee is responsible for facilitating the efficiency of the board and handling oversight responsibilities assigned by the board.
9. The deacons will record and distribute to all other board members their monthly committee meeting minutes prior to the regular board meeting times.

10. The board will establish the agenda for the church's business meetings and, by an affirmative vote of the board, will make recommendations for items requiring the church's approval.

E. Board Meetings

1. The board will establish regular meetings.
2. A majority of deacons is required for the transaction of church business.
3. Special meetings may be called by the chairman, the senior pastor, or at the request of a majority of the board members.
4. The chairman will provide an agenda for regular meetings.
5. The board may transact valid church business in person, by writing, or by an appropriate electronic means following procedures that they may adopt.

F. Committee Responsibilities

1. The congregational care committee is responsible for overseeing the processes that care for congregational needs.
2. The facilities, systems, and grounds committee is responsible for overseeing the processes that ensure that the facilities and grounds are maintained and developed.
3. The finance committee is responsible for overseeing the processes that manage the financial aspects of the church.
4. The local outreach committee is responsible for overseeing the processes that care for the needs of the members of the community.
5. The missions committee is responsible for overseeing and promoting the missionary interests of the church.
6. The personnel committee is responsible for overseeing the practices and processes related to staff members from a human resource point of view.
7. The spiritual formation committee is responsible for overseeing the facilitation of the spiritual development of the congregation.
8. The worship committee is responsible for overseeing and developing the worship services and related ministries.

**Article VII – PASTORAL AND CHURCH STAFF**

A. General Description

1. The pastoral and church staff, under the leadership of the senior pastor, is responsible for facilitating the spiritual growth of the church's members and for equipping and empowering members to serve in the ministries of the church as presented in the Scriptures.

2. Members of the pastoral and church staff may include individuals who receive financial support (salaried) from the church as well as those who do not receive financial support (unsalaried) from the church.

B. Senior Pastor

1. Qualifications – The senior pastor must be qualified and resolved to shepherd the church by the teaching of the Word of God, prayer, and spiritual leadership for the entire body. He will adhere to the confession of faith and policies of the church, be a believer in and a teacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and meet the spiritual, personal, and family qualifications listed in Scripture (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9).
2. Responsibilities – The senior pastor will guide the activities of the church and its members and will oversee all the other members of the church staff. He will preach the Gospel, teach the full Word of God, and promote evangelism, missions, and good works by example and instruction. He will have charge of the services of the church, administer the ordinances, comfort those who are suffering, counsel those with special needs, and perform the usual duties of a senior pastor.
3. Administration – Upon acceptance of the pastoral call, the senior pastor will automatically become a member of the church, a voting member of the church board, and also an ex officio member of all committees. His wife will also automatically become a member of the church.
4. Pastoral call – The church board will recommend a candidate to the church, following procedures that the board may adopt. A ballot will be taken on each candidate before another is recommended to the church. The members will have the exclusive power to extend a call to a senior pastor. Any such action will require a three-fourths majority vote.
5. Remuneration – Recognizing its obligation to provide a living for its senior pastor, the church should supply suitable compensation and benefits. The church may also provide for reimbursement for certain expenses as approved by the board.
6. Termination – The senior pastor is called for an indeterminate period of time and may continue as long as his ministry is mutually agreeable to him and to the church.
  - a. By resignation - If the senior pastor wishes to terminate his ministry with the church, he should, if possible, give the church at least thirty (30) days prior notice.
  - b. By dismissal - If the church wishes to terminate the ministry of the senior pastor, it may do so at any special business meeting called for that purpose. A majority vote will be necessary for dismissal. The senior pastor's salary will be continued for at least ninety (90) days following the dismissal date.

C. Staff – The church may employ or call pastors or other church staff as it needs.

1. The church board will recommend senior pastors and persons to serve in full-time salaried pastoral positions to the church for approval. Upon acceptance of the call, the

senior pastor and persons serving in full-time salaried pastoral positions will automatically become a member of the church.

2. Staff members may include individuals who are salaried or unsalaried, ordained or not ordained.
3. The church board will recommend all newly created staff positions to the church for approval. The board will authorize vacant staff positions to be filled.
4. The senior pastor, in consultation with the church board, may fill available staff positions. The church will vote for positions, but will not vote for specific persons, except for senior pastor and persons who will serve in full-time salaried pastoral positions.
5. Salaried or unsalaried staff positions are for an indefinite period of time unless stated otherwise at the time when the position is filled. The senior pastor, in consultation with the church board, may terminate the services of any staff member.

#### **Article VIII – AMENDMENTS**

This constitution may be amended at any business meeting of the church by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting. Proposed amendments must be approved by the church board and will be published and announced at least two (2) Sundays prior to the business meeting.

#### **Article IX – INDEMNIFICATION**

Each member of the Berean Baptist Church board or of the various committees and each pastor will be indemnified by Berean Baptist Church against all expenses actually and necessarily incurred by such members or officers in connection with the defense of any action, suit, or proceedings to which they have been made a party by reason of their being or having been such a member or officer except in matters in which such member or officer will be adjudicated in such action, suit, or proceeding to be liable for gross negligence or willful misconduct in the performance of duty.

#### **Article X – DISSOLUTION**

Upon dissolution of this organization, the church board will recommend to the church for approval that all assets and earnings, both real and personal, be assigned to one or more Bible-believing organizations such as churches, schools or associations that are qualified under section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. In order for individual missionaries to complete their present terms of service, priority will be given to the missionary commitments of the church.

#### **Article XI – ADOPTION**

This constitution, when adopted by the church, will replace all prior bylaws and the provisions herein will supersede any prior policies and procedures as to the matters addressed. The date of adoption will be indicated in the published constitution, and implementation essential to the provisions herein will be as recommended by the church board and approved by the church. All officers serving at the time of adoption will continue in office for their terms until officers are elected under the provisions of this constitution.

## **Appendix I – CHURCH POLICY ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION AND CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

### **A. Principles**

1. This church is committed to resolving in a biblical manner all disputes that may arise within our body. This commitment is based on God's command that Christians should strive earnestly to live at peace with one another (see Matt. 5:9; John 17:20-23; Rom. 12:18; and Eph. 4:1-3) and that, when disputes arise, Christians should resolve them according to the principles set forth in Holy Scripture (see Prov. 19:11; Matt. 5:23-25; 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 6:1-8; Gal. 6:1). Mutual accountability and discipline within the church is commanded by God in Scripture and is one of the most important responsibilities of a true church of Jesus Christ (see Matt. 18:12-20; Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 2 Cor. 2:5-11; Gal. 2:11-14; Eph. 5:11; 1 Thess. 5:14; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; 1 Tim. 1:20; 5:19-20; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Titus 3:10; Heb. 10:24-30; 12:5-17; 2 John 7-11; Rev. 3:19). God commands the church to intervene without delay when a member engages in seriously offensive behavior and to exercise its ecclesiastical authority to resolve the matter, protect the church, and, if possible, restore the offender (see Matt. 18:17-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 1 Tim. 6:19, 20; 2 Tim. 4:2; Heb. 13:17).
2. Our procedure is to handle this through the board of deacons in consultation with the senior pastor. We believe that these commands and principles are obligatory for all Christians and essential for the well-being and work of the church. Therefore, all disputes in this church will be resolved according to biblical principles, such as outlined in this document. All members of the church, whether regular or associate, are entitled to and subject to the benefits of church discipline as long as they remain members of Berean Baptist Church.

### **B. Procedures for Resolving Conflict and Conducting Church Discipline**

1. Inter-personal conflicts – A member of this church who has, or is aware of, a conflict with another member, will attempt to resolve the matter as follows:
  - a. The offended or concerned person will prayerfully examine himself/herself, take responsibility for their own contribution to a problem (Matt. 7:3-5), and will prayerfully seek to discern whether the offense is so serious that it cannot be overlooked (Prov. 19:11; see also Prov. 12:16; 15:18; 17:14; 20:3; Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:13; 1 Pet. 4:8). While consulting the Scriptures, the following questions should be considered in determining whether the matter may be overlooked:

- (1) Is the other person's behavior dishonoring God?
  - (2) Is it damaging the relationship between the two parties concerned?
  - (3) Is it hurting others?
  - (4) Is it hurting the offender?
- b. If the offense is too serious to overlook, the offended or concerned person will go, repeatedly if necessary, and talk to the offender in an effort to resolve the matter personally and privately, after having first confessed their own wrongdoing, if applicable (Matt. 18:15).
  - c. If the offender will not listen and if the problem is too serious to overlook, the offended or concerned person will return with one or two Christians, respected by both sides, who will gently attempt to help the parties resolve their differences (Matt. 18:16; Gal. 6:1). Knowledge of the conflict should be limited to these one or two additional persons, but the offended or concerned person may also consult with the pastor(s) and/or a deacon.
  - d. If the previous step does not resolve the matter, the offended or concerned person will bring the matter to the chairman of the church board (as the first step of our procedure for fulfilling Matthew 18:17a, "tell it to the church"). The chairman will present the matter to the board. The board will determine the appropriate action, such as whether to refer the matter to mediation, arbitration, or for church discipline (see no. 3 "Formal discipline procedures" below).
2. Grounds for formal discipline – An offense that is serious enough to warrant formal discipline is any of the following:
    - a. An offense in the area of conduct that is unbecoming to a Christian as stated in the Scriptures, which seriously disturbs the peace, purity, testimony, or unity of the church.
    - b. An offense in the area of doctrine that would constitute a denial of a credible profession of faith, or a violation of the system of doctrine contained in the Scriptures as that system is set forth in our constitution.
  3. Formal discipline procedures – Formal discipline will be carried out according to procedures designed to provide a fair process and a just resolution, as follows:
    - a. Implementation: The church board may initiate formal discipline whenever there are sufficient grounds to do so, including after the steps for inter-personal conflicts above have been completed.
    - b. Notice: Formal discipline will begin with a written notice from the church board, delivered personally, if possible, to the member in question. The notice will describe the concerns of the board and require the member to attend an initial meeting with the deacons, or their committees, at a specific time and place.

- c. Initial meeting: At the initial meeting, the board will specifically explain their concerns; outline the format of the formal meeting; provide the member with any relevant information and documentation that may be introduced at the formal meeting; and remind the member of the possibility of censure, including dismissal. The formal meeting date will be selected at the initial meeting. The member will provide names and contact information of any witnesses the member wishes to introduce at the formal meeting, whom the deacons must invite.
- d. Formal meeting: At the formal meeting, the member may be represented by anyone who affirms Berean's confession of faith; may introduce witnesses; may introduce any other evidence the member deems relevant; may object to any evidence introduced against him/her; and may make a final argument with respect to the evidence and the constitution or policies of the church.
- e. Censure: If, after deliberations, the deacons or their committees determine that the member has committed an offense, they will proceed to determine the appropriate censure, consisting of one or more of the following. It should be noted that, because of their sphere of influence, those in leadership may be treated with more severity than other members.
  - (1) Admonition: Tenderly and solemnly confronting the offender with his/her sin, warning the offender of the danger, and exhorting him/her to repentance and to greater fidelity to the Lord Jesus Christ.
  - (2) Rebuke: Setting forth the serious character of the sin, reproving the offender, and exhorting the offender to repentance and to more perfect fidelity to the Lord Jesus Christ. A rebuke may be either private or public (see 1 Timothy 5:20).
  - (3) Suspension: Depriving one of the privileges of membership in the church, of office, or of both, for a definite or indefinite time. While under suspension, the member will be ministered to by the deacons and the church to the end that the member may be restored.
  - (4) Mandatory resignation: Removing the offender from all offices of the church.
  - (5) Dismissal: The offender is no longer considered a member of the church (see Matt. 18:17b; I Cor. 5:11). If this is the censure action taken by the board, they will communicate it first to the offender and then to the church at a special meeting duly called.
- f. Restoration: If a person who has been censured comes to repentance, the church will warmly and lovingly restore the person to fellowship within the body (see Matt. 18:13; Luke 15:11-32). When deemed appropriate by the deacons, the restored person may be restricted from certain responsibilities within the church until the person has demonstrated to the deacons the requisite qualities for those responsibilities (see, e.g., 1 Tim. 3:2, 8; Titus 1:6).

C. Application

1. This Policy applies to the church as a corporate entity and its agents, including its senior pastor, ministers, officers, staff, and volunteers, with regard to any actions they may take in their official capacities.
2. This policy applies to any dispute or claim arising from or related to church membership, doctrine, policy, practice, counseling, discipline, decisions, actions, or failures to act, including claims based on civil statute or for personal injury. This policy does not preclude the filing of criminal charges where appropriate.