



# Constitution & By-Laws

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*For Harlan, For the World, For the Gospel,  
For the Glory of God!*

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# CONSTITUTION/BY-LAWS

## Introduction

The constitution outlines most of the necessary practical operations of the church. It deals with the principles, offices, accountabilities, and procedures of congregational life. Its functional nature makes it all the more important to the life of the church. Among numerous other topics, it details our church's purpose, membership process, offices, meetings, and methodology for conflict resolution, giving our ministry as a congregation necessary practical guidance.

## Preamble

Since it pleased Almighty God, by His Holy Spirit, to call certain of His servants to unite here under the name Harlan Baptist Church for the worship of the one true God and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ; and...

Whereas we, the members of Harlan Baptist Church, having searched the Scriptures under the guidance of His Spirit, have recognized the need to constitute ourselves to more closely conform to His will for the Church in this age and prepare ourselves for greater efforts in His name;

Now therefore we, the members of Harlan Baptist Church, do hereby organize ourselves in accord with the laws of the state of Kentucky and adopt this Constitution as our articles of governance, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of and bring glory to Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Bible and articulated in the standards set forth in the Statement of Faith (2000 Baptist Faith & Message or BF&M) and Covenant (2010) of this church.

## **ARTICLE 1 - PURPOSE**

This church exists by the grace of God, for the glory of God, which shall be the ultimate purpose in all its activities.

This church glorifies God by loving Him and obeying His commandments through:

- Worshipping Him through Jesus Christ as defined or indicated by Scripture;
- Equipping the saints through Bible instruction and study;
- Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching, personal evangelism, and any other means consistent with the teachings of Holy Scripture;
- Encouraging, supporting, and participating in missions work (local, domestic, and international);
- Administering the ordinances of baptism and communion;
- Encouraging Biblical, accountable fellowship among believers; and
- Serving other individuals, families, and churches by providing for physical, emotional, and spiritual needs in the name of Jesus Christ.

## **ARTICLE 2 - OUR CHURCH COVENANT**

- (1) Having been led, as we trust, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior through faith and repentance, 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 and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into and renew our covenant with one another as one body in Christ.
- (2) 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 and holiness; to work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel to all nations.
- (3) We also engage to maintain family and personal devotions; to educate and nurture our children in the Christian faith; to seek the salvation of our family, friends, and acquaintances; to walk carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our conduct; to avoid all gossip, backbiting, and excessive anger; to seek God's help in abstaining

from all drugs, food, drink, and practices that bring unwarranted harm to the body or jeopardize our own or another's faith.

- (4) We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another 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 and mindful of the guidelines of our Savior to secure it without delay; to rejoice at each other's happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows.
- (5) We moreover engage that when we move from this place, we will, if possible, unite with a church where we can carry out the articles of this confession and the spirit of this covenant.

## **ARTICLE 3 - MEMBERSHIP**

### **Section 1 - General Statement on Membership**

To join Harlan Baptist Church (HBC) means that the individual and the corporate body enter into a unique commitment to one another. Church membership is a mutual relationship with both the individual and corporate body having specific responsibilities.

When someone joins Harlan Baptist Church, the church family commits to teach that person the Word of God (II Tim. 3:15; 4:1-4; I Pet. 2:2; Eph. 5:26); to provide opportunities for growth, nurturing, and service (Eph. 4:12-14; II Tim. 1:6; I Cor. 12:4-7); to provide a framework for building fellowship and godly relationships (Eph. 4:16; I Cor. 12:12-27; Rom. 12:3-21); to carry out responsibilities of reproving, rebuking, exhorting, caring, and disciplining (Eph. 4:14-16; II Tim. 3:16-17; I Thess. 5:14; Gal. 6:1-5; Matt. 18:15-17); and to broaden the believer's concern and perspective on the non-Christian world (Matt. 28:18-20; Rom. 1:14-17; Php. 1:27-28).

The church member commits to developing in personal growth and sanctification (Rom. 6:19; Eph. 4:15; I Pet. 2:2); to be faithful in attendance and participation (Heb. 10:24-25); to support the ministries of the church through giving and service (I Cor. 16:1-2; II Cor. 9:6-8; I Pet. 4:10); to seek to preserve the unity of the church (Eph. 4:3); and to maintaining a good testimony toward unbelievers (I Thess. 2:11-12; 4:11-12).

### **Section 2 - Membership Requirement**

An individual may present himself/herself for membership (1) during a time of public commitment *or* (2) by enrolling in and completing the new members class *or* (3) by presenting himself/herself to the pastoral staff for membership in HBC. Membership is considered to take place by one of the following ways:

- A. **Profession of Faith and Baptism** Any person professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as his/her savior and Lord, and wishing to unite with this church, will be baptized by immersion in keeping with the New Testament practice.
- B. **Letters of Recommendation** A member of a Baptist church of like faith and order may be received as a member of this church pending receipt of a letter stating that the person is a member in good standing of the dismissing church.
- C. **Statement** A person coming by the statement that said person is a member of a church of like faith and order, professing their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and having been baptized by immersion according to the scriptures, shall explain the reason for coming by statement indicating his/her conversion experience.
- D. **Admission from Other Denominations** A person of another denomination wishing to unite with this church shall be asked to reaffirm his/her personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and request to be baptized into the fellowship of the church. If a person from another denomination was baptized by immersion and accepts the doctrine of salvation as set forth in our statement of faith, he/she can be accepted into the membership of this church without requiring baptism.
- E. **Restoration after Exclusion** Excluded members by reason of church discipline may be restored to the full fellowship of the church after confessing to the church their errors and showing evidence of a changed heart, when approved by a simple majority vote of the church. The membership process for new members is not required for those coming by restoration.

### **Section 3 - Rights and Responsibilities of Members**

- A. All persons uniting with the church shall be given a copy of the church covenant, constitution, by-laws, and the church's statement of faith ("Baptist Faith and Message," 2000).
- B. Every member eighteen years of age and older is entitled to vote at all elections and on all matters submitted to the church in any church business meeting. The member must be present to vote.
- C. Every member eighteen years of age and older is eligible for consideration for the elective offices of the church unless otherwise stated in these by-laws.
- D. It is the responsibility of the members of this church to sincerely serve and sacrificially attend, practice biblical stewardship, participate in the various Bible study and worship services of the church; to support and pray for each other as members reach out to persons who are not saved; and to exemplify a Christ-like spirit in public and private life. In other words, all members are

expected to live according to the church covenant, as best they can, by God's grace.

#### **Section 4 - Termination of Membership**

Members will be removed from membership at Harlan Baptist Church as follows:

- A. By granting a letter of dismissal to another church of like faith or practice.
- B. By erasure in the event of death.
- C. By erasure in the event of transfer to a church not of like faith and practice.
- D. By exclusion via two-thirds majority vote of the congregation. (See Article 4 on Church Discipline, p. 9)

### **ARTICLE 4 - CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

The discipline of members shall be a responsibility of the church under such rules and procedures as the church may from time to time establish on the basis of Scripture. All such proceedings shall be guided by a spirit of prayer mingled with Christian kindness, forbearance, and holy firmness under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

#### **Section 1 - General Policy**

All members of the Body of Christ have an individual responsibility to live righteously and to encourage righteous behavior in other believers. Interpersonal accountability is a Christian obligation that extends beyond the membership of the local church. As Gal. 6:1-5 instructs, this process begins with self-examination and a spirit of humility sensitive to one's own faults. Believers are instructed to be aware of their own sins, to be penitent, and to be quick to seek reconciliation with offended individuals (Matt. 5:23-25; 7:1-5). It is recognized that Harlan Baptist Church members have a special relationship one to the other. Consequently, Harlan Baptist Church members have the privilege of experiencing the full expression of love and care for the local body as outlined in Scripture and as detailed below.

Church discipline is regarded as a serious and clear directive in Scripture. The purpose of such discipline should be:

- *For the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined* (see Prov. 15: 5; 29: 15; I Cor. 4: 14; Eph. 6: 4; I Tim. 3: 4-5; Heb. 12: 1-11; Ps. 119: 115; 141: 5; Pro. 17: 10; 25: 12; 27: 5; Eccles. 7: 5; Matt. 7: 26-27; 18: 15-17; Luke 17: 3; Acts 2: 40; I Cor. 5: 5; Gal. 6: 1-5; II Thess. 3: 6, 14-15; I Tim. 1: 20; Titus 1: 13-14; James 1: 22);

- *For the instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to them* (see Pro. 13: 20; Rom. 15: 14; I Cor. 5: 11; 15: 33; Col. 3: 16; I Thess. 5: 14 [Note: This is written to the whole church, not just to leaders.]; I Tim. 5: 20; Titus 1: 11; Heb. 10: 24–25);
- *For the purity of the church as a whole* (see I Cor. 5: 6–7; II Cor. 13: 10; Eph. 5: 27; II John 10; Jude 24; Rev. 21: 2);
- *For the good of our corporate witness to non-Christians* (see Prov. 28: 7; Matt. 5: 13–16; John 13: 35; Acts 5: 1–14; Eph. 5: 11; I Tim. 3: 7; II Pet. 2: 2; I John 3: 10); and
- *Supremely for the glory of God by reflecting His holy character* (see Deut. 5: 11; I Kings 11: 2; II Chr. 19: 2; Ezra 6: 21; Neh. 9: 2; Is. 52: 11; Ezek. 36: 20; Matt. 5: 16; John 15: 8; 18: 17, 25; Rom. 2: 24; 15: 5–6; II Cor. 6: 14–7: 1; Eph. 1: 4; 5: 27; I Pet. 2: 12).

Discipline is exercised with compassion for the erring member and a sincere desire to seek that person's repentance, reconciliation, and (if necessary) restoration to the fellowship of the local church (Matt. 18:12-14). Discipline does not entitle the church or any of its leaders to abuse their authority over the members of the church (1 Pet. 5:1-3). Specific guidelines are followed that identify the grounds for church discipline and the process of such discipline.

The members of Harlan Baptist Church belong to a spiritual body of local believers who identify with a common purpose and mission. There is a mutual accountability that each member has, one to the other, to encourage and provoke holy living (Heb. 10:23-25). Church discipline begins with individual accountability that is a responsibility of every member. Members are encouraged to take this responsibility seriously.

Scripture is clear that the motives of those dealing with the erring member must be pure before our Savior, His Church, and the world.

- (a) They are to avoid vengeance and arrogant presumption (Gal. 6:1).
- (b) They are not to be motivated by hostility or anger but by a loving concern for the erring member (2 Thess. 3:15).
- (c) They are to approach the erring member with heartfelt sorrow and sincere concern (I Cor. 5:2; 2 Cor. 2:4).
- (d) They are to be ready to grant restoration to the erring member when repentance occurs (Luke 17:1-10; 2 Cor. 2:5-8).

## **Section 2 - Offenses Applicable to Church Discipline**

Individual accountability is an ongoing expression of believers and is always the first step in dealing with an erring member. No member is above or immune from accountability (I Tim. 5:19-22). Church discipline is not God's method for making the church sinless.



Scripture defines certain deviations from the truth as grounds for formal disciplinary action. Sin that damages the church, weakens its testimony or promotes disunity constitutes an offense that necessitates formal disciplinary action.

These sins can be understood in the following categories:

- (a) **False teaching** constitutes a deliberate, persistent program of teaching that intentionally rejects the foundational doctrines of Scripture (Titus 3:10; Rev. 2:14).
- (b) **Apostasy** constitutes a public denial of the essential truths of God's Word, most especially those related to the gospel and Jesus Christ. These essential truths are reflected in the doctrinal statement of our church, which is the "Baptist Faith and Message," 2000 (Gal. 2:11-14; 1 John 2:19).
- (c) **Divisiveness** constitutes behavior that undermines the unity of Harlan Baptist Church either between members or against God's established authority in the church (Php. 4:2-3; I Thess. 5:14; Heb. 13:17).
- (d) **Immorality** is constituted scripturally as behavior that is deemed immoral and brings shame on the testimony of Christ and the local church (1 Cor. 5:11; 6:9-11). This category includes sexual immorality and sexual deviancy (1 Thess. 4:3-8). While sexual behavior may or may not be known publicly, these sins internally pollute the church and disrupt its mission. Scripture denounces sexual impurity. These sins include adultery, homosexuality, and every other kind of sexual deviancy or impurity that Scripture calls fornication ("porneia"). This behavior will not be tolerated among the membership of Harlan Baptist Church (Rom. 1:26-27).

### **Section 3 - Procedures in Membership Accountability**

Church discipline is to be handled prayerfully, carefully, justly, and only for offenses verified by at least two witnesses. Below are the steps of accountability and discipline that follow the guidelines given in Matt. 18:15-20. It is also important to understand who qualifies as a witness and what their function is in the disciplinary process. Biblically, a witness is a person who bears testimony of another's wrongdoing based on firsthand knowledge. A person is not constituted a witness who bears testimony based on hearsay, gossip, or secondhand knowledge (Deut. 19:15-19). The Bible condemns false witnesses (Ex. 20:13). Accusations not substantiated by two or three witnesses must be left to the One who knows all things and judges righteously (Num. 35:30; Ps. 51:3-4). It is the function of a witness to insure that the offense is clearly and impartially presented and that nothing is left unsaid. The witnesses also keep each other's motivations and actions accountable before God (Matt. 18:20).

- (a) **First Step:** Arrange a private meeting with the offender. Humbly confront the person with the nature of the offense. If the person repents, the matter is closed (Matt. 18:15; Luke 17:3). Scripture does not specify the number of times that an offender should be confronted on an individual basis. Scripture is clear that believers should be longsuffering and have an unrelenting desire for that person's repentance (1 Cor. 13:4-8a; 1 Pet. 4:8). If there is no repentance and the offense is of the nature categorized above as "Offenses Applicable to Church Discipline," then there is a responsibility to move to the next step in the process.
- (b) **Second Step:** Set up another private meeting, this time with one or two other witnesses present (Matt. 18:16). This step should never be taken in haste but only after there is prayerful conviction that step one has not availed. If repentance occurs, the offender should seek forgiveness from the circle of offense—and no more. If there is no repentance, the circle of knowledge must be broadened at this point to include the pastors/deacons for their consideration in order that the third step might be taken.
- (c) **Third Step:** At this point, the matter must be brought by the pastors/deacons to the members of Harlan Baptist Church in a closed session (Matt. 18:17). The entire membership has a responsibility, as opportunity provides, to call the offender to repentance. An equitable period of time will be established by the pastors/deacons in order to optimize the fullest effect of the witness of the entire membership, to allow for the work of the Lord, and to provide more than ample time for repentance. Should there be repentance, the entire body should be quick to respond with forgiveness, grace, and love (2 Cor. 2:5-8). While repentance and forgiveness are instantaneous, restoration to serve will be monitored by the church for the benefit and development of the person. If there is no repentance, the church will meet to take action on the final step.
- (d) **Fourth Step:** As defined in Matt. 18:17, the unrepentant offender will be excluded from the membership of the church by a two-thirds majority vote of members present at a regular or specially called members' meeting. By way of application, this constitutes a removal from church membership and fellowship resulting in a recognition that the unrepentant offender is outside the realm of God's blessings (I Cor. 5:1-13). Common ground for intimate friendship has been removed. The entire congregation has an ongoing responsibility to act in unison, calling the person to repentance with all contact so as not to undermine the scriptural process or the severe temporal consequences of the person's obstinate behavior. It is sincerely hoped there will be repentance and reconciliation as a result of the consistent and loving application of this heart-wrenching but biblical action.

The action of the church in matters of discipline carries the highest conceivable authority and is both final and binding as clearly stated in Matt. 18:18-20. There can be no appeal to any court as a result of this action (I Cor. 6:1-2), and a member may not resign his/her

membership in order to avoid church discipline. Should a member seek to join another church in order to avoid church discipline no letter will be granted.

#### **Section 4 - Integrity of Knowledge**

In all matters of church discipline, if and when members become aware of the offense and the disciplinary action being brought against the unrepentant member, the members are expected, without exception, to hold the knowledge with integrity, avoiding gossip and the defamation of character (Eph. 4:31-32; James 4:11). Church disciplinary matters are internal affairs and must not be paraded before the world.

### **ARTICLE 5 - MEETINGS**

#### **Section 1 - Worship Meetings**

Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day, and may be held throughout the week as the church determines. The Lord's Supper shall be observed at least once a month or as determined by the church body.

#### **Section 2 - Members' Meetings**

- A. **Attendance and Conduct** All members should regard their presence at a duly called congregational meeting with the same seriousness with which they would regard their attendance at a stated worship service. The Lord is present in power at the gatherings together of the church and, therefore, all meetings should be carried out in a spirit of worship and unity. Every members' meeting shall begin and end with prayer. In addition, at each members' meeting the covenant shall be recited together as a reminder of each member's commitment (to the Lord and one another) and to the standards of behavior.
- B. **Frequency and Time** There shall be a regular members' meeting at least every quarter, at an agreed upon time and date by the membership. Notice of all members' meetings shall be given at least two weeks prior to the meeting. At the first members' meeting of the calendar year, a budget shall be adopted. Special members' meetings may be called as required by the pastors and deacons, or at the written request, submitted to the pastors and deacons, of five percent of the voting membership. The date, time, and purpose of any special meeting shall be announced at all public services of the church within two weeks preceding the meeting. In the event of a written request from the members, the pastors and deacons shall call a special meeting to be held within one month of their receipt of the request.
- C. **Moderator** The chairman of the deacons shall preside as moderator at all members' meetings of the church. In case of his absence, the vice-chairman/chairman-elect of the deacons shall preside. In the absence of both, the senior pastor shall preside. The pastors and deacons shall see that the

stated meetings of the church are regularly held and that required reports are submitted to the church by the responsible members.

- D. **Quorum** Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those members present. All votes shall be tallied based on the number of votes cast by members present; however, it should be our goal to prayerfully discern the mind of God so that in all matters of church business it may be said of us, as was said of that members' meeting in Acts 6, "that this thing pleased the whole multitude."
- E. **Voting Eligibility** Any member of the church eighteen years of age or over, in good and regular standing, shall have the right to vote on any matter brought before the congregation.
- F. **Elections** At any regular or special members' meeting, officers may be elected and positions filled as needed, so long as all relevant constitutional requirements have been met.

## **ARTICLE 6 - CHURCH OFFICERS**

### **Section 1 - General Statements and Election Principles**

- A. The biblical officers of the church are pastors (elders/overseers) and deacons. In addition, our church recognizes directors of ministry and the administrative positions of trustees, treasurer, and church clerk. With the exception of vocational pastors, vocational ministers or directors of ministry, qualified persons must be members of this church for at least one year to be eligible for election as officers.
- B. The process for church elections shall be interpreted and carried out to fulfill the following principles:
- Substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, should be an integral part of the election process;
  - Nominations should proceed with the support of the pastors and deacons;
  - All candidates for church office should be treated with the grace, kindness, and honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow members;
  - The election process shall express that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration that is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

### **Section 2 - Senior Pastor**

- A. **Qualifications** The senior pastor must be a male who meets the qualifications for the office of elder/pastor/overseer set forth in 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9,

and 1 Pet. 5:1-4. He must also be in agreement with the church's statement of faith and ordained according to the Baptist tradition.

- B. **Responsibilities** The senior pastor shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching, teaching, and leadership. The senior pastor shall exercise leadership over the spiritual needs of the church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6 and I Pet. 5:1-4, the senior pastor shall devote his time to prayer, the ministry of the Word (by teaching and encouraging sound doctrine), and shepherding God's flock. The senior pastor shall take particular responsibility to preach on the Lord's Day, examine and instruct prospective members, examine and recommend all prospective candidates for offices and positions, administrate the employment of all paid staff members, oversee the work of the deacons and appointed church agents and committees, conduct worship services, administer the ordinances of baptism and communion, equip the membership for the work of the ministry, encourage sound doctrine and practice, admonish and correct error, oversee the process of church discipline, coordinate and promote the ministries of the church, and mobilize the church for world missions. The senior pastor is further to ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share our fundamental convictions and are apt to teach.

- C. **Calling of the Senior Pastor** In the event that a suitably qualified senior pastor is not already present within the congregation, the deacons and any pastoral staff shall receive nominations and assemble a senior pastor search committee. To be considered for the committee, persons must be in agreement with HBC's statement of faith, purpose, structure, and direction as established by the church. The committee shall be composed of the remaining pastoral staff, three active deacons, and three at-large members in good standing. Once assembled, the deacons will recommend the search committee to the congregation for a vote of affirmation. A two-thirds majority vote for each person by paper ballot is required to establish the committee.

The senior pastor search committee shall then seek out and nominate to the congregation a suitably qualified individual (see Article 6, section 2, subsection A). Notice of this nomination shall be given from the pulpit at a morning service at least two Sundays preceding the election, which shall take place on Sunday. Prior to the election, the congregation must be given ample opportunity to meet and examine the candidate as to his giftedness and qualifications. The election shall follow the preaching service and shall be by secret ballot. At least two-thirds of the votes cast by the members present shall be necessary for the election of the new senior pastor.

- D. **Removal and/or Replacement** The senior pastor may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members with reason to believe that the senior pastor should be dismissed should express such concern to the pastoral

staff and deacons and, if necessary, to the congregation. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matt. 18:15–17 and I Tim. 5:17–21. The senior pastor may be dismissed by a two-thirds vote of the members at any business meeting of the church, provided that at least two weeks written notice of such motion has been provided to the congregation.

### **Section 3 - Ministerial Staff**

All ministerial staff members shall be recommended to the church by the senior pastor/deacons and called by a two-thirds vote of the members present in a regular or called business meeting designated for that purpose. The voting shall be by secret ballot. Unless otherwise stated at the time of the call, the call shall be for an indefinite period. The senior pastor/deacons, at their own discretion, may form a temporary search committee for vocational ministry staff if they deem it necessary or desirable. The composition of the committee is the discretion of the pastors/deacons, but if a committee is formed, it must be approved by a majority vote of the congregation. The relationship between the church and ministerial staff members may be terminated at any time by the resignation of the staff member or by a two-thirds majority vote of those present at any regular or called business meeting designated for that purpose, provided at least two weeks written notice has been given to the congregation (as in Article 5, section 2, subsection B. Those qualified according to Article 6, section 2, subsection A, shall carry the title “Associate Pastor.” Those who are not pastors shall carry the title “Minister” or “Director of Ministry.”

### **Section 4 - Deacons**

- A. **Qualifications and Number** The deacon body shall be composed of men who meet the qualifications for the office of deacon set forth in 1 Tim. 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7. These men must also be in agreement with the church’s statement(s) of faith and ordained according to the Baptist tradition. They shall be faithful in their attendance at the regular meetings of the church. They shall be faithful in the stewardship of their time and resources. They shall be those who are peacemakers, who preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace in the body of Christ. They shall be those who have exhibited a servant’s heart and involvement with and commitment to the body of Christ. The deacon body shall be composed of not less than seven men, with the number of deacons at any time determined by the needs of the congregation and by the scriptural call and qualification of the men of the church. A deacon must be at least twenty-five years of age and must have been a member of HBC for a period of at least one year at the time of nominations (see below).
- B. **Responsibilities and Duties** The deacon body shall serve under the leadership of the senior pastor and other ministerial staff as servants of the church and of Jesus Christ. Subject to the will of the congregation, deacons shall care for the temporal needs of members; assist the senior pastor and pastoral staff in any

service that shall support and promote the ministry of the Word; attend to the accommodations for public worship; and encourage and support those able to help others and those with gifts of administration. Their responsibilities may include administering a fund to assist the poor and needy; providing aid in times of crisis and distress; overseeing the greeting and welcoming ministries of the church; assisting in administering the ordinances of the Gospel; assisting at fellowship gatherings of the church; caring for and maintaining the church properties; and administering the business affairs of the church that pertain to its material assets. This final responsibility includes compiling and presenting to the senior pastor, pastoral staff, and congregation (in that order) the annual church budget.

C. **Election of Deacons** The active deacon body shall be elected in the following manner:

A deacon nominating committee shall be composed of the chairman, vice-chairman, senior pastor, and two additional deacons nominated and elected by the active deacon body.

In September, the church body will nominate candidates for service on the active deacon body. Nominees must meet the scriptural qualifications for nomination, which are listed in section A of this article (see above).

The deacon nominating committee will receive the nominations and will then screen and select candidates for church approval. The deacon nominating committee must limit their recommendations and selections to the names that were submitted by the church body. The committee cannot nominate candidates who were not nominated from the church at large. The committee will nominate as many deacon candidates to the congregation as they deem necessary to meet the needs of the body.

Once the deacon nominating committee has completed its initial screening, the candidates will receive a questionnaire, which must be completed and returned for review and final screening by the deacon nominating committee. If there are more qualified candidates than positions, those receiving the most nominations will be selected. All final candidates must be approved unanimously by the deacon body prior to church approval. Church approval shall consist of a two-thirds majority vote of the congregation for each candidate.

Deacons elected to the active deacon body shall serve three consecutive one-year terms. After a deacon rotates off the active body, he must wait one year before he is eligible to be nominated for another term of service; however, should the need arise and the deacons deem it necessary, a deacon may be asked to serve one extra year and no more.

- D. **Officers of the Active Deacon Body** Deacon officers will consist of the chairman, vice chairman/chairman-elect, and secretary. The chairman shall preside at all deacons' meetings. In case of his absence, the vice chairman/chairman-elect will preside. In the absence of both the chairman and the vice chairman, the senior pastor will preside. The secretary will keep a record of the minutes of all meetings of the active deacon body.

Election of deacon officers shall be as follows:

- (1) **Chairman of Deacons** The vice chairman/chairman-elect will automatically serve as the next chairman of deacons once the existing chairman of deacons completes his one-year term of service.
  - (2) **Vice Chairman/Chairman-Elect and Secretary** In the regularly scheduled deacons' meeting held in January, the members of the active deacon body will nominate candidates to serve as vice chairman/chairman-elect and secretary for the following year. The nominations for both offices will be submitted by means of secret ballot during that meeting. From those nominations, the existing deacon officers, in consultation with the senior pastor, will recommend two candidates for each office for a vote at the February meeting.
- E. **Meetings of the Active Deacon Body** Regular meetings of the active deacon body shall be held monthly. Special meetings may be called by the senior pastor in consultation with the chairman of deacons with ample notice of these meetings being given. A quorum of not less than fifty percent of the active deacon body must be present at any meeting for business to be transacted. Active deacons shall be expected to attend all deacons' meetings, regular or special-called. Chronic absenteeism from deacons' meetings shall be addressed by the active deacon body.
- F. **Organization** The deacons shall organize themselves however they determine to be best to achieve the mission of the church. The senior pastor or the deacons may designate any specific deacon or group of deacons to specialize in some particular diaconal function.
- G. **Removal and/or Replacement** A deacon's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members with reason to believe that a deacon should be dismissed should express such concern to the pastors and deacons. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of the Lord in Matt. 18:15-17. Any of the deacons may be dismissed by a two-thirds vote of the members at any business meeting of the church. If a vacant deacon office must be filled mid-year, then the deacons will locate, interview, and recommend a scripturally qualified individual (see Section A of this article) to the congregation for election according to the procedures outlined in Section C of this article.



## **Section 5 - Clerk**

- A. The clerk shall keep accurate records of all business meetings; shall keep a correct register of the membership with the date and manner of their admission and dismissal.
- B. The clerk shall be nominated by the pastors and deacons and elected by the congregation by simple majority for a three year term at the third quarterly members' meeting of the year. The clerk shall begin his or her service in January of the following year.

## **Section 6 - Treasurer**

- A. The church shall disburse all funds for local expenses, missions, and benevolence.
- B. The treasurer shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as appropriate. The treasurer shall also be responsible for presenting regular reports of the account balances, revenues, and expenses of the church at each members' meeting. The responsibility may be delegated with the approval of the pastors and deacons. The treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church. The treasurer shall render to the pastors and deacons annually, or whenever they may require it, an account of all transactions as treasurer and of the financial condition of the church.
- C. The treasurer shall be nominated by the pastors and deacons and elected by the congregation by a simple majority to serve a term of three years at the third quarterly members' meeting of the year. The treasurer shall begin his or her service in January of the following year.

## **Section 7 - Sunday School Director**

- A. The Sunday School director shall keep an accurate record of all SS class attendance and assist the pastor(s) of the church in any logistics necessary for maintaining a healthy Sunday School. This may include, but is not limited to, ordering resources and materials, setting up Sunday School classes or rooms, recruiting workers, etc.
- B. The Sunday School director shall be nominated by the pastors and deacons and elected by the congregation by a simple majority to serve a term of three

years at the third quarterly members' meeting of the year. The Sunday School director shall begin his or her service in January of the following year.

#### **Section 8 – Women's Missionary Union (WMU) Director**

- A. The WMU director shall be executive officer of the WMU; shall have general oversight over all the work of the WMU and all the auxiliary organizations; and shall make reports to the church at the business meetings.
- B. The WMU director shall be nominated by the pastors and deacons and elected by the congregation by a simple majority at the third quarterly members' meeting of the year. The WMU director shall begin her service in January of the following year.

#### **Section 9 - Trustees**

- A. The trustees shall consist of a minimum of three members elected at the third quarterly members' meeting of the year by a two-thirds majority, for a period of three years, on a staggered basis so that one trustee shall rotate off every year. Trustees shall be nominated by the pastors and deacons. The trustees shall begin their service in January of the following year.
- B. The trustees shall represent the church in all transactions involving legal matters.
- C. The trustees shall be responsible for the oversight, use, and upkeep of the buildings and all property of the church.
- D. They shall be charged with keeping all church property insured.
- E. They shall inspect the buildings regularly and shall report their findings to the church in business meetings.
- F. All actions of the trustees shall be subject to the approval of the church.

### **ARTICLE 7 - COMMITTEES OR MINISTRY TEAMS**

The church will establish and maintain all the committees or ministry teams necessary to assist the church in fulfilling its mission and developing its ministry. Committees will be organized as the need arises. The congregation or pastors and deacons may recognize the need. Members of all committees are to be appointed by the pastors and deacons. The pastors and deacons will appoint new members to fill vacancies when they occur and will appoint new members to fill vacancies caused by rotation. Each committee will meet as often as necessary to fulfill its responsibility. Each committee chairman will determine the time of each meeting, and it will be his responsibility to notify each member of the time and place of every meeting. A committee will be abolished when their area of need,

as determined by the pastors and deacons, no longer exists. Committees will be either standing committees or temporary committees. The pastor(s) and the deacon body are not considered committees. The pastor and chairman of the deacons will serve as ex-officio members of each committee.

### **Section 1 - Standing Committee**

A standing committee is one whose area of responsibility is continuous (e.g. stewardship committee). The membership of all standing committees will be divisible by three. At the formation of a standing committee, one-third of the members will be appointed for three years, one-third of the members will be appointed for two years, and one-third of the members will be appointed for one year. No member of a standing committee will serve longer than three successive years and must remain off that committee for a period of one year prior to the reappointment.

### **Section 2 - Temporary Committee**

A temporary committee is one whose area of responsibility is for specific, limited-in-time, need (e.g. search committee). The number of members on a temporary committee will be determined by the pastors and deacons. Should a vacancy arise on a temporary committee, the pastors and deacons may or may not appoint a new member at its own discretion.

## **ARTICLE 8 - CHURCH EMPLOYEES**

In addition to vocational pastors and ministers, the church may employ additional personnel. The moneys for such personnel must be approved by the pastors and deacons in conjunction with the stewardship team/committee. The pastors and deacons and stewardship team shall be responsible for the hiring and firing of all such personnel as well as determining all staff needs, employment, salaries, benefits, other compensation, policies, job descriptions, personnel services, and legal requirements.

## **ARTICLE 9 – DISPUTE RESOLUTION**

Believing that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian Church (see, e.g., Matt. 18:15-20, I Cor. 6:1-8), the church shall require its members to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblically based principles, without reliance on the secular courts. Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the church shall encourage the use of biblically based principles and the avoidance of suits of law or equity to resolve disputes between itself and those outside the church, whether Christian or pagan and whether individuals or corporate entities. The pastors and deacons may adopt policies and procedures to accomplish these requirements and aspirations as deemed necessary.

In the event of a division of this church, from which may God in His mercy save us, the property of this church shall belong to that group of such division as represents the largest portion of the church membership before recognizing a division therein provided such group is loyal to these by-laws and statements of faith; otherwise, it shall belong to the group remaining loyal to these by-laws and statements of faith though it may not be the largest group in such division. Should any controversy arise as to whether such loyalty exists, the question shall be submitted to an impartial third party selected by the pastors and deacons, and their decision shall be final.

## **ARTICLE 10 - AMENDMENTS**

The Statement of Faith and Church Covenant may be amended by a three-fourths vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous members' meeting, and shall have been announced from the pulpit at the morning church services two successive Sundays prior to such vote.

This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous members' meeting, and shall have been announced from the pulpit at morning church services two successive Sundays prior to such a vote.

The revised version of this constitution shall be made available to all church members upon request.