

ada bible church

constitution

The design features a series of horizontal lines and bars below the title. It starts with three thin, parallel teal lines, followed by a thicker teal bar, then a thin white line, another thick teal bar, a thin white line, a thick teal bar, a thin white line, a thick teal bar, a thin white line, a thick teal bar, a thin white line, a thick teal bar, a thin white line, a thick teal bar, and finally a large, solid teal block at the bottom.

The Bible is a love story about the relationship between God and man. It chronicles how God created man to have an intimate relationship with Him, how man walked away from God, and how a holy God made a way for sinful man to have that relationship restored. The Bible presents the eternal principles that govern our world and guidelines that help us relate to God and to each other. It teaches us what it means to have a relationship with God and what that relationship looks like.

Christians are the representatives of Christ to a world that is lost and far from God. The Bible, throughout the Old and New Testaments, teaches us what a good representative of God looks like. As a group of those who believe in Jesus, we seek to reflect His priorities in all we do. Our desire is to have all of our decisions consistent with the Bible, God's words to us. We also endeavor to discern God's program for us as a church through allowing the indwelling Holy Spirit to guide us.

The purpose of this constitution is to set forth what we believe are the Bible's core teachings and to document how our church is structured. We have divided the constitution into two parts. One part summarizes what we hold as core teachings. The second part outlines how we are structured and how we govern ourselves. It is our hope this document will give a clear picture of our church; which we trust is a clear reflection of Jesus Christ.

Table of Contents

What We Believe

Introduction	4
<i>Our Core Doctrines</i>	5
About God	7
About Humanity	6
About Eternity	9
About Jesus Christ	10
About Salvation	11
About Eternal Security	13
About The Holy Spirit	15
About The Bible	16
About The Church	17
<i>Other Doctrines</i>	19
Free Will and Predestination	20
End Times	21
Spiritual Gifts	22
Women in Ministry	22
<i>Our Ordinances</i>	24
Communion	24
Baptism	25
<i>Our Government</i>	
Article 1 – Name	27
Article 2 – Membership	27
Article 3 – Restoration of Members	31
Article 4 – Leadership	33
Section A – Authority	34
Section B – Elders	34
Article 4 (continued)	

Section C – Deacons	35
Section D – Functions of Elders and Deacons	36
Section E – Approval of Elders and Deacons	36
Section F – Board Procedural Matters	39
Section G – Annual Meeting and Special Meetings	39
Article 5 – Hiring of Pastoral Staff	40
Section A – Process	40
Section B – Qualifications	42
Section C – Withdrawal or Dismissal of Pastor	42
Article 6 – Recruitment, Responsibilities, and Release of Other Staff	42
Article 7 – Finances	43
Section A – Support	43
Section B – Loans and Credit	43
Section C – Designated Funds	43
Section D – Properties	44
Section E – Excess Compensation or Gifts	44
Section F – Dissolution	44
Article 8 – Ordination	45
Article 9 – Amendments	45
Other Items	46
Articles II & III of Old Constitution	46
Article II – Purpose	46
Article III - Fellowship	47

March 2002

Introduction

We believe that it is absolutely essential that our beliefs and practices are centered in Jesus Christ and supported by the clearest passages of Scripture. Our elders believe this document to be an accurate summary of what Scripture teaches about what we believe.

This section summarizes the major doctrines that we hold as “core”: those that are unalterable and are foundational in nature. These are the truths that Christians throughout the ages have been willing to die for.

There are other issues and doctrines that we consider secondary in nature. These are not “core” doctrines that form the basis of our faith; however, they do form the basis of how we function as a church body. Portions of these issues, throughout the years, have become divisive and have served to split churches. As a condition of membership at our church, we request that members do not advocate positions different from what we hold to in these “secondary” doctrines. We believe that our positions are biblically supported and sound, but we understand that there are others who have had different opinions and experiences. It is our desire that everyone in our fellowship agree that even if they have differing opinions on what may be considered “minor” issues, there be no divisiveness. We understand that while we are free to express our opinions to other church members, we don’t ever want to harm the church by gathering a following around ourselves (or an issue) to create a splinter group. We value the unity of this local assembly of believers above any desire for self-expression.

As you read the following sections, we’ve added explanatory comments to clarify and help apply these core doctrines. As you read these statements you will see they are rich with spiritual truth. Do not hurry through these statements. Read them slowly and thoughtfully. Ask yourself as you read, “What difference does this truth make in my life? If I didn’t know or believe this, would it matter?”

OUR CORE DOCTRINES

About God

We believe that God, and God alone, is the Creator and Ruler of the universe. He is the Supreme Being of the universe and is to be worshipped above all else. God created the universe and everything in it out of nothing, thus manifesting the glory of His power, wisdom, and goodness. By His authority and power He continues to sustain His creation.

God is often referred to as “Holy.” Holy means that He is different – separate from humans. In His holiness, God is righteous (perfect) and without any imperfections. He always does, says, and thinks what is right. We believe that God is always just, righteous, loving and caring in everything that He does with His creation. We further believe that God is “omnipresent” (everywhere at once), “omniscient” (knows everything) and “omnipotent” (all powerful). In addition, we believe that because God is holy and is Creator of the universe, He alone has the authority to define what is right and what is wrong in our world.

The Bible begins with the phrase, “In the beginning, God...” God has always existed. His nature and being are eternal. We also learn about God from His revelation to us – the Bible – that three distinct persons are called God: God the Father, God the Son (Jesus) and God the Holy Spirit. Because the Bible clearly teaches there is only one God, not three, we understand that these three persons must fully share the one and only divine nature. They may be manifested in different ways and have different roles, but nonetheless, they are equally God. The word “Trinity” is used to describe the teaching that God has a singular nature, but a plural personality.

The creative God desired to share the “community” that always existed within the Trinity. Because of this desire to share community, He made a universe that would reflect His attributes. All that He created is dependent on Him: He made it out of nothing, keeps it together, can reshape it, and is Master over it. God’s crowning creation in the universe was humanity. He fashioned us in His image, and made us so that we could have a relationship with Him and with each other. We reflect His nature by exhibiting unity in the presence of diversity, love in the midst of differences, and ruling while remaining submissive, all at the same time.

God has been involved in the affairs of His creation from the very beginning, and continues to play an active role in relating to man. Specifically, He is continually seeking His legitimate right to be glorified as our Creator.

How should our beliefs affect our behavior? The following are a few summary statements that flow from our beliefs of who God is:

Worshipping and knowing God as He is revealed in the Bible are our highest priorities. Substituting any activity or allowing any passion to become stronger than this priority is idolatry.

Because we believe a transcendent God created the universe, we reject naturalism, the idea that nature is all that exists, that life arose from a chance collision of atoms, evolving eventually into human life as we know it today.

We treat creation as something wonderful that God has made; we neither abuse it nor worship it. We seek to cultivate all that God has shared with us so it can be used to further His purposes, treating it as a stewardship from Him. Creation is never to become more important than the people He made to enjoy it.

We do not agree with any teacher, church, organization or religious group, which rejects God's revelation of Himself as Trinity (as is common among many groups labeled as "cults"). All Persons of the Trinity are involved in our salvation. Recognition of the Trinity also takes place when we pray as we address the Father in the name of Christ as the Spirit directs us.

The whole Bible is a study of who God is; it is a lifelong learning process. It is difficult to summarize who God is and what He is about in just a few words. The following scriptures highlight some of the major points of what we believe about God. Take time to examine them and discover for yourself who God is.

For further study: Genesis 1:1, 26, 27; Psalm 90:2; Matthew 28:19; John 15:26; John 17:3; Romans 8:28; Colossians 1:16; 1 Timothy 2:3-4.

About Humanity

In art, the making of images is an exercise of beauty. Painting, sculpture, and other forms of art are often imitative. The ultimate artist is God. When He fashioned the universe, He left His own mark upon it in such a way that the heavens declare His glory and the earth shows forth His handiwork. When God made the creatures that fill the earth and the sea, He created humans to be uniquely made in His own image. This does not mean physical image (because God does not have a physical image), but rather consistent with the image of His character: relational in nature, able to make decisions, reason, love, forgive, experience joy, etc. In this way, humanity is distinct from the rest of creation.

Part of the image bearing of God includes mankind's call to rule the earth; to have dominion over it. We are called to dress, fill, and keep the earth as God's stewards. We are called to reflect the character of God's righteous rule over the universe. He never ravages or exploits what He rules, but rather reigns in justice and kindness.

God created man and woman as perfect beings who walked and talked with Him in an intimate relationship. When God's originally sinless created beings, Adam and Eve, sinned against Him, something ghastly happened (also called "The Fall"). The image of God in humanity was severely tarnished. Our ability to mirror His holiness was affected for all time. The Fall, however, did not destroy our humanity. Though our ability to perfectly reflect God's holiness was lost in The Fall, we are still human. We still have a mind, a heart, and a will. We still bear the mark of our Creator upon ourselves.

Sin is what separates us from a Holy God. Death, which the Bible defines as separation from God, is the consequence of our sin. Sin is defined as any action or thought that is against God's commands that were given to us in the Bible. Sin is doing or thinking something that a perfect God would not do or think. The Bible defines it also as not measuring up to God's standard of perfection.

Everyone who was born after Adam and Eve was born sinful. That means that we were all born with the innate propensity to sin and cannot mea

sure up to God's standard of perfection. This means that because God is righteous and holy, He cannot allow us to live with Him in our natural state. We are separated from Him by the sins that we commit.

It is God's desire to restore humanity to its previous glory. He still desires to have humanity be a reflection of His character. God has provided a way we can once again have a relationship with Him and can once again gain the ability to reflect His glory.

Our doctrine of humanity affects our beliefs and practices in the following ways:

Because God created human beings in His image and likeness, humans are special, separate and distinct from the rest of creation. To that end, we believe that human life is to be protected and nurtured. We thus believe in the sanctity of life for the pre-born and reject all forms of euthanasia, including those efforts directed toward the handicapped or the elderly.

There is some analogy between God and human beings that makes communication between them possible. This communication, as evidenced by Bible reading, Bible study, and prayer, is to be an integral part of a person's desire to seek life from the Creator of the universe.

Human beings have the faculties of mind and will. We are the only created earthly being that has the ability to know right from wrong. We are responsible for our thoughts, words, and actions, as well as any consequences that may result from sinful choices in those areas.

The Bible places responsibility for sin, which opened the floodgates to evil, squarely on the human race. In that original choice to disobey God, human nature became morally distorted and bent so that from then on, humanity has had a natural inclination to sin. Because of this, we reject the utopian view that humans are intrinsically good and that under the right social conditions, their good nature will emerge. Perfection in humanity is not possible apart from the work of God.

For further study, see the following scriptures that support our beliefs about man: Genesis 1:26-27; Genesis 2:7; Psalm 8:3-6; Psalm 139:13-16; Isaiah 53:6; Isaiah 59:1-2; Romans 1:20; Romans 3:23.

About Eternity

God created us as eternal beings. God has given us the opportunity to choose our eternal condition. If we place our faith and trust in Christ, we continue a relationship with God for all eternity. Heaven is the place God has provided for those who follow Him. If, however, we reject Him and His plan for our life and instead prefer behavior He condemns, He will not bother us with His presence or commands forever. Hell is a place of eternal punishment that God has provided for everyone who longs for Him to stop interfering with their plans and who wishes He would leave them alone. In Hell those who have rejected God will be “separated from God” forever. Those in heaven, however, whose highest delight in life was God, will be able to enjoy forever the One who gave them pleasure on earth.

Death seals the eternal destiny of each person. Every person will experience a resurrection of the body. This resurrection will lead to an individual judgment that will determine whether a person will be eternally separated from God or in union with Him.

There are no “second chances” after we die. Our relationship with God for eternity is determined by how we respond to Him in this life. When we place our faith and trust in Jesus Christ, God not only saves our souls, but He promises that one day our bodies will be resurrected. These “resurrected bodies” will be fashioned in such a way as to allow us to exist in, and enjoy, the environment we will inherit.

Jesus, while He was on the earth, described hell as a place where there is wailing and gnashing of teeth. We believe that hell is a literal place; a place of eternal suffering and conscious punishment.

Our philosophy of eternity has the following applications: As we relate to those people God brings into our lives, we see them as the everlasting beings that they are and accord them due respect. Everyone matters to God and deserves to be treated lovingly and with respect.

Knowing that our eternity is infinitely longer and more significant than our limited time on earth, we structure our lives so that they take into account this everlasting perspective. We choose our activities and priorities based

on what fits with God's pleasure; recognizing that His approval supersedes every other consideration. We attempt to model the form of servanthood as demonstrated by Jesus Christ.

While we understand that good works do not and cannot earn heaven, we are taught that our obedience is pleasing to God and will be rewarded. So we serve Him diligently, not only because it brings God glory, but because He has promised us the future age will make all earthly difficulties and problems fade by comparison.

We reject the teachings of reincarnation and annihilation. Our choices matter not only for today but also for all eternity.

See the following scriptures for further study: Matthew 25:41; John 3:16-18; John 3:36; Romans 5:10; Romans 6:23; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 1 Thessalonians 1:8-10; 1 John 5:11-12; Revelation 20:11-15; Revelation 21:8.

About Jesus Christ

Jesus the Christ, the Messiah, the Redeemer, is the pinnacle figure in the history of the world. He was and is the Son of God, the eternal second Person of the Trinity, united forever with a true human nature by a miraculous conception and virgin birth. He is equal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. Jesus lived a sinless human life in obedience to the Father and offered Himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all men by dying on the cross. This death satisfied divine justice and accomplished salvation for all who trust in Him alone. He arose from the dead after three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death. He ascended to Heaven's glory and, as the only Mediator between God and man, continually makes intercession for us. He will return again to earth to reign as King of Kings and Lord of Lords.

Jesus was "the God-Man" sharing fully in the divine and human natures while he was on this earth. No one like Him has ever, or will ever, live. He was not part God and part man; He was both fully God and fully man. All of God dwelt in Him and His humanity was complete.

Jesus' birth gives evidence to both His deity and His humanity: He was born in the normal way through a human mother, yet His divinity was

established by virtue of the virgin birth. As a human, He experienced every limitation except sin. He was like us in every way except that He perfectly obeyed His heavenly Father.

As God, He is co-equal with the Father and the Spirit. His death did not end His existence. After He had paid for our sin on the cross, He rose from the dead on the third day - showing His complete provision for sin's effects. He continues to possess both full humanity (though glorified) and full divinity. He is the only Mediator between us and the Father, always mindful of our needs and always concerned for our ultimate well being. His final words on earth included the promise to return to earth visibly and bodily.

Because we believe this about Jesus, we believe:

We are Christians (followers of "the Christ") because our message is about Christ: His life, His work, His divinity, and our need to be obedient to Him. Any message proclaimed by any religion, church, group, or people, that does not center on Christ (including His full deity and humanity) and His forgiveness for all sin, is not the Gospel.

Because our salvation was secured by the perfect sacrifice of the Perfect Person (Jesus Christ), we live knowing that we are totally and unconditionally forgiven from all sin now, not hoping we will be forgiven at some future point.

Knowing that Jesus will return some day, we hold loosely to the things of this world, counting on the new heaven and earth to be our permanent home. It is our desire and intent that all we possess be used to honor God.

See the following scriptures: Matthew 1:22-23; John 1:15; John 10:30-33; John 14:9-11; Acts 1:11; Romans 1:1-4; 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Philippians 2:5-11; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:8; Hebrews 4:14-16.

About Salvation

Salvation is a gift from God to us. Salvation is necessary because of our sin: we choose to go our independent way instead of following the commands of a Holy God. Because God is righteous (perfect) and cannot tolerate sin in His presence, sin demands death or separation from God. Because of His righteousness, God demands that there be payment for sin.

In the Old Testament, God allowed the life of a lamb or goat to substitute for or cover the sin of people. Note that this sacrifice did not pay for the sin of the human, it simply temporarily covered it. God stated in the book of Hebrews that “it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins” (Hebrews 10:4). Human sin demands payment by a human life. In His graciousness, God gave Jesus as a sacrifice for our sin. Jesus did not commit sin and, therefore, he did not have to die for His own sin. In addition, because He was perfectly human, Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross was sufficient payment for human sin. God gave Jesus’ sacrifice as a gift to all who have believed as a payment for their sin.

Our decision to sin not only alienates us from God, but also corrupts us and makes us unable to obey God perfectly. We can never make up for our sin by self-improvement or good works.

God has provided a way out of this dilemma: the death of Jesus Christ, which paid the penalty for our sin. A right relationship with God is restored when we accept the forgiveness that God offers through Jesus. This new life (being “born again”) is a gift. It cannot be earned by anything we may do nor can it be revoked by anything we may do. Salvation is wholly a work of God’s free grace. We live with the undeserved promise that the change He’s begun in His followers is just the beginning of a total transformation that ends only when we are taken into His presence to live forever. When we repent of our sinful ways and accept the sacrifice of Christ on our behalf, God begins the process of changing our essential nature from sinful to righteous. We begin, for the first time, to innately desire to obey God because that is who we are becoming like. Obedience is not a forced behavior, but a natural outflow of God’s change in us. (See 2 Corinthians 5:17 where it discusses the replacement of our sin nature with a new nature.)

How does this impact how we behave?

Our message to unbelievers contains the call to turn from their attempts to earn God’s favor and to rely fully on the gift of salvation God offers through the death of Jesus. We don’t have to do anything – Jesus has already done it.

The message of the Gospel brings life to those who would perish eternally without Christ. Therefore, we seek to present His saving message publicly

and privately as often as possible. As we do this, we are sensitive to the needs of our listeners, we make every effort to understand the culture into which God has placed us, and we desire to match “the medium with the message.”

Our message also clearly spells out that a person’s attempts to earn God’s favor can include “religious” things such as: church attendance, religious ritual, and service to others. While these may be good things in and of themselves, they do not in any way make us acceptable to a holy God. Obedience to God is a natural outflow of our thankfulness to God for the salvation He has provided. It also is a natural outflow of our changed way of life. Our obedience does not make us more acceptable to God.

Knowing we are all sinful, we will never naively assume that, as Christians, we’re immune to temptation or evil. Though confident of being rescued from the eternal penalty of sin by God’s grace, we conduct our lives mindful of sin’s ongoing potential to destroy our lives, witness, and testimony.

There are many passages in the Bible that speak to salvation and the impact that it should have on our behavioral patterns. It begins a process of radical heart transformation that results in a radical behavior change as we yield to God.

Some of the scriptures which teach about salvation are: John 1:12-13; John 14:6; Romans 5:1; Romans 6:23; Galatians 3:26; Ephesians 2:8-9; Philippians 1:4-6; Titus 2:13-14.

About Eternal Security

Because God gives eternal life through Jesus Christ, the believer is secure for eternity. Salvation is maintained by the grace and power of God, not by the self-effort of the Christian.

Most of us know people who have made a profession of faith in Christ and even involved themselves deeply in the life and ministry of the church, only to later repudiate that faith and become spiritual dropouts. We know it is possible for people to be enamored by certain elements of Christianity without ever embracing Christ Himself. Perhaps a young person is attracted to a fun and stimulating youth group that has an appealing program. The

person may be “converted” to the program without being converted to Christ. Such evidence always raises the question: can a person once saved lose his salvation? Is losing one’s salvation a danger for the believer? We believe the Bible clearly teaches that once someone has saving faith they will never lose it. This belief does not rest on an individual’s ability to persevere, but rather rests on God’s promises to preserve us. It is by God’s grace and His grace alone that Christians persevere. God finishes what He begins. He ensures that His purposes are not frustrated. We have security because salvation is of the Lord and we are His craftsmanship.

There are instances, as mentioned above, which seem to indicate that a person has lost their salvation. The Bible does teach that there are those who will live in disobedience and may “look” or behave like a Christian. There are many hypocritical people in the church. However, the Bible is clear that once a person is part of the family of God, it is impossible for him to be taken out of the family regardless of his behavior.

An age-old question arises as one begins to understand the security of our salvation. Does this give us a license to sin? Can we do whatever we want after we believe and still be part of God’s family? The Bible states that a pattern of sinful behavior is inconsistent with a heart transformation (Romans 8; 1 John 2). Will we still sin? Oh yes, but a person who has truly believed will repent and seek restoration with God after they sin. On the other hand, there is no sin grievous enough that God cannot forgive and that will cause us to lose our salvation.

What does this mean in terms of our day to day behavior? Because our eternal security is God’s responsibility, we have a confidence that allows us to follow Jesus boldly and without fear of losing our salvation.

We recognize that “good works” are the natural result of being transformed by Jesus Christ. There is something dramatically wrong if an individual claims to be saved but lives in such a way that continually contradicts what Christ did and taught. Good works are done not to earn eternal life, but are evidence of the eternal life that has already been given.

See the following scriptures for teaching on eternal security: John 6:35-40; John 10:29; Romans 8:31-39; Philippians 1:6; 1 Peter 1:3-5.

About The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is equal with the Father and the Son of God, and was sent into the world by the Father and Son. He is present in the world to make men aware of their need for Jesus Christ. He also lives in every Christian from the moment of salvation. The Holy Spirit provides the Christian with power for living, understanding of spiritual truth, and guidance in doing what is right. The Christian seeks daily to live under His control.

The Holy Spirit is God, not just “a force.” As the third person of the Trinity, He works to prepare people to hear and understand the Gospel and then “enters” the life of the individual at the point of belief. Jesus promised the Spirit’s presence to all His followers; promising that He would actually indwell us in a unique and permanent way. The Spirit helps us understand the Bible, makes us aware of our sin, and assures us that we belong to God. The Holy Spirit helps our prayer life by interceding for us, produces in us the kind of character that is pleasing to God, and makes us credible witnesses to an unbelieving world. He also gives “spiritual gifts” to each person in the family of God that allows us the privilege of serving others.

The Spirit is a wonderful gift that God has given to those in His family. Our belief in the Holy Spirit changes our behavior and our perspective in these ways:

The Christian life is more than just “being good.” We need the Holy Spirit to bear holy fruit in us. Therefore, our lives must daily be yielded to Him. Our self-improvement efforts are useless in improving our character. It is only through yielding to the work of the Spirit that we become more like Christ.

As followers of Christ, we are continually striving to be more like Him. We are not content just to be forgiven; we want to exemplify Christ-like behavior in every area of our lives. The Holy Spirit empowers us to resist sin and be like Him in all we do.

When we witness about Christ to others, the message we present is effective not because of our superior reasoning, dynamic presentation, or a quality strategic plan. It is effective only because the Spirit is free to work through us and in the hearts of the people we talk to. We understand that we ultimately depend on the Spirit’s invisible activity in all that we do.

Because the Spirit resides in us, we will earnestly listen for His promptings, anticipating that He wants to direct us and will do so if we are open to Him.

For further study about the work and person of the Holy Spirit see: John 14:16-18; John 16:7-13; Acts 1:4, 5, 8; 1 Corinthians 2:12-14; Galatians 5:22-25; Ephesians 1:13-14.

About The Bible

The Bible, the 66 books of the Old and New Testaments, is God's Word to us. It was written by human authors under supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. It is the unique, full, and final authority on all matters of faith and practice. Because it was inspired by God, it is without error in the original writings. There are no other writings similarly inspired by God.

Human reason is a powerful tool, but it is often distorted by our self-serving perspective. We cannot, by reason alone, figure out the meaning of life; and therefore, cannot comprehend who God is beyond the simple awareness, through creation, that He exists. The only way we can have a relationship with God is for Him to break through to us because we cannot break through to Him. The Bible is the written record of His breaking through to us throughout the history of mankind.

The Bible isn't just a record of His words; it is the Word of God in written form. It is revelation: truth expressed not by means of humans struggling to find the right way to say it, but truth given by God Himself. The writers' message was and is His message. Because God cannot lie, the Bible is completely reliable. We must let it judge us instead of us judging it. Though other books, both ancient and modern, may contain some degree of spiritual truth, no other writings are uniquely the Word of God. That is why we base our beliefs on its teaching and submit all our thoughts and plans to its scrutiny.

Because of our beliefs in the Bible as God's Word to us, we hold to the following:

The Bible contains all the information that we need to understand who God is and what He expects of us. It is totally self-sufficient.

It is our desire to regularly read and study the Bible, both privately and publicly, to understand God's message to us.

We submit to God's authority through His Word. This Word stands over and judges all of us.

We as a church do not take stands on issues about which the Bible is silent. We allow individuals, by their own conscience before the Lord, to determine which position to take on these issues.

We do not accept doctrines, beliefs, or actions, no matter what is claimed as their source, if they do not adhere with what the Bible says. Alleged "modern prophets," "new revelation," or any message or belief, even if apparently given miraculously, must be tested by the Bible.

Consult the following scriptures for more details regarding the Bible: Psalm 19:7-11; Psalm 119:105; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20-21.

About The Church

The word "Church" is used to describe two groups. The first group, the Universal Church, is comprised of all believers everywhere. The second

group, the local church, describes a gathering of believers who devote themselves to making disciples by serving others, presenting Christ, building community, growing spiritually, and worshipping God.

The Universal Church is the body of Christ. It is primarily an organism, not an organization. It is made up of people everywhere who are truly His followers. It is not defined by the limits of any denomination but includes all true believers. Our church is just one of thousands of local churches.

We believe that the Church is the unique agent of God in this age. Paul, in his letter to the church at Ephesus wrote that God intended "now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known..." (Ephesians 3:10.) He further taught that the Church is the manifestation of Jesus to the world: "Christ is the head of the church, his body..." (Ephesians 5:23)

When Jesus was on this earth, he set forth the purpose of all believers:

"...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Matthew 28:19-20.

We were created to complete a mission. Our mission is to make disciples: to bring people who do not know God into a relationship with Him and His Church, so that they will become like Christ. The church's mission is to facilitate and equip each believer to accomplish the mission Christ gave us.

Because becoming a disciple is a broad term, we have divided our mission into the following objectives:

Evangelism: Our objective is to increase the number of people in our community and throughout the world who accept Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior. The purpose of evangelism is to bring nonbelievers to God.

Maturity: Our objective is to promote the spiritual growth of our members through an understanding of the Scriptures leading to obedience. The purpose of being a maturing congregation is to more clearly bear the image of Christ.

Service: Our objective is to minister in Jesus' name to people in the church, community, and throughout the world. The purpose of serving is to administer God's love to other people.

Fellowship: Our objective is to ensure that loving relationships permeate every aspect of church life. The purpose of fellowship is to share together our lives with God, with those in the Body and with those who are not in the Body.

Worship: Our objective is to be a worshipping fellowship, responding in praise and obedience to God's truth. The purpose of worship is to give honor to God in every area and in every moment of our life.

Some observations about the Church:

Becoming a member of Ada Bible Church does not place one in the Universal Church. Becoming a member of the Universal Church is the invisible

work of God distinct from the membership process in this local church.

By becoming a member of Ada Bible Church, a believer makes a commitment to share in the privileges and responsibilities of serving others, presenting Christ, building community, growing spiritually, and worshipping God with the local church.

All believers who associate with this local church have opportunities to discover and develop their spiritual gifts. We structure this church to implement this value so that everyone can participate in some aspect of the church based on their passion and giftedness.

We guard our unity and diligently seek to honestly confront and work through differences in ways that honor God and respect the personalities, gifts, and passions that God has given each of us. We believe that lack of unity within the Church is one of the greatest deterrents to people seeing that Christianity is real.

See the following scriptures for more study on the Church: Matthew 18:15-17; Matthew 28:19-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 2:19-22; Ephesians 4:1-6, 11-13; Colossians 1:18; Revelation 7:9-10.

OTHER DOCTRINES

The core doctrines presented above are what we consider very clear teaching from God's Word. The Bible presents, and we hold to, other doctrines that define our faith and practice. These are not "core" doctrines that form the basis of our faith; however, they do form the basis of how we function as a church body. There are several positions that godly scholars have taken on these doctrines throughout the years. These are the doctrines that have typically caused divisions within churches or denominations and have portrayed a testimony to the world that the church is more interested in fighting and arguing about doctrinal issues than it is about advancing the Kingdom of God. We hold to the interpretations of these truths as outlined below. However, we do not believe that these doctrines are worth causing disunity within a congregation. Our goal in presenting these doctrines is to allow people who are seeking to understand our church culture to have an insight into our stance on these issues.

As previously stated, as a condition of membership at our church, we request that members do not advocate positions different from what we hold to in these "secondary" doctrines. We believe that our positions are biblically supported and sound, but we understand that there are others who have had different opinions and experiences. It is our desire that everyone in our fellowship agree that even if they have differing opinions on what may be considered "minor" issues, there be no divisiveness. We understand that while we are free to express our opinions to other church members, we don't ever want to harm the church by gathering a following around ourselves (or an issue) to create a splinter group. We value the unity of this local assembly of believers above any desire for self-expression.

As time permits and as the need arises, additional documentation will be available to further define and outline the specifics of our beliefs on these issues.

Free Will and Predestination

Does man have a choice in his salvation or is his destiny "pre-decided" by God? We believe "yes." Yes, God has predetermined that we will be part of His family. Yes, we do have to make a choice and are responsible for that

decision. We believe that the Bible teaches that both of these doctrines are true and yet they are contradictory. We understand that there is a tension between predestination and free will.

Romans 8:29-30 states that God foreknew, predestined, called, justified and glorified those who were to be His. Ephesians 1:4 says that we were chosen "in Him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in His sight." Paul further states in verse 13 of this chapter that they had to "believe"-- a volitional act of their will. The Bible is replete with places where we are called to choose: choose life over death, choose to follow Christ, etc.

We believe that, in our finite mind, we cannot reconcile predestination and free will. What is important to understand though is that apart from God's work and calling, there would be no salvation. And, apart from man's decision to follow after God, there would be no salvation.

End Times

As stated above, we believe that man is an eternal being that will be held accountable for his decisions that were made while on this earth. We believe that each one will have to give an account of his actions. There is debate as to when this happens.

We believe in the literal return of Christ to this world to gather those who belong to Him. We believe that this gathering will occur immediately before a period known as "the tribulation": seven years of time where God begins His judgment on this earth. Following the tribulation period, a new kingdom will be set up on this earth for 1,000 years (the millennium). At the end of the millennium Satan will return to earth, deceive many and attempt to overthrow the leadership of Jesus Christ. Jesus will prevail in the ensuing battle. Following this battle, a new heaven and a new earth will be "created" where those who have believed will live with God and Jesus forever.

There are others who see the end times happening in a different sequence and some who even believe we are in the millennial kingdom.

The most important thing is not to exactly figure out the sequence of the end times but to believe that the return of Christ is real, and as the Bible

teaches, is imminent. Jesus described His return as being like a thief in the night. He also said that no man knows the hour when this will occur. He only warned us to be ready for His return (Matthew 24:43; Luke 12:40). We believe He could come at any moment and we must be ready for His return. This belief should affect how we live and how loosely we hold the "stuff" of this life.

Spiritual Gifts

There are some who claim that unless a person speaks in tongues or experiences a supernatural outpouring of the Holy Spirit they aren't true believers. We oppose this teaching, as well as the teaching that espouses that a believer must speak in tongues or exhibit other "sign gifts" in order to experience the full work of the Spirit.

We believe that the supernatural manifestations of the Spirit (healing, speaking in tongues, etc.) have ceased to be the norm in our culture today. We believe that these gifts centered on new revelations from God and were an affirmation of His new message. To say that they are completely unused in our world is an overstatement. However, we believe that because of the religious roots of our culture and its surplus of available Christian resources, these gifts are not needed to affirm the message of scripture in our culture. Accordingly, we do not seek to promote, nor do we pursue development of, the supernatural sign gifts in our congregation.

Women in Ministry

We believe all humans, women and men, are of equal importance to God. There is no distinction in the eyes of God. He sent His Son to die for everyone regardless of their gender. Each person, regardless of their station in life is responsible before God for their own eternal destiny.

God has assigned different leadership roles to men and women in the church structure. In 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9, God has set forth that the role of an elder be filled by a man who meets the specified criteria. This teaching is not a statement of importance, but rather a statement of role and structure. Titus 2:3-5 gives a specific charge to the spiritually mature women in the church. They are to teach those women who are less mature.

In accordance with the Bible's teaching, we appoint men for the position of elder for overall leadership in the church.

There are some who believe the Bible teaches that women are not to lead anywhere in the church. We do not hold to this teaching (especially in light of the charge to women in Titus 2.) We believe the biblical principle is that the responsibility and authority to lead the church is given to the elders and all other leadership roles in the church (e.g. ministries, small group leaders, etc.) are subject to their direction and leadership.

OUR ORDINANCES

Communion

The Church recognizes two ordinances: Communion (the Lord's Supper) and water baptism. These ordinances are simply acts of obedience to the commands of Jesus while He was on this earth.

Communion

Just before He died for our sins, Jesus celebrated the Feast of the Passover: a Jewish feast that was commanded by God that the Jews celebrate every year (see Exodus 12 and 13.) Jesus commanded us to remember Him and what He did for us by symbolically partaking of a Passover feast. We call this "communion."

And he took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying, "This is my body given for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you. Luke 22:19-20.

We will observe communion on a regular basis so that we will never forget the extreme price Christ paid as a substitute for our judgment for sin. Since Jesus gave this command to people following Him and since it only has deep meaning to people who have accepted His sacrifice, we encourage only people who have committed their lives to Christ to partake in communion.

Paul, in his letter to the Corinthians, also gave instructions about communion:

For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you: The Lord Jesus, on the night he was betrayed, took bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body, which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of me." In the same way, after supper he took the cup, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me." For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the

cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord. A man ought to examine himself before he eats of the bread and drinks of the cup. For anyone who eats and drinks without recognizing the body of the Lord eats and drinks judgment on himself. That is why many among you are weak and sick, and a number of you have fallen asleep. But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment. When we are judged by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be condemned with the world. 1 Corinthians 11:23-32.

Following these words, we further will instruct that if a person who has committed his life to Christ is living in sin (not in obedience to the commands and instructions of God) that he also not participate in communion. It is our desire that a person not be judged by God for partaking in communion in an unworthy manner. According to the context, eating in an unworthy manner means that a person is not respecting the other members in the body of Christ (see 1 Corinthians 1:17-22, 33 to understand how the members of this church were disrespecting each other.)

Baptism

We believe that the second ordinance, baptism, is a visible testimony to the community that a person has had a change on the inside: that they

are committing to live a new life in Christ. There are many passages in the Bible that teach about baptism.

Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness."

Then John consented. As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. Matthew 3:13-16.

"...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you." Matthew 28:19-20.

Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins.... Those who accepted his message were baptized, and about three thousand were added to their number that day. Acts 2:38, 41.

The eunuch asked Philip, "Tell me, please, who is the prophet talking about, himself or someone else?" Then Philip began with that very passage of Scripture and told him the good news about Jesus. As they traveled along the road, they came to some water and the eunuch said, "Look, here is water. Why shouldn't I be baptized?" And he gave orders to stop the chariot. Then both Philip and the eunuch went down into the water and Philip baptized him. Acts 8:34-36, 38.

"Can anyone keep these people from being baptized with water? They have received the Holy Spirit just as we have." So he ordered that they be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ. Acts 10:47-48.

...having been buried with him in baptism and raised with him through your faith in the power of God, who raised him from the dead. Colossians 2:12.

The following beliefs about baptism come from these passages:
We desire to follow the example of Christ, who was baptized.

We desire to follow the command of Christ who instructed us to baptize disciples.

We baptize by complete immersion in water. Immersion symbolizes the death to the old self and the rising again to a new life in Christ.

We baptize only those who have committed their lives to Christ and desire to follow Him.

There is some question as to whether children should be baptized. We do not baptize babies because they are not capable of understanding their need for a Savior. We also do not make it a practice to baptize children. We will baptize children only if their parents testify to the fact that they see evidence of their commitment to Christ in their lives.

We do not believe that either of these ordinances has any power to save a person from judgment. Adherence to them also does not give any special "favors" from God. They simply are acts of obedience to the words of Christ. Our Government

Article 1 – Name

The name of the church is Ada Bible Church (hereafter referred to as the "Church") of Cascade Township, Michigan. The name can be changed pending approval from a majority of the membership.

Article 2 – Membership

The moment someone accepts the sacrifice of Christ and commits their life to Him (becomes a believer) they become a member of the body of Christ. In that sense, every believer is a member of the universal church and has access to all the resources and benefits that this position brings.

Although all believers are members of the body of Christ, there are practical reasons to identify with a local body or church of believers. A local church such as ours has unique needs and is uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit with individuals who are suited to meet those needs. We believe: Becoming a member is a visible statement to the community that one agrees with the doctrine and direction of the local church.

Becoming a member places an individual under the care of the local church leadership. It is a visible statement to the local church leadership that one is open to encouragement or correction.

It allows the local church leadership to confidently delegate care of a portion of the congregation to an individual; understanding that there is agreement with our doctrine.

Membership in a local church provides a platform for individuals to evidence their desire to contribute to the ministry of the church in such areas as service, finance, etc.

It allows the individual to help make decisions on church-wide policies through the membership vote.

The church provides the member with a place to experience community, a place to exercise their spiritual gifts and receive spiritual care. Choosing to join a church does not provide a means of salvation, nor does it earn any favor with God.

Requirements for Membership

As previously stated, accepting the sacrifice of Christ and commitment to God are sufficient for membership in the body of Christ. For membership at our local church, there are six general requirements:

A clear understanding of one's personal belief and acceptance in the need and sufficiency of the sacrifice of Christ as payment for their sins;

A commitment of one's life to serve God and His people;

An attitude and practice of submission to His Lordship over their life;

A heart's desire to become more like Christ and to serve God through the care and encouragement of a local church;

A commitment to follow the direction set by the elders of the Church;

An agreement with the Church's beliefs and governance as outlined in this document.

Responsibility of Members

It is our desire that members of the Church fulfill the mission of the Church in their personal lives. Our desire is that they maintain:

1. A Thirst for God

Jesus said the greatest commandment is to love God with all your heart, soul, and mind (Matthew 22:37). We believe this is a distinguishing characteristic of a person who is part of the family of God: they have a deep desire to know, love and obey God. A thirst for God manifests itself in a desire to know Him by reading and studying His word (the Bible), seeking to commune with Him through prayer, and living a life that is obedient to His commands and to His Spirit's leading.

2. Personal Purity

Perhaps the greatest evidence that a person is a follower of Jesus is not

only the words they express, but also the life they live. Jesus Christ compared himself to a vine and called those who were dedicated to him the branches. Therefore, personal purity is part of the fruit such a person demonstrates. Personal purity is more than the avoidance of bad moral choices. It is the presence of the right choices. It is a matter of integrity and character. When the apostle Paul pictured a life committed to Christ, he said to look for the Spirit-controlled traits of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22-23).

3. Relational Integrity

God intends for his people to walk the Christian life together, in spiritual community. The health of our congregation is greatly affected by the actions and the words of its members toward each other, both negatively and positively. It is of greatest importance for members to build up one another with words and deeds. In contrast, gossip, slander, anger, and malicious talk cause great harm to individuals and the body as a whole. Members must focus on building loving, life-changing relationships with those inside and outside the church. Encouragement, godly admonition, accountability, gratefulness, mercy, and forgiveness are the words and deeds of a healthy body of Christ. However, when relationships are stressed through circumstances, misunderstandings or moral failures, forgiveness and steps toward reconciliation must be taken (Galatians 6 and Matthew 18).

4. Organizational Loyalty

It is incredibly important for a church and its leadership to have members who can be identified by their passion and loyalty for not only the mission and purpose of the church, but also the organizational aspect of church life. Organizational loyalty can be defined by the following statements:

Members actively participate in the ministry of our church. They are the "players" rather than "spectators."

Members are committed for the long term; they are faithful and persevering in times of trial and celebrating in times of joy.

Members agree to follow the doctrine, mission, philosophy, and leadership of Ada Bible Church.

Members are willing to freely give their time, spiritual giftedness, and finances in order to fulfill God's mission for Ada Bible Church.

5. A Servant's Heart

Jesus taught his disciples in John 13 to "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another." Our expressions of love in our acts of service for each other draw a distinction between the church and other institutions. Members need to exhibit a servant's heart to each other, the body as a whole, and to the unbelieving community around them.

The Bible also teaches that our service is best utilized when each member understands and serves as God has gifted and designed them to serve (1 Corinthians 12). The apostle Paul compares the church to a body, where its parts have distinct purposes, yet function in harmony to accomplish the mission of the "body." Paul continues to say that the greatest component of service is love (1 Corinthians 13). Without love, our deeds are empty. With love, God will produce immeasurable fruit. Members are active in love-permeated service to each other, the church, and the unbelieving community around us.

The Process of Membership

The process of becoming a member at the Church consists of an application and interview process. The first step is to complete the Church Membership Application and return it to the Church office. After the application has been received, two or more Church leaders will interview the applicant (at least one of the interviewers must be an elder of the Church; the other may be an elder or someone specifically designated by the elders).

If the interviewers believe that the applicant meets the criteria for membership as stated above, then the applicant will be recommended to the Elder Board for membership at its next meeting. If there are no objections to the recommendations by the Elder Board, the applicant will become a member of the Church.

There will be no "charge" or monetary cost associated with becoming a member.

Being a member of the Church is required if one desires to be in a leadership (elder or deacon) or teaching position. We have set this requirement so that we understand that any person who is teaching others biblical truth agrees with our interpretation of scripture and will not cause dissension by teaching other doctrines.

Only members of the Church over the age of 18 may vote in church matters.

The membership application can be amended or annotated as directed by the interviewing elders or the Elder Board. Amendments and annotations cannot be made for core doctrinal issues as delineated in the What We Believe section of this document.

For those who will not be at the Church for extended periods of time (e.g., students or those with short-term local employment), but still wish to participate in teaching activities, the Church offers an associate membership. Associate membership simply requires commitment to the Church's doctrinal position as indicated by a signed statement. An associate membership allows the applicant to teach and lead various ministries. Associate members are not eligible for the offices of elder or deacon, nor can they vote on church matters.

Withdrawal and Removal of Members

If a person desires to withdraw their membership, they may inform the Elder Board in writing. In addition, if a member does not meet the requirements of membership, then the elders can remove their name from the membership roll. The elders will determine an appropriate process for assessing if members meet the requirements of membership and how they are to be removed. If a member stops attending for an extended period of time (greater than three months) their name can be removed from the active membership roll by staff or elder action.

Article 3 - Restoration of Members

Our desire is to promote the spiritual growth of the members of our congregation. There can be times in our spiritual journey when we make wrong decisions and do not follow God's direction as set forth in the Bible.

At these times, it becomes the responsibility of the Church leadership to encourage, correct or rebuke with the purpose of restoring the member's relationship with God. Involvement by the Church leaders may be necessary when there are grievances between two or more parties or if a person is involved in an overtly sinful activity that is destroying their life or the lives of those around them.

There are many passages that speak to the role of the church in restoring members to a right relationship with God. This is accomplished by exposure and correction of sinful behavior that violates the laws of God and most often manifests itself in the need to restore broken relationships. In these situations, the elders take their direction from the following passages of scripture:

"If your brother sins against you,* go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that `every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector. Matthew 18:15-17

If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! 1 Corinthians 6:1-4

If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you, to some extent--not to put it too severely. The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him....I have forgiven in the sight of Christ for your sake, in order that Satan might not outwit us....2 Corinthians 2:5-11

Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Galatians 6:1

Based on God's Word, we have the following guidelines when we seek to restore a member to a right relationship with God:

Both sides of the "story" will be heard;

The elders will give biblical counsel regarding the situation to the person(s) with the desire to correct the situation and provide for restoration;

If the person or persons is not willing to restore the broken relationship in the manner advised by the elders, then the congregation at large or a segment of the congregation may be instructed to have no dealings with the individual(s).

As stated previously, the elders are responsible for spiritual oversight of the registered members of the congregation. By seeking membership with this Church, they have made testimony to the fact that they are willing to be lead by the elders, including areas of rebuke and correction with the intent of restoration of a right relationship with God (which includes restoring relationships with others).

Article 4 – Leadership

The leadership of the Church is modeled after principles found in Acts 6. It consists of two offices: elder and deacon. The elders are responsible for the overall direction and spiritual development of the Church. The deacons support the elders by being responsible for the physical needs of the congregation.

From time to time, the elders may change the configuration of the Elder and Deacon Boards to better suit the operational needs of the Church. This includes, but is not limited to, formation of a joint board, formation of subcommittees, or formation of conference committees (which can include both elders and deacons). If necessary to provide better and more expeditious care for the congregation, a portion of the elders' or deacons' responsibilities may be delegated to a subcommittee. Changing of the configuration of the board or boards does not change the overall role and responsibility of the elders or the deacons. Its purpose is to allow for a structure that provides a greater level of care for the congregation as its needs change.

Section A - Authority

We believe that our local church should be independent and autonomous, as well as solely responsible to God for our actions (see Revelation 1-3). Accordingly, we are not under the authority of any denomination or other hierarchical form of government.

God gave the ultimate authority in the church to Jesus Christ. He is the head and it is our privilege and responsibility to follow His leadership.

And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him [Christ] to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way. Ephesians 1:22-23

We believe that God has divinely given leadership gifts to certain individuals in the church with the express intent that they should lead.

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service... Ephesians 4:11-12a

Section B - Elders

The Bible teaches that God has given the responsibility of shepherding the church to the elders. The purpose of church leadership is not for obtaining power and authority, or for setting and achieving personal agendas. The role of church elders is to discern the will of God through the Bible and through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and to shepherd the church in that direction. Accordingly, the elders of the church must be men of the highest spiritual caliber and of excellent reputation. They must be known as men of God and have demonstrated through their actions and words their desire and ability to listen to the Holy Spirit and their willingness to sacrificially serve the congregation.

Since the elders have the responsibility of care for the congregation, they must also have the authority to give directives in all matters pertaining to the governance of the church. This includes hiring of pastors, hiring of staff, and approval of budgets.

Consider the teaching about the role of the elders in the following passages:

From Miletus, Paul sent to Ephesus for the elders of the church. . . . Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you elders. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. Acts 20:17, 28

Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an Elder, he desires a noble task. . . . He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) 1 Timothy 3:1, 4, 5

Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you. Hebrews 13:17

To the elders among you, I appeal as a fellow elder, a witness of Christ's sufferings and one who also will share in the glory to be revealed: Be shepherds of God's flock that is under your care, serving as elders-not

because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock. 1 Peter 5:1- 3

Section C – Deacons

Deacons were selected in the early church to aid the elders in administering the affairs of the church.

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will

give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit; also Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas from Antioch, a convert to Judaism. They presented these men to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. Acts 6:1-6

As illustrated in Acts 6, these individuals were chosen to assist the early church elders (Apostles) in matters that distracted them from the "ministry of the Word." The role of the deacon is to serve the congregation by ministering in any area that would distract from the elders being able to focus on the spiritual needs and direction of the Church. As such, the elders from time to time will delegate the responsibility and authority of certain matters to the deacons.

Section D - Functions of Elders and Deacons

The elders are responsible for the spiritual oversight and overall direction of the Church.

The deacons will administer all business matters of the Church and will function as trustees in all legal matters.

They are also responsible for the maintenance of all church property. They will receive, safeguard, and disburse all of the funds of the Church and keep an accurate financial record of all transactions. They are responsible to see that all monies are deposited in a bank as soon as possible and will submit a monthly report, on request, to the elders. The deacons will also supervise the benevolent needs of the Church.

Section E – Approval of Elders and Deacons

Elders and deacons must meet the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1 and Acts 6 (deacons). In addition, they must agree with the Church Constitution. It is the responsibility of the elders and the congregation to assure that all candidates meet these qualifications.

The approval process is a process of identifying and affirming those who have already demonstrated spiritual leadership. Elevation to the position of elder or deacon does not make them a leader: it is an affirmation by the

congregation that they are already leading.

Biblical Qualifications for Elders

An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless--not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. Titus 1:6-9

Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task. Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect.(If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. 1 Timothy 3:1-7

Biblical Qualifications for Deacons

In those days when the number of disciples was increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained against the Hebraic Jews because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food. So the Twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, "It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables. Brothers, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them and will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word." Acts 6:1-4
Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be

tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as deacons. In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well. Those who have served well gain an excellent standing and great assurance in their faith in Christ Jesus. 1 Timothy 3:8-13

Composition of Boards

The Elder Board must consist of a minimum of three men who are not staff members. There is no maximum number of elders. These men must be biblically qualified (as noted above), approved by the membership, and be personally led by the Lord to serve. If there are no men within the congregation qualified to serve as elders, then men from outside the church (who meet the qualifications of elder) can be appointed.

The Elder and Deacon Boards will collectively determine the number of required deacons. Depending on the needs of the congregation, the number of deacons can increase or decrease year by year. These men must also be biblically qualified (as noted above), led by the Lord to serve, and approved by the membership.

Term of Service

Elders and deacons serve for a three-year term. After their term expires, they can be re-elected.

If at any time during his term an elder or deacon fails to meet the qualifications of the office as listed above, he shall be removed from office.

The congregation may bring a claim against an elder or deacon in regard to their failure to meet the scriptural qualifications. According to 1 Timothy 5:19, any accusation must be brought by a minimum of two witnesses. Each claim shall be addressed by the Elder Board or a special subcommittee appointed by the elders.

Selection Process

The Elder Board will annually prepare and publish a process for approval of elders and deacons. A nominating committee will be appointed by the elders each year with the specific task of determining qualified candidates for

the offices of elder and deacon. The nominating committee will consist of at least one member of the pastoral staff, two other members of the Elder or Deacon Boards and two other members of the

Church. The nominating committee will consider the qualifications of men who are members of the Church and will determine if any meet the qualifications of the offices of elder and deacon. It is also their responsibility to ask these men if they are willing to serve. The nominating committee will submit a list of qualified and willing candidates to the Elder Board for approval.

The elders will review the list of potential candidates. At least two weeks prior to the Annual Meeting, the elders will submit the list of approved candidates to the Church membership for their approval.

Section F – Board Procedural Matters

It is the responsibility of the Elder and Deacon Boards to determine appropriate meeting frequency and times. It is also their responsibility to determine an appropriate meeting structure of the boards to determine appropriate procedures for adequate communication with each other. The Elder Board must appoint a chairman and secretary for the organization. The elders are responsible for determining the appropriate structure of the Board; forming subcommittees and task forces as required to adequately care for the Church. They are also responsible for development of procedures, policies, etc., for operation of these groups.

The Deacon Board must appoint a president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer for all legal matters pertaining to the Church. They also must annually prepare a letter stating who is authorized to sign on behalf of the Church in all legal matters. The deacons are also responsible for securing services related to a periodic audit of the finances of the Church. This audit shall be performed a minimum of once every three years.

Section G - Annual Meeting and Special Meetings

Each year, the Church will hold an Annual Meeting. This meeting can have a variety of purposes such as reviewing the events of the past year, setting forth the emphasis of the Church for the next year, status reports, etc. The

elders will establish the agenda of this meeting.

The agenda will include, at a minimum, a membership vote for approval of Church board members and the Church's operating budget.

The elders can call special meetings of the membership at any time.

A quorum of twenty-five percent of the registered membership is necessary at any meeting where a membership vote is scheduled. When less than fifty percent of the membership is present, a two-thirds majority will be required to pass any measure.

Appropriate notification must be given to the congregation prior to holding a meeting. All congregational meetings must appear in a church - wide communication for a minimum of two consecutive weeks prior to the time of the meeting.

Article 5 - Hiring of Pastoral Staff

Section A – Process

From time to time, it is necessary that the Church hire staff to carry out the work of the ministry. Certain roles within the church require that a man of elder quality be hired (a pastoral position versus other type of staff). A ministry description for the pastoral position in question will be prepared and submitted to the elders for their approval of the position. Following approval of the position, the elders may appoint a search committee or commission an individual or group of individuals to search for a qualified candidate. It is the responsibility of the elders to communicate the hiring process to the congregation.

If a search committee is called for, it must be made up of a minimum of three members, two of which must be elders. The committee can also contain deacons or other members.

In general, the hiring process for pastoral staff should approximate the following process:

Seek and collect information from interested candidate(s) [resumes, references, etc.];

Conduct initial interviews [informal discussions or telephone calls] with the candidate(s);

Interview qualified candidate(s) and their spouses (if applicable);
Visit current area of ministry (if applicable);

Conduct a thorough investigation of final candidate(s) including, but not limited to, talking to references about past experience, family life, and reputation, etc.;

Make a final recommendation to the elders.

Depending on the nature of the pastoral hire (is it a public or private ministry position, does it contain a speaking role, etc.), the search committee or elders can add additional and/or special steps to the process (e.g., asking a candidate to speak at services if one of his primary tasks is public teaching).

The elders will meet to consider the recommendation of the search committee or the individuals charged with the hiring process. At the elders' discretion, they may choose to interview the search committee or individual(s), interview the potential candidate, seek additional information, or accept the recommendation of the committee or individual(s) without comment. Approval of the candidate requires a minimum of seventy-five (75) percent vote of the Elder Board.

The elders may elect to seek membership approval of the candidate. If the elders seek membership approval, only one candidate at a time for the same position may be presented to the membership.

Upon hire, the pastor and his wife become members of the Church.

Section B - Qualifications

Pastors must give evidence of the call of God to the position in question; have the gifts and abilities to meet the requirements of the ministry as set forth in the ministry descriptions and adhere to biblical principles

governing church leadership. They must also meet the qualifications of

elder as presented in Timothy and Titus.

Any man desiring to be considered as a candidate for pastor will have read this document and will have agreed in writing to his unreserved agreement with its provisions.

Section C - Withdrawal or Dismissal of Pastor

A pastor may resign from ministry at any time by notifying the elders in writing.

If the Elder Board believes there is cause to remove a pastor or staff member from duty, the Elder Board will create a subcommittee composed of at least three individuals, two of which must be from the Elder Board. The subcommittee will fully investigate the matter and make a recommendation to the Elder Board. The elders can make a recommendation for dismissal with a minimum of seventy-five (75) percent vote of the Elder Board.

Prior to his dismissal, the elders will determine an appropriate plan for termination of the pastor. Factors such as length of service, the circumstances surrounding the need for dismissal, and any other pertinent circumstances, will be considered in preparing the plan. The plan must include elements such as transition time and compensation package (including benefits).

If necessary due to an offense of a serious nature (e.g. infidelity, heresy, etc.), the elders may place the pastor on immediate and indefinite leave, with or without salary and benefits. The congregation will subsequently be advised of the action of the elders.

Article 6 - Recruitment, Responsibilities, and Release of Other Staff

There may be operational needs of the Church that require more time than a volunteer can reasonably give. In these cases, it may be necessary

to hire an individual to complete the work. The need for additional paid staff shall be presented by pastoral staff, department heads, or other persons in leadership positions to the Elder Board for their approval. The presentation should include a ministry description and rationale for the need. The elders must approve the need for additional staff.

Interviewing and hiring of additional staff can be completed by the appropriate supervisor, department head, and/or a team appointed by the Elder Board. The hiring process should closely follow procedures presented in Article 5 Section A.

The staff of the Church must agree with the doctrinal positions of the Church as outlined in this document, be a growing Christian, have a desire to serve God, and be willing to submit to the leadership of the senior staff.

Any party can terminate the employment relationship at any time. Employment of staff may be terminated immediately with cause at any time with written notice. Because the staff needs and the budget of the church may change, employment of staff may also be terminated without cause at any time with written notice. If appropriate, a severance package may be given to the employee who was terminated.

Article 7 - Finances

Section A – Support

The Church will be supported through the freewill offerings of members, attenders, and those interested in its ministry.

Section B - Loans and Credit

Short term loans or notes in excess of 5% of the annual budget must have the approval of the membership. Short term loans or credit shall be repaid within one year. The aggregate total of short term loans or notes shall not exceed a total of 5% of the annual budget.

All long term loans or notes (greater than one year in duration) shall be authorized by the membership.

Section C - Designated Funds

From time to time the elders and deacons may call for special funds for designated projects. These funds will normally be used only for the pur-

pose that they were designated. If, in special circumstances, it is necessary to temporarily use these funds for other matters, their use must be approved by the Deacon and Elder Boards. In the case of emergencies, the deacons may approve the use of designated funds with subsequent ratification of the elders. The monies so used must be replaced as soon as possible.

The elders may, for a variety of reasons, elect to change the purpose of a designated project. The elders are responsible for contacting individuals who contributed to the designated project to ascertain if they are willing to contribute to the revised designation. If the donor does not wish to participate in the revised designation, then the gift will be returned.

Section D - Properties

The title to all property of this church, both real and personal, will be and will remain vested in the Church membership. The Church will have power to acquire and hold property, both real and personal, for the general purpose of the Church. All property so acquired will be in the name of the Church.

Any sale, mortgage, or transfer of real or personal property valued in excess of 10% of the annual budget must be approved by a two-thirds majority vote of the voting members present.

All properties belonging to the Church will be available to attenders and members for purposes consistent with the ministry of the Church. The elders and deacons will regulate these properties and their uses.

Section E - Excess Compensation or Gifts

The elders are responsible for developing a staff policy covering excess compensation. At a minimum this policy shall include a reporting and oversight structure for gifts given to staff members.

Section F - Dissolution

In the event the Church is dissolved, no part of the net earnings of this ecclesiastical corporation will ever be used to the benefit of any member,

donor, director, or officer of the ecclesiastical corporation, or to any private individual. No member, donor, director, or officer of the ecclesiastical corporation, or any private individual will be entitled to share in the distribution of any of the corporate assets.

Upon dissolution, any assets of the corporation must be distributed to any organization that exists exclusively for religious purposes, which is in agreement with the Constitution of this church. Any organization receiving assets must be recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as an exempt organization by statute or under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or any corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law).

Article 8 - Ordination

The Church reserves the right to ordain, commission, or license individuals into Christian ministry. The responsibility of ordination, commissioning, or licensing shall reside with the Elder Board. The elders shall determine an appropriate process for each type of candidate.

The Elder Board will have the power to discipline, even to the revoking of ordination credentials, any minister ordained by the Church. Discipline will be enforced if the ordained minister is guilty of a doctrinal or moral defec-tion.

Article 9 - Amendments

This Constitution, with the exception of the name change as noted in Article 1, may be amended only by a two-thirds majority vote of voting members present at a congregational meeting. The name may be changed or amended by a simple majority vote at a congregational meeting. The elders must first approve the proposed amendment by a simple majority before it is submitted to the membership for a vote.

OTHER ITEMS

Articles II & III of Old Constitution (note Article I is not used)

ARTICLE II – PURPOSE

SECTION A – Phases of its Ministry

The object of this Church is the ministry of the Word of God for the salvation of souls, the edification of Christians, the world-wide proclamation of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the promotion of godly worship, the defense of the “faith once delivered,” and cooperation with Christian activity.

SECTION B – Independence and Autonomy

It is the purpose of the original incorporators of this Church that it shall be, and forever remain an independent and autonomous organization, adhering to the fundamental and premillennial doctrines of the Christian faith, as set forth in the Holy Bible, and as exemplified in the “Statement of Faith and Doctrine” of the Independent Fundamental Churches of America, as amended June 1972.

SECTION C – Udenominational Character

It is likewise the original purpose of this Church, in accordance with the New Testament example and teaching, that it shall forever remain free from denominationalism. It shall for this reason, avoid identification with denominations or associations of Churches by means of its name, or by the observance of traditions peculiar to such denominations or associations. It shall never change its name or nor its polity so as to affect such identifications. (1 Corinthians 1:11-13; 3; 1-9.)

SECTION D – Amendments to ARTICLE II

The provisions of Article II shall be amended only by unanimous consent of the Membership.

ARTICLE III – FELLOWSHIP

SECTION A – Fellowship with Other Local Churches

Fellowship with other local independent churches shall be maintained by this Church. It may also enter into such cooperation with other fundamental churches as shall not jeopardize its undenominational and fundamental position. To this end, the Church may be a member of and affiliate with the Independent Fundamental Churches of America, as long as such membership does not jeopardize its independence or fundamental character.

SECTION B – Affiliation with Local Church Councils

Affiliation or cooperation with local church councils, etc., shall be such as shall not compromise the fundamental doctrinal position of this Church.

SECTION C – Amendments of ARTICLE III

The provisions of Article III shall be amended only by unanimous consent of the Membership.



ada bible church

8899 cascade road se • ada, mi 49301

616.868.7005 • adabible.org