

# Constitution of Providence Bible Church

## **PREAMBLE**

We, the members of Providence Bible Church, do establish the following Articles, to which we voluntarily and solemnly submit ourselves.

## **ARTICLE I: NAME**

The name of this church shall be: Providence Bible Church of Fort Collins.

## **ARTICLE II: PURPOSE**

The purpose of this church is to glorify the God of the Scriptures by maintaining and promoting His worship both individually and corporately, by edifying His saints, and by evangelizing sinners.

## **ARTICLE III: AFFILIATION**

Providence Bible Church believes, as our Confession states, that 'churches ... ought to hold communion among themselves, for their peace, increase of love, and mutual edification.' (BCF, 26.14) For this reason, Providence Bible Church is affiliated with the Fellowship of Independent Reformed Evangelicals (FIRE). FIRE is not a denomination, rather, 'a unifying network for independent reformed baptistic churches to experience mutual edification, fellowship, cooperation and prayerful support in ministries and missions.'

In our affiliation with FIRE, Providence Bible Church yields neither its authority nor autonomy as a local church.

## **ARTICLE IV: Statement of Faith**

### **A. Authority**

We maintain that the Holy Scriptures are accepted as the only final authority and statement of absolute truth. The Bible is the ultimate authority in all matters of faith, order, and morals. Thus, we desire to be thoroughly biblical and God-Centered in all we do: doctrine, leadership, ministry, worship, and life. We do not desire to place legalistic and unscriptural demands on our fellow brethren. Furthermore, neither do we encourage a degeneration into sinful indulgence by ignoring God's clear commands.

2 Ti.3:16-17; 4:1-2

### **B. Creeds and Confessions**

We declare ourselves to be in substantial agreement with many of the ancient confessions of faith; such as the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, and the Definition of Chalcedon. We hold to the 'Solas' of the reformation (Scripture, Christ, Grace, Faith, the Glory of God alone) as most recently expressed in The Cambridge Declaration. We further regard the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689 as a good, though not inspired, expression of the teachings of the Word of God. We adopt the confession as our secondary doctrinal standard under Charles Spurgeon's following disclaimer:

This little volume is not issued as an authoritative rule, or code of faith, whereby you are to be fettered, but as an assistance to you in controversy, a confirmation in faith, and a means of edification in righteousness. Here the younger members of our church will have a body of divinity in small compass, and by means of the

Scriptural proofs, will be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in them.

#### C. The Bible, the Word of God

We believe the Bible, consisting of 66 books (Genesis through Malachi and Matthew through Revelation), was written by holy men of God who were controlled by the Holy Spirit. The result of their collective work is the inspired Word of God. The Bible is without error in the original manuscripts. The Bible perfectly reveals the will of God, and therefore is the basis for Christian unity and the standard by which all conduct, creeds and opinions should be judged.

2 Pe. 1:19-21; 2 Ti. 3:15-17; Psalm 19:7-14

#### D. God, the Holy Trinity

We believe that there is one and only one living and true God, an infinite, personal, holy, and good Spirit, the Creator, Sustainer, Governor, Judge, and Redeemer. He is inexpressibly glorious in all His perfections and worthy of all honor, confidence, and love. In the unity of the one God there are three Persons, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Each of these three Persons executes a distinct but harmonious office in the work of redemption.

1 Co. 8:4-6; Rom. 11:36; Jn. 4:24; 10:30; 1 Ti. 1:17; 4:10; Eph. 1:3-14; Mt. 28:19

#### E. The Creation and Fall of Man

We believe that God created mankind, male and female, in His own image and in righteousness holiness, though capable of sinning. By voluntary disobedience man fell from that happy and holy state. As a result, every person born is a sinner by nature. From birth all are utterly void of the righteousness required by God and are positively inclined only to evil. Therefore all are

under God's righteous condemnation to eternal ruin, and without any excuse or hope apart from the love and grace of God.

Gen. 1-3; Rom. 3:9-19; 5:12-19; Eph. 2:1-10

#### F. God's gracious purpose

We believe that God freely, sovereignly, and graciously chose in eternity past specific sinners to share in His salvation through Jesus Christ. God graciously regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and preserves His chosen ones in time through the Gospel. God's choice is not based on foreseen faith, yet is consistent with the free agency of man; it comprehends all the means in connection with the end. God's choice of sinners is a glorious display of His sovereign love, and is infinitely gracious, wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes all boasting, and promotes love, humility, worship, prayer, and trust in God; it encourages the sinner to seek God. God's choice may be seen by its effects in all who believe the Gospel, and it is the foundation of Christian assurance. To make certain that we are God's chosen requires the utmost diligence.

2 Th. 2:13-14; Col. 3:12-17; Eph. 1:3-14; Rom. 8:28-29; 2 Ti. 2:10; 2 Pe. 1:10-11; Mt. 28:18-20 with Jn. 17:2

#### G. The way of salvation

We believe that the salvation of sinners is entirely of grace, through the Son of God, Jesus Christ. He is the mediator between God and man. In obedience to the Father, He freely took up on Himself our human nature (yet without sin). He honored God's law by His personal and complete obedience. By His death He atoned for the sins of His people. Having risen from the dead, He is now at the Father's right hand where He intercedes for us. As both God and man, He is in every way qualified to be an all sufficient Savior.

Eph. 2:8-10; Rom. 4:25; 5:19; 8:3; Heb. 2:9-18; 7:25; 1 Ti.

2:4-6; Gal. 3:13

#### H. Regeneration

We believe that, in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again. Regeneration consists in the impartation of Divine life to the soul, whereby the mind and heart are inclined toward God. It is effected in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit, in connection with the Word of the Gospel, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the Gospel. The evidence of regeneration consists in the holy fruit of repentance and faith leading to holiness and newness of life manifested in obedience to God's commandments.

Jn. 1:12-13; 3:1-13; James 1:18; Acts 2:37-47; Titus 3:4-6; 1 Pe. 1:22-25; 1 Jn. 2:3-6; Eph. 4:17-24

#### I. Repentance and Faith

We believe that repentance and faith are sacred duties and inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God. In repentance and faith we turn to God with sincere contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy, being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger and helplessness, and of the way of salvation through Christ. At the same time, we heartily receive the Lord Jesus Christ in His mediatorial offices as our Prophet, Priest and King and rely Him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior.

1 Jn. 3:23; Acts 2:37-38; 11:18; 17:30; Eph. 2:8; Rom. 10:9-13

#### J. Justification by Grace through Faith alone

We believe that the great Gospel blessing which Christ secures to believers is justification. Justification includes the forgiveness of sin and the gift of eternal life on the basis of God's righteousness in Christ. It is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of merit which we have done, but solely through faith alone and on

the basis of Christ's obedience and death. By virtue of Christ's obedience and death, His perfect righteousness is imputed to us by God. Justification brings us into a state of blessed peace and acceptance with God, establishes the basis for God's treatment of us as sons, and secures every other blessing needed for time and eternity.

Rom. 3:21-5:21; 8:14-17; 31-39; 2 Co. 5:21

#### K. The Free Offer of the Gospel

We believe that the blessings of salvation are offered freely to all without distinction by the gospel. It is the immediate duty of all to accept these blessings by a cordial, penitent and obedient faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Nothing prevents the salvation of any sinner but his own inherent depravity and willful rejection of the Gospel. Such rejection aggravates the condemnation of the sinner.

Is. 55:1-2; Mt. 11:20-24, 23:37-39; 28-30; Rev. 22:17; Acts 17:30; Heb. 2:1-4; Rom. 1:16-17

#### L. Sanctification

We believe that sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of His holiness.

Sanctification is a definitive work begun at regeneration with a radical change of one's affections toward sin, and a setting apart of the believer to God. We are sanctified by virtue of our union with Christ. We continue to be sanctified in the progressive work of the Holy Spirit in our hearts, in an on-going separation from sin and a dedication to God through the regular use of the appointed means -- especially the study of the word of God, self examination, self denial, prayer, watchfulness, and Christian fellowship.

2 Pe. 1:4-11; Mt. 6:9-13; 26:41; Acts 20:36; Rom. 6; 7:5-6; Eph. 4:1-6:20; Lam.3:40

#### M. The Perseverance of the Saints

We believe that all those whom the Father chose unto life, and redeemed in His Son, and sanctified by His Spirit shall surely persevere unto the end and be saved. Their love for Christ and perseverance in holiness are the grand marks which distinguish them from false professors of faith. A special providence watches over the welfare of believers, and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto final salvation and glory.

Jn. 6:39-44, 66-71; 10:26-29; Mt. 10:24-33; 13:1-23; 25:1-13; 1Pe. 1:3-5; 2:1-12; Rom. 8:28-39

#### N. The Church of Christ

We believe that the Church of Jesus Christ in the most inclusive sense consists of all the elect of God who have or shall come to faith in His word concerning Jesus Christ. This is the one Body of Christ. Visible love and unity is to prevail among all true believers in our common Lord and we gladly pronounce a benediction upon all who love Him in sincerity. We believe that the primary emphasis given to the doctrine of the Church in the New Testament is to local churches in various geographical locations, each having its own ordinances, order, and leadership. These churches are congregations of baptized believers, associated in the fellowship of the Gospel for worship, ministry, evangelism, instruction, and observance of the ordinances, according to the Word of God. Church leadership consists of Elders and Deacons and it's only Head is Christ. Under the direction of the Holy Spirit, each church is separate from the state, free from human ecclesiastical authorities, and divinely authorized to decide all its internal and external affairs and associations.

Heb. 12:22-24; Phil. 1:1; Jn. 13:34-35; Rom. 12:4-5; Acts 14:23; I Co. 1:2

#### O. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

These are two ordinances of special significance which our Lord has commanded us to observe. We believe that neither of them has saving merit. Christian baptism is the immersion in water of a believer, in the Name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Baptism proclaims our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and symbolizes our death to sin and resurrection to a new life.

We believe that the Lord's Supper is a sacred commemorative meal in which believers, by partaking of bread and wine, remember and proclaim the dying love of the Lord Jesus Christ, until He returns. Participation in the Lord's Supper should always be preceded by solemn self-examination.

Acts 2:27-41; 1Co. 11:17-34; Mt. 26:26-29; 28:18-20; Luke 22:17-20; Rom. 6:3-6

P. The State, Authority, and Government We acknowledge as our ultimate authority the Lord Jesus Christ, who is the head of the Church. We embrace the Holy Scriptures as our only final and binding authority given to us by Christ in and for every area of life, faith and practice. The authority of Christ is binding upon every member of this church.

Eph. 5:23; Jn. 8:31; 2Ti. 1:13; 4:1-4; 2Th. 3:6; Col. 2:6-10

We believe that Christ, through the Holy Scriptures, directs the affairs of the church through elders of the Church. The elders themselves at all times and in all of their activities are subject to the authority of Holy Scripture.

Acts 14:21-23; 1Co. 1:24; 4:1-2; Eph. 4:8-16; 2 Co. 1:24; 2:17; 4:1-5; 1Ti. 5:19-21



## Q. The Last Things

We believe that at the Last Day the Lord Jesus Christ will descend from heaven and will be visibly manifested as Lord to the whole world. All who have died will be bodily raised. The Lord Jesus will judge and condemn all who do not know God and do not obey the Gospel, but He will bring salvation to those who are waiting for Him. The wicked will be condemned to everlasting torment in Hell. The Lord Jesus will glorify His elect and receive them into the everlasting joy of His presence. At His coming the Lord Jesus Christ will establish His Kingdom. We confess our hope and confidence in these things with the prayer, 'Even so, Come, Lord Jesus!'

Mt. 24:36; 25:31; Jn. 5:28-29; Rev. 21:3, 8; Mark 13:26-27; 2Th. 1:7-10

## **ARTICLE V: AGREEMENT**

We do promise and endeavor by God's grace ...

to worship only the one true and living God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who has revealed Himself to us in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, to have no other gods before Him, and to declare His glory to the nations

to meet together on Lord's-days, and to sanctify the day by special exercises of public and private worship; and to meet together at other times, as the Lord gives us opportunities

to worship God in His appointed way and to exclude from our worship anything that He has not appointed

to refrain from using the name of our God emptily or to take it

upon ourselves carelessly, but to walk in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake

to raise our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; by maintaining family devotions and generally cultivating God-honoring lives and homes

to honor and obey, within the bounds of Scripture, all our superiors, whether in family, church, state, or business; and, if we be superiors, to deal reasonably and lovingly with our subordinates and thus to teach them by word and example to fear God and keep His commandments

to avoid whatever tends to destroy us or our neighbors and to engage vigorously in all lawful endeavors to preserve our own lives and the lives of others, especially by ready reconciliation and faithful exhortation in the church

to bear one another's burdens, to cultivate genuine fellowship

to watch over each other's lives, and not to allow sin upon one another, so far as God shall reveal it to us; and to stir up one another to love and good works; to warn, rebuke, and admonish one another with gentleness, according to the rules left to us by Christ

to pray for one another, and for the glory and increase of this church, and for the presence of God in it, and the pouring forth of His Spirit on it, and His protection over it to His glory

to bear with one another's weaknesses, failings, and infirmities, with much tenderness, not revealing them to any outside the church, nor any inside, unless it is according to Christ's rule, and

the order of the Gospel provided in that case

to strive together for the truth of the Gospel and purity of God's ways and ordinances, to avoid causes, and causers of division, endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace

to possess our bodies in holiness as vessels joined to Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit and to avoid all uncleanness of thought, speech, or action; to walk in holiness, godliness, humility, and brotherly love

to be diligent in our vocations, that we may provide for our own households, avoid theft of time, money, or goods, and have to give to him who has need

to earnestly promote truth among men and to avoid anything that would prejudice the truth or injure our neighbor's good name

to be fully content with our own condition in life, to rejoice in the advancement of our neighbor, and to avoid envying him or coveting anything that is his

to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the church

These and all other Gospel duties we humbly submit unto, promising and purposing to perform, not in our own strength, being conscious of our own weakness, but in the power and strength of the blessed God, Whose we are, and Whom we desire to serve. To Whom be glory now and for evermore. Amen.

## **ARTICLE VI: MEMBERSHIP**

### **A. Warrant for Membership**

The New Testament demands of all Christians, formal, open, solemn, voluntary and enduring commitment to Jesus Christ, to His truth and to His people. A true Christian's commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ must include, and is inseparable from his commitment to Christ's truth and to Christ's people. Such a commitment to Christ, His truth and His people ordinarily requires a formal, open, solemn, voluntary and enduring commitment of church membership in a local church for the following biblical reasons:

- 1. Fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission requires church membership. According to the Great Commission of Christ (Mt. 28:18-20) there is an inseparable connection between making disciples, baptizing them and teaching them. The Apostles implemented this commission by gathering baptized disciples into local churches. It was therefore in local churches that baptized disciples were taught all that Christ commanded (Acts 2:38-42, 1 Co. 4:17). With the uncertain exception of the Ethiopian eunuch, the New Testament knows nothing of believing men and women who are not members of local churches.
- 2. Obedience to Christ's directive to observe the Lord's Table requires church membership. Since all believing men and women are required by Christ to observe the Lord's Table (Luke 22:19; 1 Co. 11:23-25), and since the Lord's Table is clearly a local church ordinance (1 Co. 11:17-18, 33-34; cp. 1 Co. 1:1-2), it follows that all Christians must belong to a local Bible-believing church in order to partake

biblically.

- 3. The New Testament presents the local church as a group of individuals which could:
  - a. be counted (Acts 2:41-42; 4:4)
  - b. be added to (Acts 2:47; 5:14)
  - c. be called upon to select leaders and representatives from among itself (Acts 6:1-6; 2 Co. 8:19, 23; Acts 15:22)
  - d. be officially gathered together (Acts 14:27; 15:22)
  - e. carry out church discipline (Mt. 18:17; 1 Co. 5:4, 13; 2 Co. 2:6)
  - f. observe the Lord's table as a wholly present corporate assembly (1 Co. 11:17-20, 33-34)

There is therefore clear biblical warrant for the existence and careful maintenance of local church membership involving formal, open, solemn, voluntary and enduring commitment. This biblical warrant compels us to use great care in maintaining a biblically-ordered church membership.

#### B. Requisites for Membership

- 1. To be eligible for membership, a man or woman (Acts 5:14; 8:3, 12) must demonstrate repentance toward God and the fruits thereof (Acts 26:20), as well as that faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21) which produces godly works (Eph. 2:8-10; James 2:18, 22) beginning with believer's baptism.

- 2. The candidate for membership must also profess full agreement with our Statement of Faith (Article IV). Occasionally, individuals may have reservations about specific doctrinal positions. The church still allows that these may be considered members in good standing if they declare their specific reservations (privately to the eldership), and commit not to speak contrary to the church's doctrinal positions (Note: men who maintain such doctrinal reservations shall not be considered for service as an elder of this church -- see Article IX: Officers). The candidate must also be willing to submit to the constitution of this Church, noting carefully the Agreement of Fellowship (Article V), and the governmental structure of this church. Finally, he or she must not be under the biblically warranted, corrective discipline of a genuine church (3 Jn. 9-10; Mt. 18:17-18; 1 Co. 5:11-13; 2 Th. 3:6, 14-15; 2 Co. 2:6-8).
- 3. Church members must be in submission to the appointed rule of the church to which they belong (Heb. 13:17). He who cannot intelligently and freely submit to a church's government or elders should not belong to that church.
- 4. Anyone who is in substantial disagreement with the constitution of the church could not be consistently submissive to the church's teaching ministry. Therefore, to admit such a person to membership would be unwise (Eph. 4:3) and unscriptural.
- 5. Mastery of church confessions is not required for church membership. Such a requirement would violate the order of Mt. 28:19-20, which instructs us to disciple, to baptize, and then to teach the baptized disciple to observe all things whatsoever Christ has commanded. He or she should be able to profess a general agreement with the Confession (Article IV) together with a willingness to be taught.

- 6. If one who is already a member of the church at any time concludes that he no longer satisfies the requirements for membership, he is obligated to inform the elders of that fact, and both actively begin seeking another fellowship and submission to dismissal of this church.
- 7. All who are received into the membership of the church (according to the procedures set forth in Section C of this Article), and who do not come under the corrective discipline of the church (as set forth in Article VII), shall be considered regular members in good standing and entitled to all the rights and privileges of membership in the church (Acts 2:37-47).

### **C. Reception into Membership**

- 1. Any person desiring to become a member of the church must submit a written testimony to the elders explaining his understanding and experience of the Gospel of Christ. Exceptions to this requirement shall be determined by the elders in cases involving extraordinary circumstances. The written testimony is intended to promote a proper evaluation of the potential member and to encourage knowledgeable fellowship with him. The elders may request further clarification and/or expansion of this written testimony before proceeding with the application process.
- 2. If the applicant has been a member of another church, the elders will investigate his standing in that church before he is accepted as a member in this church. Where it is possible and appropriate, a letter of transfer will be requested. Reception by transfer does not negate any of the requirements for becoming a member in this assembly.
- 3. Upon the reception of an acceptable written testimony, the elders may at their discretion ask for a

preliminary meeting with the applicant; otherwise, the name of the applicant shall be announced for at least three consecutive Lord's Days at stated meetings of the church. This time period is for the purpose of enabling the members to read his testimony and to raise any questions or objections concerning the applicant's qualifications. Members are expected to consider this a personal duty of the most serious character. They are expected to voice privately to the elders all questions or objections that have not yet been resolved, after personal contact has been made with the applicant (Mt. 18:15ff; Lev. 19:16-17). During the application process, the applicant will be interviewed. During the interview the elder(s) will seek to clarify any questions the applicant may have concerning the church or church membership. They shall also determine whether or not that person meets the qualifications as stated in Article VI, Section B, of the Constitution and, if necessary, resolve any questions or objections raised by the church. The elders may postpone the reception of the person into membership until any objections can be resolved. If the elders are satisfied that the applicant meets the qualifications, the person will be received at a stated meeting of the church (Mt. 3:6-12; Acts 9:26-27; 1 Jn. 4:1; Rev. 2:2).

#### D. Privileges of Membership

In God's order, commitment normally constitutes the pathway to the possession of privileges. Therefore, membership in this church includes the following privileges:

- 1. Participation in the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:41-42; 1 Co. 11:18-26, 33);
- 2. Attendance at, appropriate participation in church business meetings (Acts 6:1-6 (cp. Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:13-14); 1 Co. 5:4-7; 13 (cp. 1 Co. 1:2));



- 3. Laboring to extend God's Kingdom in ministries of the church (as one's gifts, graces and calling make appropriate) (1 Co. 12:4-27 (cp. 1 Co. 1:2); Eph. 4:7; 11-12; 16; 1 Pe. 4:10-11).
- 4. Reception of the committed oversight and care of the pastors of the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Pe. 5:2-3).
- 5. Reception of the committed care and discipline (as needed) of the membership of the church (Acts 6:1-2 (cp. Acts 2:41; 5:13-14; 9:26); 1 Co. 5:4-5 (cp. 1 Co. 1:2); Gal. 6:10).

## **E. Requirements of Membership**

- 1. All the members of this church are expected to attend worship services on the Lord's Day unless providentially hindered by illness, unusual working conditions, and other such circumstances (Heb. 10:24-25). Members are strongly encouraged to attend other official services so deemed by the elders.
- 2. All the members are strongly encouraged to attend other stated meetings of the church including, church business meetings, or any special meetings that the elders shall occasionally deem necessary. When any member must absent from the above stated meetings, he or she is encouraged to inform an elder.
- 3. All the members of the church are strongly encouraged to make use of the various other means of grace that are available to them, such as daily private prayer and systematic reading of the Bible, daily family worship, and a proper reverence for and observance of the Lord's Day.
- 4. All the members of this church are strongly encouraged to financially support the work of the Lord by

systematic and proportionate giving made through the local church (Mal. 3:8-10; 1 Co. 16:1-2; 2 Co. chs. 8-9) as we are clearly taught in the Scriptures. Added to this should be gifts and offerings according to one's ability and the willingness of his heart (2 Co. 8:1-5; Ex. 36:2-7).

- 5. All the members of this church are expected to obey the teachings of Scripture in respect to the life and government of the family. The husband is the God-appointed head of the family and must rule his household with gentleness, love, wisdom, and firmness (Eph. 5:25ff; 1 Ti. 3:4, 5; 1 Pe. 3:7). The wife must be in Scriptural subjection to her husband in all things (Eph. 5:22-24; 1 Pe. 3:1-6). The husband and wife must bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:1-4). This includes setting a godly example before them, consistently instructing them from the Scriptures (Deut. 6:4-9), and administering corporal chastening to them when needed (Prov. 13:24; 22:15; 29:15; Heb. 12:7).
- 6. It is the duty of every Christian, as an individual and as a member of a local church, to labor by prayer, word, and deed for the extension of the kingdom of God in ever widening circles, beginning at home and stretching forth to the ends of the earth (Is. 54:1-3; Acts 1:8). Therefore, every member of this church is expected prayerfully to recognize and to seize every opportunity to bear witness to his faith in Christ, both by consistent Christian conduct and by the testimony of his lips.
- 7. Each member of the church is required to render loyal obedience to all the moral precepts of God's Word in his daily life (Rom. 8:3-4; 1 Co. 9:20-21; James 2:12). If God has not condemned or forbidden a practice in His Word, a Christian is at liberty to participate in it. The exercise of Christian liberty, however, must at all times be governed by an earnest desire to walk in the fear of God and to glorify Him in all things (1 Pe. 1:17; 1 Co. 10:31), a loving regard

for the consciences of weaker brethren (1 Co. 8:9; Rom. 15:1-3), a compassion for the lost (1 Co. 9:19-22), and a zealous regard for the health of one's own soul (Rom. 13:14; 1 Co. 6:12; 9:24-27; Gal. 5:22-23; 1 Pe. 2:16).

- 8. All who come into the membership of this church are expected to recognize and to submit to the authority of the overseers of the church (1 Co. 16:15-16; 1 Th. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:17).
- 9. We who have been joined to Christ by faith and are members of this church are also members one of another (Rom. 12:5). With this privileged relationship come particular responsibilities. We must maintain mutual transparency and honesty (Eph. 4:25). We must rejoice in each other's honor and bear one another's sorrows (1 Co. 12:26). We must discreetly confess our faults one to another (James 5:16). We must mutually oversee each other, faithfully admonish and encourage one another, avoid all backbiting and gossip, and keep in strict confidence all matters which the elders determine are of private concern to the church (Prov. 11:13; Mt. 18:15ff; 1 Th. 5:14-15; Heb. 3:12-13; 10:24-25). Also, we must, when necessary, help meet the material needs of our brethren (Gal. 6:10; James 2:14-16; 1 Jn. 3:16-18).

## **F. Termination of Membership**

- 1. *Types of Termination*
  - a. By Physical Death.  
When a member of the church is removed from our midst by death, his name shall be transferred to the file of former members.
  - b. By Transfer

- (1) Because the New Testament norm for Christians is that they be members of true local churches of Christ, and because the spiritual health of believers is endangered when they are not thus committed to a church, any Christian who leaves the membership of this church should seek to do so by means of transfer to another true church of Christ. Therefore, if a church member in good standing whose conduct does not warrant corrective discipline desires to leave the membership of this church, he is strongly urged to leave in an orderly way by privately indicating that desire to the elders along with his reasons for leaving, and by submitting a request to the elders for a transfer of membership to another true church of Christ.
- (2) When such a departing member has not yet chosen a suitable church to which he may transfer, the elders may provide, if he wishes, for a transitional period which will allow the departing member to decide where he wishes to be transferred. Such a transitional status will be allowed to continue as long as the departing member maintains regular contact with the elders, does not unnecessarily prolong the transitional process, and does not engage in conduct requiring the exercise of church discipline.
- (3) When it is so requested, the elders may transfer a departing member of good standing to the fellowship of another church. A letter of transfer will be sent to the appropriate officer(s) of the church to which the member wishes to transfer. No such letter may be given to a member who is at the time under the corrective discipline of this church. The elders may refuse to grant a letter of transfer to any church which is in

their judgment disloyal to 'the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints' (Jude 3) or which does not exercise godly care over its members.

- c. By Dismissal
  - (1) Occasionally, a person's membership may need to be terminated under circumstances which make both transfer and corrective discipline inappropriate. In such circumstances a member may be dismissed.
  - (2) While there is no explicit precedent for Dismissal in the New Testament, it is required by biblical principles, including the voluntary nature of local church membership (Acts 5:13; 9:26; 1 Jn. 2:19), by the demands of biblically defined love and justice (Lam. 3:31-33; 1 Co. 13:4a, 5a, 7a; Prov. 17:15; 18:5); and by the exigencies of a church not yet wholly redeemed and facing the results of nearly 2000 years of church history.
  - (3) Dismissal may be initiated either by the written request of a member to the elders, or by the elders themselves when a member ceases to maintain vital contact with this church. In either case, the final decision regarding the action of Dismissal will lie with the elders. Church membership is a very serious matter. Members, therefore, shall be dismissed only after due inquiry and admonition by the elders, whenever such contact is possible. Before any individual is dismissed, the church shall be informed of the intention of the elders to dismiss the individual. This information must include the grounds for the proposed Dismissal. A suitable period of time following the announcement shall be given for the church to privately raise concerns with the elders.

After due consideration of such concerns, the elders may proceed with Dismissal. When possible, they shall send a letter to the dismissed individual informing him of his Dismissal. The elders shall subsequently communicate to the church that the person has been dismissed. If one who has been dismissed applies again for membership, the normal procedures shall be followed as set forth in Section C of this Article.

- (4) Dismissal may be warranted for any of the following reasons:

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- (a) A member in good standing concludes that he is not truly saved.
- (b) A member in good standing wishes to terminate his membership for reasons that do not impugn his Christian profession.
- (c) A member ceases to maintain vital contact with this church due to relocation or other unique circumstances.

- d. By Excommunication

According to the teaching of Holy Scripture, a church must cut off from its fellowship and visible membership any person who teaches or insists on holding to false and heretical doctrine, or who blatantly or persistently conducts himself in a manner inconsistent with his Christian profession, or who persists in disturbing the unity or peace of the church (Mt. 18:15ff; 1 Co. 5:1f; Rom 16:17; Titus 3:10-11). The procedure to be followed in such excommunication is set forth in Article VII, Section B, of this Constitution.

- 2. *Implications of Termination*

- a. Providence Bible Church does not exist in isolation from, but is part of the universal church of Christ, composed of all true churches. Accordingly, open and forthright communication among the churches is vital for the purity, peace, edification and unity of the church universal. Therefore the elders may, at their discretion, disclose to the members of this church and to other churches the circumstances under which a person's membership was terminated (Acts 15:24; 1 Ti. 1:20; 2 Ti. 2:17; 4:10; 1 Jn. 2:18, 19).
- b. In addition, Providence Bible Church does not exist in isolation from society at large. Accordingly, this church has a moral obligation to society both to act with integrity and to maintain its testimony (2 Co. 8:20-21). Therefore, the elders may, at their discretion, disclose to other persons outside the ecclesiastical circles mentioned above the circumstances under which a person's membership was terminated (Lev. 5:1; Prov. 29:24; 1 Pe. 4:15).
- c. Termination of membership does not give license to former members to sow discord, spread false teachings or reports, or engage in any other behavior which threatens the peace and unity of this church or the church universal. Accordingly, when it is established that a former member is behaving divisively, the elders may issue whatever warnings they deem appropriate to maintain and preserve the peace and harmony of this church and the church universal (Acts 15:24; Rom. 16:17-20; 1 Ti. 1:20; 2 Ti. 2:17; 4:10; 1 Jn. 2:18, 19).

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#### G. Records of Membership

The elders shall keep a file of all past and present members.

This file shall have two divisions: current members and former members. The file of former members shall include the date and reason church membership was terminated, as well as any other necessary information (see Article VI, Section C).

## **ARTICLE VII: CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

### **A. Formative Discipline**

Every disciple (follower) of Christ must be under His discipline (His instruction and correction), which is administered to each one through the church (1 Co. 12:12-27; 1 Th. 5:12-15; Heb. 3:12-13; 10:24-25). Mutual submission to one another (Eph. 5:21) and to the overseers whom the Lord has set over His church (1 Pe. 5:5) will result in the sanctification of each member individually and of the whole body of the church collectively. There are occasions, however, when one's failure to respond to this formative discipline makes the application of corrective discipline necessary.

### **B. Corrective Discipline**

Corrective discipline becomes necessary when heretical doctrine or disorderly, immoral, or scandalous conduct appears among the members of the church. As a general rule and whenever feasible, an effort must be made to resolve difficulty, correct error, and remove offense through counsel and admonition before more drastic steps are taken (Gal. 6:1; James 5:19, 20). The principles given to us (Mt. 18:15-17, Rom. 16:17-20, 1 Co. 5:1-13, 2 Th. 3:6-15, 1 Ti. 5:19-20, Titus 3:10, Jude 22-23, 1Th. 5:14) must be carefully followed and applied to each and every case of corrective discipline as appropriate. In some cases public



admonition and/or public repentance may be warranted (Mt. 18:17; 1 Ti. 5:20). In the most extreme cases excommunication from the membership of the church may be necessary (Mt. 18:17; Rom. 16:17-20; 1 Co. 5:1-13; 1 Ti. 1:20; Titus 3:10). All the members of the church are obliged to submit to and enforce as appropriate the decision of the church in acts of corrective discipline.

- 1. Means of Punishment

Since the church is a spiritual and religious institution, the punishments inflicted by the church in corrective discipline (2 Co. 6:7) are also spiritual. They include public verbal reproof (Mt. 18:17; 1 Ti. 5:20), social avoidance (Rom. 16:17; 1 Co. 5:9-11; 2 Th. 3:6, 14), suspension from the Lord's Supper (1 Co. 5:11), and removal from the membership of the church (Mt. 18:17; 1 Co. 5:13). They are intended to effect repentance through a sense of sorrow and shame (2 Co. 2:7; 2 Th. 3:14). The church has no right, however, to confiscate goods, revoke conjugal rights, or inflict corporal punishment of any kind. Nevertheless, a member guilty of criminal actions may be delivered to the civil authorities according to the rule of Scripture (1 Pe. 4:15).

- 2. Goal of Correction

The goals of corrective discipline are always the glory of God, the welfare and purity of the church (1 Co. 5:6) and the restoration and spiritual growth of the offender (1 Co. 5:5; 2 Co. 2:5-8; 1 Ti. 5:20).

- 3. Process of Correction

If anyone who is charged with serious misconduct<sup>[1]</sup> persists in the sin, after having been confronted and admonished from Scripture, they may be admonished a second time with at least one Elder present (representing

the consenting Board of Elders). If the individual remains unrepentant they shall be exposed to the church membership as such. This action shall be communicated privately to the membership of the church following a Sunday service (Mt. 18:15-17). At this time the entire church body shall begin to pray for and call the individual to repentance. After a thirty-day period, during which time the church should be engaged in much prayer, if the individual remains unrepentant, they are removed from the membership of the church and expelled until which time they repent (Mt. 18:17; 1 Co. 5:2, 7; 2 Th. 3:6, 14). This action too shall be communicated privately to the membership of the church following our Sunday-morning worship service. Thus communicated, the body will continue to pray for the individual to come to repentance but shall have no Christian fellowship with them.

- 4. Restoration

Excommunication is not intended to be the final 'step' of church discipline; the goal is rather restoration to the offended, the church, and to the Lord Jesus Christ. Since one purpose of church discipline is to restore a fallen brother or sister, it is the duty of the church to forgive and to restore to full membership a suspended or excommunicated member who gives satisfactory evidence of his repentance. Hence, upon both private and public statements and deeds of remorse and repentance the individual shall be fully restored to the body (Mt. 18:15; James 5:19-20; Gal. 6:1; 2 Co. 2:5-11.) to the glory of God. This shall be done in a duly convened business meeting of the church.

## **ARTICLE VIII: ORDINANCES**

### **A. General Statement**

There are two ordinances of special significance that our Lord has commanded us to observe, namely, Baptism and the Lord's

Supper. Neither of them has saving merit, nor is any grace imparted to the recipient through the water of Baptism or through the bread and the cup of the Supper. These ordinances are not means of 'special grace,' but they are special 'means of grace' and powerful aids to the faith of the believers who participate in them.

## B. Baptism

Only confessed disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ are proper candidates for Baptism (Acts 2:38, 41, 47; 5:13, 14). Baptism in water is the God-ordained sign of one's personal union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and the door of entrance into the visible community of the people of God. Immersion in water is the biblical mode of baptism, is necessary for its due administration, and is the only mode to be administered by this church.

## C. The Lord's Supper

Whereas Baptism is the initiatory ordinance by which one enters the visible church and should be observed only once by each believer; the Lord's Supper should be celebrated frequently by the assembled church (1 Co. 11:26). While this is a most holy ordinance and should be observed with solemnity and dignity, the bread and the cup of the Supper are and remain only symbols of the broken body and the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. In order to maintain the purity of this ordinance, the elders will faithfully seek to insure that only true believers who are members in good standing of true churches are admitted to the Table. Children who come to faith in Christ may partake of the Lord's Supper only after meeting with the elders and their parents to verify their readiness. Visiting believers will be encouraged to partake in the Lord's Table only if they regularly fellowship, and are in good standing in a like-minded church. True believers

whose church membership involves unusual circumstances may be admitted at the discretion of the elders. The Church purposes to celebrate the Lord's Supper every other month.

## **ARTICLE IX: OFFICERS**

### **A. General Statement**

Jesus Christ alone is the Head of His Church (Col. 1:18). He has ordained that individual churches should be governed by Himself through officers whom He appoints, who are endowed by His Spirit with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work. Christ has ordained that local churches are to be administered by elders and deacons. Beside these two offices the Scriptures acknowledge no office which continues in the church today (Phil. 1:1; 1Ti. 3:1-13).

### **B. General Prerequisites**

- 1. All officers of this church must be members of it except as provided in Section H of this Article.
- 2. Any individual set apart to one of these offices must not only be able to wholeheartedly and conscientiously affirm his full agreement with the church's Statement of Faith and Constitution -- but also have the capacity to biblically defend them. Further, a candidate for eldership should be thoroughly conversant with the Confession. He should be able to profess a general agreement with the Confession, noting carefully any exceptions of which he is aware providing Scriptural support for his conviction. If an elder should at any time radically move from these doctrinal positions, he would be under spiritual and moral obligation to immediately declare such to his fellow elders in an orderly manner. Depending upon the doctrine involved and his strength of conviction his fellow elders may request his

resignation as an elder and possibly seek dismissal from the church per Article VI.F.1.c.

- 3. While we acknowledge the valuable gifts which God has given women and the valuable assistance they may render to the officers of the church (Rom. 16:1-6; Phil. 4:3; 1 Ti. 3:11), the Bible prohibits women from holding either the office of deacon or elder in the church (1 Co. 14:33b-35; 1 Ti. 2:8-15; 3:1-7). Women, therefore, shall not be nominated, elected, or appointed to either of these offices in the church. It is also contrary to Scripture for any woman to exercise headship or leadership in a formal meeting of the whole church either by leading in prayer, conducting the worship, reading the Scripture, leading the singing, administering the sacraments, or ministering the Word of God (1 Co. 14:33b-35; 1 Ti. 2:8-15). Since it is also a violation of the Scriptures for a woman to exercise authority over a man in spiritual things outside a meeting of the whole church, no woman shall be appointed to a teaching or authoritative function in a ministry of the church where adult men would be regularly under her ministry. Nevertheless, we acknowledge and encourage the valuable gifts and assistance of women in the formal instruction of children and other women (Titus 2:3-5), in the informal instruction even of men (1 Co. 11:5; Acts 18:26), and in the service to fellow saints, and especially the benevolent ministries of the church (1 Ti. 3:11; 5:9-10).

### C. Elders

Those who have been called of God to rule and teach in the church are called elders, pastors, or overseers. These are three, interchangeable names designating one and the same office in a biblically functioning church (Acts 20:17, 28; Eph. 4:11, 12; Titus 1:5, 7). In other words, elders together 'pastor' or shepherd the flock by exercising spiritual oversight over the flock -- teaching,

admonishing, nurturing, praying, and discipling.

- 1. Authority

Because the authority of the elders of the church is human authority exercised in the house of God, it has both high prerogatives and important limitations:

- a. It is divinely-delegated authority. Thus, elders are answerable to God for the exercise of this authority (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17). Therefore, elders are obligated to discharge all of the duties specified by God in the Scriptures (particularly in such passages as Acts 20:17, 28ff; 1 Pe. 5:1-4; and Heb. 13:17).
- b. When they exercise this authority by requiring obedience to themselves, they must seek to gain the consciences of God's people through the ministry of the Word (Eph. 4:11c; 1 Ti. 3:2c; 2 Ti. 4:1-2; Heb. 13:17).
- c. In major decisions of church life (such as those having to do with corrective discipline, recognition of officers, and the sale of a church building), the local church as a whole has a voice (Acts 6:2-6; 9:26; 1 Co. 5:4-5; 13; 2 Co. 2:6). Yet the elders' must provide definitive leadership to the church in the making of such decisions.
- d. The authority of the elders is limited to the sphere of the local church. Thus, they will not require punishments for sin beyond those of biblical church discipline, will not invade the biblically-defined spheres of other divinely-ordained human authorities (husbands, fathers, civil rulers, and employers), and will not command God's people regarding matters not specified in Scripture except to order the house of God by the application of His Word (Mt. 22:21; Luke 12:13-14; Acts 20:28; 1 Pe. 5:3a; Rom. 13:1-7; Eph.

5:22-6:9; 1 Co. 7:25-28; 35-40).

- e. The authority of elders is conditioned by the fact that they are themselves members of the local church. While elders are shepherds over the flock, they are also members of the flock. Therefore, each individual elder is entitled to the same privileges, is obligated by the same responsibilities, and is subject to the same discipline as are all the other members of the church. Thus, each individual elder is both under the oversight of his fellow elders and accountable to the church as a whole (Mt. 18:17; 23:9; 26:31; 2 Co. 11:19-20; Gal. 2:11; 3 Jn. 1, 9-10).
- f. The authority of every elder (or pastor) is the same. Thus, every elder has equal rule in the church. Though gifts possessed and functions performed will vary from elder to elder, this diversity must not undermine real parity among the elders (Acts 20:28 (cp. 17); Gal 2:11; 1 Pe. 5:1-2; 1 Ti. 5:17).
- g. Finally, the authority of the elders is very real authority. God's people are, therefore, required to submit when it is biblically exercised (Heb. 13:17; note also the Scriptural titles and functions of the office).
- 2. Decisions of the Board of Elders.
  - a. General Statement  
Decisions shall be reached after prayerful consideration only by the unanimous or majority vote of the Board of Elders, as differentiated below, in a spirit of humility, each Elder regarding one another before himself. Therefore, in essence, whether the decision is one that necessitates a unanimous vote or a majority vote, the net result after all discussions are terminated and binding decisions have been made, the board must have a spirit of unanimity as to the direction the Church should take. Any violation of this

spirit of unanimity must be considered a serious breach of Elder qualifications. If such behavior occurs more than once without genuine repentance this Elder must seek the re-approval of the Elder Board to continue in the office of Elder (Titus 3:10).

- b. Unanimity of all Elders required  
Whenever the matter to be considered concerns calling a member of the Vocational Staff, approving an Elder, Deacon, or Missionary (to be supported), an amendment to or modification of the Constitution, or a modification to indebtedness limitations, a quorum as it pertains to the vote shall consist of all of the Board of Elders whether voting in person, or by telephone, to be later confirmed in writing, and must be unanimous.
- c. Majority of all Elders required  
All other decisions (other than those listed under the preceding unanimity paragraph), will be made on the basis of simple majority of Elders. Those Elders in the minority position, after being given an opportunity to defend their minority view from Scripture, will yield to the majority position of the Elder Board in the spirit of Philippians 2:3,  
Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

This will thereby preserve the spirit of unanimity that the Elder Board must maintain to the Church congregation and the public, in general. Therefore the minority Elder's must publicly support the decision of the majority of the Elder Board, in every situation. Any violation to this spirit of unanimity will be dealt with as outlined in the opening paragraph of this section.



- d. Voting exclusions

Decisions by the Elder Board that pertain directly to any of the Elders, themselves (such as Church discipline or salary review, etc.), may be made (at the discretion of the majority of the other Elders) without the participation of the Elder in question (other than input required of him by the other Elders), in the discussions or the final decision of the Elders. Under no circumstances is any Elder allowed to influence other Elders or vote upon any issue involving him in a conflict of interest.

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- 3. Duties

- a. One crucial aspect of the elders' duties is personally overseeing the flock of God. Fulfillment of this duty shall include regularly and systematically meeting with each member of the church on at least an annual basis, except when physically impossible due to distance.

- b. Subject to the limitations of this Constitution, all the activities and affairs of Providence Bible Church shall be exercised by or under the direction of the Board of Elders, who are responsible for the shepherding and spiritual oversight of the Church membership. Without prejudice to such general powers but subject to the same limitations, it is hereby expressly declared that the Board of Elders shall have the following powers in addition to the other powers enumerated in this Constitution.

- (1) To select and remove all the officers, agents, vocational pastors, deacons, staff and employees of Providence Bible Church, prescribe such duties for them as may not be inconsistent with law, or with this Constitution, fix the terms of

their offices and their compensation.

- (2) To make such disbursements from the funds and properties of Providence Bible Church as are required to fulfill its purposes, and generally to conduct, manage and control the activities and affairs of the Church and to make such rules and regulations therefore not inconsistent with law or with this Constitution, as they may deem best. The elders will not approve any expense greater than \$500 without informing and seeking input and assent from the Church body.
- (3) To establish policies, positions and practices for Providence Bible Church consistent with the purposes of the Church.
- (4) To assist vocational teaching elders in the administration of the ordinances of Baptism and Communion.
- 4. Devotion  
Elders will be maintained in material necessities and disentangled from the cares of another vocation according to their gifts, the needs and capability of the church, and the direction of Christ her Head (1 Ti. 5:17ff).
- 5. Plurality  
Though a plurality of elders is the New Testament norm for every church, Scripture does not specify the number of elders each church should have, nor does it dictate the length of an elder's term of office. One truly called to this office is usually called to it for life. He is a gift of Christ to the church, and the gifts of God are without repentance. Only when an elder fails to meet the necessary scriptural qualifications for his office does he disqualify himself from being an elder.

## **D. Accountability and Removal of Elders**

- 1. General Statement  
The Elders shall serve an indefinite term. Elder accountability is first and foremost unto God (1 Pe. 5:1-5). It is mandatory, however, that the Elders must also be accountable to one another, at all times. Any Elder may be removed from office if he becomes physically incapacitated, relocates to a different area and church, becomes spiritually unqualified, or his inability to serve is established in the minds of the remainder of the Board of Elders.
  
- 2. Discipline of Elders  
Any Elder may be disciplined according to Biblical principles, although no accusation against an Elder is to be taken seriously unless there are two or three witnesses (1 Ti. 5:19). When the confronted Elder 'continues to sin', he is to be rebuked by the other Elders before the whole assembly, that others may fear (1 Ti. 5:20). An Elder will be subject to scrutiny not only in the areas which might call for general Church discipline, but also as to his continued meeting of the Biblical qualifications for Eldership listed above. When an Elder ceases to meet those qualifications, he shall be asked by the Elders to step down for a time so that he may get his life in order in that area. Such a request by the other Elders shall be made only when they are in unanimous agreement. An Elder may also desire to be relieved from office either temporarily or permanently, if he feels unable to serve for any reason. The process of his possible reinstatement at a later date shall be governed by the attendant circumstances of his particular situation.

## **E. Deacons**

- 1. The word for 'deacon' means 'servant.' As such, deacons play a crucial role in the life of a healthy church. Specifically, deacons provide 'any kind of service that supplies the need of another person.' Being subject to the

elders, deacons serve in the capacity of assisting the Elders / Pastors (who are assigned spiritual oversight) with administrative responsibilities, business affairs, and practical care of the church body.

- 2. The number of deacons shall not be fixed. The church shall set apart according to its need men who evidence the scriptural qualifications for that office (Acts 6:1-7; 1 Ti. 3:8-13).
- 3. The Deacons bear the responsibility for the oversight and distribution of the benevolent fund (Acts 6:1-4). They shall consider all requests for financial assistance consistent with the following guidelines: The recipient must either be a member of Providence Bible Church, in good standing; or an individual or family in genuine need to whom we bear a Scriptural responsibility. The Deacons will be required to submit the individual's name, need, and amount requested to the Elders for affirmation.

## **F. Appointment of Officers**

- 1. General Statement  
The appointment of elders and deacons is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. However, He has ordained that each local church exercise the responsibility of recognizing those whom He is appointing to be elders and deacons in that particular church. Elders and deacons are appointed to office by the laying on of hands by the eldership (1 Ti. 4:14). This is an expression of approval for which the elders are responsible (1 Ti. 5:22). Therefore, each officer must have the approval, not only of the church as a whole, but of the eldership in particular. The Lord's appointment of an individual to either of these offices is recognized by means of that individual's possession of those graces and gifts required by Scripture for the particular office and his own conviction that the Lord is calling him to

minister in that office. The recognition of officers is a matter of such importance that it should never be dealt with without much prayerful waiting upon God, an honest perusal of the relevant passages of Scripture, and a frank evaluation of those who are being considered. Each member of the church has a spiritual responsibility to be intelligently informed regarding these matters.

- 2. Calling  
Anyone desiring the office of an elder must evidence to God's people the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications that are set forth in the Scriptures (1 Ti. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).
- 3. Presentation
  - a. Since it is really God who makes men overseers by maturing them and burdening them with such a ministry, then it is the responsibility of the Church to recognize the men whom the Holy Spirit is appointing for pastoral function. The process of recognition will be as follows:
  - b. Any member of Providence Bible Church may present one of the male members for consideration as an Elder via a letter. This communication should focus on the individual's apparent conformity with the aforementioned Scriptural qualifications and a brief history of his service among the Body. This letter of recommendation is to be submitted to the existing Elder Board, and each person so presented will be considered seriously.
- 4. Evaluation
  - a. The Elder Board, by unanimous consent will decide whether the man suggested should be regarded as a true candidate for the office of Elder. In determining this, the Elders will contact the man himself in order to determine his assessment of God's

will in this matter. If the man, under the Lord's conviction, desires the office, the Elder Board will then take a minimum of three months to get to know the candidate.

- b. Following this time for spiritual evaluation, the Elder-Board, by unanimous consent, may present the name of the candidate to the whole congregation for consideration. The entire Body will be given at least two weeks to express concerns or needed input to the Elders, personally.
- c. After the Elders have acted upon the input of the congregation (if necessary), and if the Elders are in unanimous agreement that the individual has indeed been qualified by the grace of God for leadership within the Church, the Elders will affirm what God has already done in the man's life by setting him apart as an elder at Providence Bible Church. Should the elders be unable to conscientiously appoint him as an elder (1 Ti. 5:22), they shall inform each member of their reasons in an appropriate manner.
- 5. Appointment  
Following the recognition of an elder there shall be a portion of a regular worship service set aside at which time the officer shall be appointed by the laying on of the hands of the eldership. This solemn act should always be accompanied by the special prayers of the whole church (Acts 13:1-3). The laying on of the elders' hands shall signify their approval of an officer-elect.

#### G. Support of Vocational Elders

Though all elders are equal as to the authority of their office, not all elders possess qualifications warranting full financial support in the office. The Bible teaches that special ability in ruling the

church and, more especially, in public teaching and preaching are gifts worthy of full financial support (Gal. 6:6; 1 Ti. 5:17; 1 Co. 9:1-14). Thus, before it undertakes his full support, the church must recognize that an elder or nominee to the eldership possesses special ministerial gifts and that he is excelling in the employment of those gifts for the benefit of the church, in ways appropriate to his opportunities. Special caution should be exercised in giving full support to an elder for the following reasons:

- 1. full support necessitates his removal from a secular vocation, which, in the interests of Christ's Kingdom and of his family, might be a more advantageous position for him to occupy;
- 2. a major portion of the church's financial stewardship is involved, for which its Head will hold it accountable; and
- 3. a fully supported elder has a greater influence upon the church, for good or ill. The provisions of this Section apply to any proportion of financial support required by an increase of ministry that would hinder an elder's full-time employment in a secular vocation.

#### H. Replacement of Vocational/Teaching Elder

Should it become necessary to look outside the Church's leadership body of Elders for a vocational Teaching Elder, the following procedures shall be utilized:

- 1. Unanimous Approval  
A Vocational Teaching Elder must be unanimously approved by the entire Board of Elders after the same careful examination required of any other Elder candidate. Before the final decision of the Board is made, the candidate

must be available to preach and teach a minimum of two weekends. The Church body must also be given an opportunity to interact with the candidate so as to properly evaluate and express such to the Elder Board.

- 2. Qualifications

As an Elder, a vocational Teaching Elder must meet the qualifications set forth in 1 Ti. 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9, and 1Pe. 5:1-3.

- 3. Accountability

A vocational Teaching Elder, being an Elder, will be accountable in every respect as any other Elder, and he shall be directly responsible to the Elder Board.

- 4. Termination

A vocational Teaching Elder shall remain in office for an indeterminate period of time subject to the following reservations:

- a. A vocational Teaching Elder who intends to resign must provide at least one (1) month notice to the Board of Elders, and will be compensated for a minimum of three (3) months beyond the date of the resignation.
- b. The Elders have the right, for Biblical or providential reasons, to dismiss a vocational Teaching Elder upon giving him written notice of its intention to dismiss. Upon receiving written notice of dismissal, the vocational Teaching will be compensated for a minimum of three (3) months from the date of the notice.

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## **ARTICLE X: CHURCH MEETINGS**

### **A. The Annual Business Meeting**



An annual business meeting of the church shall be held in January or February of each year. During this meeting, a report shall be given by the elders which shall contain an account of the membership of the church. The status of those whose membership involves unusual circumstances will be reviewed. All persons responsible for various ministries in the church shall give a report on the status of their respective ministry. A financial report for the previous year and the proposed budget for the coming year shall also be presented.

#### B. The Occasional Business Meetings

Church business meetings may be called by the elders. If an individual member or group of members desires to call a meeting the suggestion should be submitted to the elders who shall in turn make the proper announcement of the meeting. Every meeting at which business is to be transacted shall be announced at regular services for at least two (2) successive Sundays.

#### C. Voting

Membership in Providence Bible Church shall not vest in any member any proprietary rights in the Church but shall only entitle the member to vote on those matters submitted to the Church membership by the Elders. In these limited instances, voting privileges are restricted to members who have passed their eighteenth (18) birthday, and are not permitted to vote in absentia. Membership shall not be assignable or transferable. Three-fourths of the membership shall constitute a quorum. Decisions shall be arrived at by simple majority.

### **ARTICLE XI: TEACHING MINISTRY**

#### A. General Statement

Teachers must understand the serious responsibilities they bear in instructing others in the Word of God (James 3:1). Consequently, the Board of Elders will approve and periodically review all teachers.

#### B. Qualifications

The following qualifications are for Bible teachers of children, young people, and adults:

- 1. Must be a member of Providence Bible Church (See Article VI.D.3).
- 2. Must be spiritually mature.
- 3. Must understand and be in full agreement with the Statement of Faith (Article IV) and be submitted to the Church Constitution per Article VI.B.1-7.
- 4. Must be able to teach, especially in reference to handling the Scriptures accurately.

#### C. Policies

The following policies based upon either Scriptural mandate or Biblical wisdom must be observed:

- 1. Adult classes comprising both men and women will be taught by men (1 Ti. 2:11-12).
- 2. Older women will, formally and informally, teach the younger women to be godly ladies, loving wives, and caring mothers (Titus 2:3-5).
- 3. All teachers of pre-school age children shall be married couples or adult women.

- 4. Any male teacher of school-age children through the 6th grade classes will be assisted by his wife.
- 5. Young adult classes (7th grade and up) will be taught by men who may be assisted by their wives.

## **ARTICLE XII: COUNSELING MINISTRY**

### **A. General Statement**

General counseling at Providence Bible Church will primarily be a function of the pulpit and podium.

### **B. Additional Counsel**

From time to time there will be special need for crisis, premarital, preventative, or corrective counseling. In these special counseling occasions, the goal of the counseling is to free people to enter into a deeper relationship with God, and to more effectively please Him through worship and service by helping them become more like the Lord. In a word, the goal is maturity: immediate obedience in specific situations and long-range character growth. Through biblical counseling, the counselee will be guided by the counselor in developing maturity by dealing with any immediate problem circumstances in a manner consistent with Scripture and by developing an inward character which conforms to the character (attitudes, beliefs, purposes) of Christ. Both the short-range and long-range objectives will be approached by attempting to transform the thinking patterns, renewing the mind of the counselee through appropriate biblical principles.

## C. Policies

- 1. At no time will a counselor counsel a person of the opposite sex without a third party present.
- 2. Counsel is a privileged ministry of Providence Bible Church and is available to all members at no charge.
- 3. The frequency, length of appointments, and duration of counseling relationship is subject to the availability of resources and the discretion of the counselor.
- 4. If it becomes apparent that there is an unwillingness on the part of the counselee to change his or her thinking patterns in accordance to the Word of God; or if a pattern of unfaithfulness in worship attendance develops; or if there is an unwillingness to complete, in a timely manner, the designed assignments given by the counselor; counseling will be immediately suspended until which time the counselee can make the necessary adjustments.
- 5. Pre-marriage counseling is required of any couple desiring to be married by a pastor (elder) of Providence Bible Church. Counseling must be satisfactorily completed before an elder makes a commitment to conduct a wedding ceremony. This position will be maintained regardless of any planning done prior to or concurrent with the counseling (i.e. the setting of a wedding date, etc.).

## **ARTICLE XIII: MUSIC MINISTRY**

Providence Bible Church believes that music in the Church service, as taught in Scripture, is one of the highest forms of worship and as such, should be used primarily to honor God as an expression of a believer's thanksgiving and testimony to Him.

Because of the confusion generated in music by the spirit of this age, the following guidelines will be applied to the music ministry of the Church:

- 1. To be an acceptable offering to God, music must be the song of the redeemed heart.
- 2. The message (lyrics) of the music must be consistent with Bible truths.
- 3. The style of the musician must be one of worship and not one of sensuality; in other words, the music and its performance must call attention to God, not to the performer.
- 4. A high level of proficiency and quality will be maintained at all times consistent with the above mentioned parameters. As in everything we do, worship ought to be done with excellence to the glory of God.

## **ARTICLE XIV: MISSIONARY SUPPORT**

### **A. General Statement**

We believe that the work of missions is 'the carrying of the message and work of Jesus Christ to others, especially of a different culture.' (Erickson) As such, missions is primarily evangelistic work and therefore to be primarily about the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

### **B. Partnership and Stewardship**

- 1. Like-mindedness  
Financial support will be limited to those persons, programs, ministries or mission agencies that are substantially in agreement with our doctrinal statement,

positions and policies, as well as our strong views concerning the authority of and accountability of all missionaries to the local Church. The Church preference will be to directly support those from our own Church membership who are sent out from among us in fulfillment of the great commission of Christ. However, we will also consider supporting a candidate whose character and calling as a lifetime missionary has been affirmed by a sending church or agency, whose history of service manifests a proven faithfulness, who possess a high view of Scripture and sound theological training, and who endeavor to operate with a biblical approach to ministry (i.e. preaching the Word, discipleship, establishing churches etc.).

- 2. Eldership Agreement

All financial support of any ministry or missionary supported by Providence Bible Church needs the unanimous approval of the Board of Elders together with the affirmation of the Church. The Elder Board must continually evaluate the Scriptural integrity of all supported ministries or missionaries and take appropriate actions.

## **ARTICLE XV: COUNCILS AND COMMITTEES**

### **A. General Statement**

To promote efficient handling of Board matters, the Board may appoint various councils and committees from within its membership, the staff, and from the Church at large. These councils and committees shall perform tasks solely in accordance with the duties and with powers specifically delegated by the Board. The general functions of councils and committees are:

1. To bring considered recommendations to the Board

concerning ministries.

2. To provide a wider base of counsel to the Elders having the oversight of specific ministries.

B. Duration of Councils and Committees

All councils and committees shall exist for the period specified by the Board.

## **ARTICLE XVI: CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY**

A. Nature

This Constitution, as with any other non-inspired document, is not infallible. It does, however, reflect an earnest and sincere attempt to apply the Scriptures in ordering the life of this local church. Furthermore, we as members of this church, including the elders, have solemnly committed ourselves to follow this Constitution in ordering the life of this church (see the Preamble). Therefore the demands of the ninth commandment and the sanctity of truth in general require that the elders and all of the members of this church abide by our mutual commitment.

B. Deficiencies

Only when we must obey God rather than the provisions of this Constitution may its requirements be disregarded (Acts 5:29). If at any time a member of this church becomes aware that adherence to this Constitution would violate biblical principle, he should make this known to the elders. If the elders conclude that biblical principle requires disregarding a provision of this Constitution, they are obligated to communicate this together with the reason(s) for their conclusion to the church within one month at a duly called meeting of the church. Furthermore,

relevant amendments to this Constitution must be submitted to the church and acted upon in accordance with the provisions of Section C within one year following this informational meeting. The failure of the elders to observe these requirements will constitute a legitimate reason for the calling of a special meeting by the members of the church in accordance with Article X, Section B.

#### C. Amendments

Proposed amendments shall be distributed in written form to the membership at least four (4) weeks prior to a business meeting. Amendments to this Constitution may be adopted by the unanimous decision of the eldership.

### **ARTICLE XVII: SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES**

In any dispute arising between Providence Bible Church members, pastors, or general staff employees pertaining to any matters of the Church Bylaws (spiritual teaching, practices, policies or positions), staff counseling, Church finances, title to property purchased with Church contributions, or Church discipline, the dispute shall be resolved by the Board of Elders of the Church. A decision shall be reached after prayerful consideration in a spirit of humility, with each Elder regarding one another before himself.

### **ARTICLE XVIII: CHURCH RECORDS AND REPORTS**

#### A. Records

Providence Bible Church shall maintain adequate and correct accounts, books, and records of its business and properties. All



such books, records and accounts shall be kept at its principal location in the State of Colorado, or with the appropriate Elder.

**B. Independent Audit**

In order to uphold the financial integrity of Providence Bible Church, the corporation shall employ the services of an independent CPA to audit the church's books on an annual basis.

**C. Inspection of Books and Records**

Every Elder shall have the absolute right at any reasonable time to inspect all books, records, documents of every kind, and the physical properties of Providence Bible Church and also of its subsidiary organizations, if any.

## **ARTICLE XIX: DISSOLUTION**

Upon the dissolution of Providence Bible Church, the Board of Elders shall, after paying or making provisions for the payment of all liabilities of the Church, dispose of all assets of the Church exclusively for the purposes of the Church in such manner or to such organization or organizations organized and operated exclusively for religious purposes, and which affirm the beliefs mentioned in the Doctrinal Statement, and shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law).