

# CONSTITUTION & BYLAWS

REDEEMER CHURCH OF FORT WORTH

2005

Revised – 2009

Amended – September 8, 2010; October 14, 2012;

January 13, 2013; May 19, 2013; May 10, 2015

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## CONSTITUTION

### ARTICLE I: NAME

The legal name of this church shall be Christ the Redeemer Church of Fort Worth, Inc. (hereinafter, “Redeemer Church”).

### ARTICLE II: FOUNDATION, OBJECT, AND PRIORITIES OF MINISTRY

The *foundation* of this church is the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Corinthians 3:11), and its code of guidance in all its affairs is the Word of God. This church does here affirm its faith that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of Almighty God (Mark 13:31).

The *object* of this church is to worship God according to the teaching of His Word, to practice the precepts and examples of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ as set forth in the Scriptures, to sustain its ordinances and doctrines, and to preach and propagate among all peoples the gospel of salvation that is by personal repentance and faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. This church is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention on a national level and the Southern Baptists of Texas Convention on a state level; it may also partner with other agencies for the purposes of Christian ministry or gospel proclamation.

The *priorities* of ministry of this church flow from the vision of God’s glory revealed in Jesus Christ. We exist to savor this vision in worship (John 4:23), strengthen this vision in nurture and education (1 Corinthians 14:26; 2 Peter 3:18), and spread this vision in evangelism, missions, and loving deeds (Matthew 28:18–20; 5:16; 1 Peter 2:9; 3:15).

## **ARTICLE III: STATEMENT OF FAITH**

From the time of the Apostles to today, Christians have laid out doctrine in brief, definitive statements. As those who know God and desire to deepen one another's joy in God, we believe it necessary to set forth in a concise fashion the truths our church affirms as guided by Scripture. Our Statement of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our faith, but summarizes historic Christian beliefs, promotes unity in Christ, and guards the church from error.

We believe that the Bible alone speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, and is the sole and final source of all that we believe. We also believe that for purposes of church doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, we must state and agree to the Bible's meaning and application. Once we as members agree to the Statement of Faith, we are responsible to God and each other for believing and living in accordance with it.

### **Section 1: The Word of God**

We affirm that the Scriptures, consisting only of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, are not a mere witness to divine revelation but are God's complete written revelation of himself to humanity, graciously given to us through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and according to God's sovereign purposes in Jesus Christ. John 5:39; 14:26; 16:13-15; 20:31; Acts 13:27-29; Romans 1:2-3; 16:25-26; 1 Corinthians 2:6-14; 2 Timothy 3:15-16; Hebrews 1:1-2; 3:7 [cf. Psalm 95:7-11]; 2 Peter 1:20-21

We affirm that as God's written revelation to humanity, the Scriptures constitute the holy Word of God communicated through appointed human authors. In his sovereignty, God so superintended the human authors of Scripture that although what they wrote was genuinely their own, it was nevertheless the very word of God, verbally inspired in every part equally, without error in the original manuscripts, totally true in all they affirm, and completely trustworthy. Thus, we also deny that any portion of Scripture is marked by error or the effects of human sinfulness. Exodus 24:4; Numbers 23:19; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; Jeremiah 36:2-4; Psalms 12:6; 19:7-10; 119:11; Proverbs 30:5; Ezra 1:1 [cf. Jeremiah 1:1-2]; Matthew 22:43-44; Mark 7:13; Luke 3:2; Acts 4:25; 28:25-27; John 10:35; 14:26; 16:13-14; 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 14:37; 1 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16; Titus 1:2; Hebrews 1:5 [cf. Psalm 2:7; 2 Samuel 7:14; Acts 13:33], 6 [cf. Deuteronomy 32:43], 8 [cf. Psalm 45:6-7]; 3:7 [cf. Hebrews 4:7]; 1 Peter 1:23-24; 2 Peter 1:20-21; 3:16; 1 John 4:6

We affirm that the Scriptures carry with them the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ and thus stand as the supreme and final authority over every domain of knowledge to which they speak, and that they are sufficient for all that God requires the Christian and the church to believe and do. Therefore, the Scriptures must remain central to the teaching ministry of the church, the formation and preservation of sound doctrine, and the proclamation and spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Deuteronomy 17:19; Isaiah 40:8; Matthew 4:4, 7, 10; 5:17-20; 16:18; 19:4-6; 22:29; 26:31, 52-54; Luke 4:16-21; 16:17; 18:31-33; 21:33; 22:37; 24:25-27, 44-46; John 10:35; 14:26; 15:26; 16:13, 15; Acts 1:2; 10:41 [cf. Acts 1:22, 26]; 20:27, 32; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 15:1-11; Galatians 2:9; Ephesians 2:20; 1 Timothy 4:13; Hebrews 2:3; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25

## **Section 2: The Trinity**

We believe that there is one living and true God, eternally existing in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—who are equal in every divine perfection, and that the persons of God execute distinct but harmonious offices in the work of creation, providence, and redemption. Genesis 1:1, 26; Matthew 28:19; John 1:1, 3; 4:24; Romans 1:19–20; Ephesians 4:5–6

## **Section 3: God the Father**

We believe in God the Father, an infinite, personal spirit, perfect in holiness, wisdom, power, and love. We believe that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of man, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all that come to Him through Jesus Christ. We believe that the Father orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace. Isaiah 46:9–10; Matthew 23:9; Luke 10:21–22; John 3:16; 6:27; Romans 1:7; 1 Timothy 1:1–2; 2:5–6; 1 Peter 1:3; Revelation 1:6

We believe that, as the only absolute and omnipotent ruler in the universe, God is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption. In His sovereignty, He is neither author nor approver of sin, nor does He waive the accountability of His creatures. He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own, not based on anything they have done, but according to His own good pleasure. Genesis 1:1–31; Psalm 103:19; Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38–47; Romans 11:36; Ephesians 1:4–6; 2:8–9; 1 Timothy 6:13–16; James 1:13; 1 Peter 1:17; Revelation 4:11

## **Section 4: Jesus Christ**

We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son. We believe in His virgin birth by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 1:18, 25 point to the miraculous nature of both Christ's conception and birth), sinless life, miracles, and teachings. We believe in His substitutionary and propitiatory death (on our behalf the Son satisfied His Father's holiness, averting His Father's wrath), bodily resurrection, ascension into heaven, perpetual intercession for His people, and personal, visible return to earth. We believe Jesus Christ is coequal, consubstantial (*i.e.*, having the same substance, nature, or essence), and coeternal with the Father. Isaiah 9:6–7; Matthew 1:18–25; 20:28; Luke 1:26–38; John 1:1, 14; 10:30; 14:9; 20:28, 30–31; Acts 1:11; Romans 5:6–8; 6:9–10; 2 Corinthians 5:21; 8:46; 9:5; Ephesians 1:4; 1 Timothy 3:16; Hebrews 1:8; 7:25; 9:28; 1 Peter 2:21–23; 2 Peter 1:1

We believe that in the incarnation (when God became man), Christ surrendered only the prerogatives of deity, and nothing of the divine essence, either in degree or kind. We believe that Jesus Christ represents humanity and deity in indivisible oneness. Micah 5:2; John 5:23; 14:9–10; Philippians 2:5–8; Colossians 2:9

We believe that on the basis of the efficacy (effectiveness) of the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, every genuine believer is freed from the punishment, the penalty, the power, and one day the very presence of sin; and that he is declared righteous (*i.e.*, justified), given eternal life, and adopted into the family of God. Romans 3:25; 5:8–9; 2 Corinthians 5:14–15; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18

We believe that in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, God the Father displayed to His creation the deity of His Son and gave proof that He accepted the propitiatory work of Christ on the cross. Isaiah 53:10–12

### **Section 5: The Holy Spirit**

We believe in the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father and the Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. We believe that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign agent in regeneration. It is His work to indwell, sanctify, instruct, empower for service, and seal until the day of redemption all who believe on Jesus Christ. We believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer in Christ, and that He is an abiding helper, teacher, and guide. He is a divine person, eternal, underived (*i.e.*, having no beginning or source), possessing all the attributes of personality and deity. In all the divine attributes, He is coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father and the Son. Jeremiah 31:31–34; John 14:16–17, 26; 15:26–27; 16:9–14; Acts 2:15–20; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16; 6:19; 2 Corinthians 3:6; Galatians 5:22–26; Ephesians 1:13; Hebrews 10:15–17

### **Section 6: Man**

We believe the triune God created man directly and immediately in His own image and likeness. God created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, and with a moral responsibility to God. God created man to glorify God by enjoying him forever. Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5, 7, 18-25; Psalm 8:3-6; Isaiah 43:7; Romans 11:36; 1 Corinthians 11:3, 7-12; Colossians 1:16; James 3:9; Revelation 4:11

We believe that man, by his own will, sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man disobeyed the revealed will and Word of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin, incur the penalty of spiritual and physical death, and become subject to the wrath of God. Thus, every human being in Adam is totally depraved, unable to choose or do what is acceptable to God apart from divine grace, and has no recuperative powers to enable him to rescue himself. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-19; Psalm 1:1-6; 14:1-3; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5, 9; John 3:36; Romans 1:18-3:26; 5:10-21; 6:23; 8:7, 14-18, 29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 2:13-15; 15:19, 21-22; Ephesians 2:1-10; Colossians 3:9-11; 1 John 1:8; 3:4-10

We believe the sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love. Genesis 1:26-30; 9:6; Psalm 8:3-6; Mark 12:16-17; 1 Corinthians 11:7; Galatians 6:10; 1 Timothy 1:15; 4:10

## **Section 7: Salvation**

### **A. Election**

We believe that election is the sole act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ all whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies. Romans 8:28–30; Ephesians 1:4–11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1–2

We believe that sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of human beings to their Creator. Spiritually dead humanity, however, can never be considered righteous, and none will ever understand spiritual truths, much less ever seek after God, on their own accord. Therefore, God’s sovereign grace includes the only means of receiving the gift of salvation. God’s sovereign election always results in what God determines. Therefore, all whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith, and all who come in faith the Father will receive. Isaiah 55:6–7; Luke 13:3; John 6:37–40, 44; Acts 2:38; 13:48; 3:19; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 3:10–18; 8:28–30; 9:11–16; 1 Corinthians 2:14; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Ephesians 1:4–11; 2:1–2, 4–5, 8–9; 2 Peter 1:1

We believe that when God grants grace to utterly depraved sinners, it is not related to any initiative of their own, nor to God’s anticipation of what they might do by their own will, but is solely on the basis of His sovereign purpose and will. Ephesians 1:4–8; Titus 3:4–7; 1 Peter 1:1–2; 2 Peter 1:1

### **B. Regeneration**

We believe that man was created by God in His own image; that he sinned and thereby incurred physical, spiritual, and eternal death, which is separation from God; that as a consequence, all human beings are born with a sinful nature and are sinners, and are, therefore, under condemnation. We believe that those who are regenerated by the Holy Spirit repent and forsake sin, trust Jesus Christ as Savior, become new creatures, are delivered from condemnation, and receive eternal life. Genesis 1:26; 2:17; 3; 5:2; Psalm 51:7; Proverbs 28:13; Ecclesiastes 2:11; Jeremiah 17:9; John 1:13; 3:14, 16; 5:24, 30; 7:13; 8:12; 9:22; 10:26; Romans 3:19; 5:19; 8:1; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:9; James 1:14; 1 John 1:9; Revelation 19:3, 20; 20:10, 14–15; 21:18

We believe that regeneration is manifested by fruits consistent with repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works done in faith and love will be the proper fruit (result) and evidence of genuine repentance. Matthew 7:18–21; 1 Corinthians 6:19–20; Ephesians 2:10

### **C. Justification**

We believe that justification is the act of God by which He declares man righteous. This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ and the imputation of Christ’s righteousness to us. By this means, God is able to “be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus” (Romans 3:26). Romans 3:26; 8:33; 3:20; 4:6; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 2:8–9; Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24

#### **D. Sanctification**

We believe that every genuine believer experiences justification before God. Therefore, having been justified, we believe that in the daily life of the believer he is being progressively conformed to the likeness of Christ. In this respect, every saved person is involved in a daily conflict—the new creation in Christ doing battle against the remnant of the flesh (sinful thoughts, desires, actions, and words). Those who are genuinely saved will persevere to the end in this battle against the flesh. Matthew 24:13; John 17:17, 19; Romans 6:1–22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3–4; 5:23

#### **E. Perseverance of the Saints/Preservation by the Savior**

We believe that all those regenerated by the Spirit of God will be likewise kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ. John 5:24; 6:37–40; 10:27–30; Romans 5:9–10; 8:1,31–39; 1 Corinthians 1:4–8; Ephesians 4:30; Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 7:25; 13:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24

We believe that the true children of God, chosen from the foundation of the world, will stand firm for Christ to the end, because they are kept in Christ by the Holy Spirit. Paralleling the clear teachings concerning the security of the true believer, God's Word warns the professing church concerning the perseverance of those who claim the name of Christ. Matthew 24:9–13; Hebrews 10:23–39; Revelation 2–3

We believe that references to those who do “fall away” (Matthew 24:10), whose “love will grow cold” (Matthew 24:12), are references to men and women who claim that they are in Christ but, in reality, are not. Christ taught that the kingdom of God—the genuine elect of God—will be infiltrated with tares, those who claim (and may even think) that they are in Christ but who, in reality, are not. These claimants (tares) may be members of a local church, but they are not, and have never been, true citizens of the kingdom of God. Matthew 7:21; 13:24–30, 37–42; 24:10, 12; 1 John 2:19

We believe the foregoing warnings should be taken seriously by all of us who claim the name of Christ, including the leadership of Redeemer Church, “so that when he appears we may have confidence and not shrink from him in shame at his coming” (1 John 2:28). Only the genuine elect of God will ever experience the promise of Christ, “that I [Christ] should lose nothing of all that he [the Father] has given me [Christ], but raise it up at the last day” (John 6:39). Therefore, we teach and encourage all who claim the name of Christ to “examine yourselves, to see whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves” (2 Corinthians 13:5; *cf.*, 1 Corinthians 10:12).

We believe that it is the privilege of all genuine believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word. But we also teach that God's Word clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living and carnality. For that reason, we teach that “faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (James 2:17). Romans 6:1–2, 15–22; 13:13–14; Galatians 5:13, 25–26; Titus 2:11–14

### **Section 8: The Church**

We believe the New Testament speaks of the church as the universal body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation. Matthew 16:15-19; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:4; 3:10, 21; 5:22-32; Colossians 1:18; Hebrews 11:39-40; Revelation 19:7-8; 21:2-3

We further believe the New Testament emphasizes that in the age preceding Christ's return, the redeemed should gather in and be accountable to visible, local churches. The local church is the primary context in which believers joyfully fulfill the demands of the new covenant. In essence, the local church is an assembly of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel (Acts 2:41; 14:21-23; Romans 6:1-14; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 13-16; 10:16-17; 11:27; 16:13; Galatians 1:8-9; Ephesians 4:1-6, 13; Philippians 1:27; Hebrews 10:24-25). The local church visibly manifests obedience to Jesus when, depending on her Lord in prayer, the believers joyfully submit to one another (Acts 2:38, 41; Ephesians 2:1-22; 1 Corinthians 12:1-3; Galatians 5:13-6:10; Hebrews 12:22-23) under faithful leadership (Acts 14:23; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 16:15-16; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; 5:17-25; Titus 1:5-9; Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 5:2-3; cf. Acts 6:1-7; 14:23; James 5:14), to heed the gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 2:42; Romans 10:16-17; 15:14; 1 Corinthians 15:1-4; Ephesians 5:26; 6:11-20; Colossians 1:23-26; 1 Thessalonians 2:13), to celebrate the new-covenant ordinances of believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper and practice corrective discipline when out of step with their meaning (Matthew 18:17-20; 28:18-19; Luke 22:14-23; Acts 2:42-47; Romans 6:4; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 10:16-17; 11:17-34; 14:26; 16:1-4; Ephesians 4:5; Colossians 2:12; Hebrews 10:24-25; 1 Peter 3:21), to edify and care for one another by the aid and gifting of the Holy Spirit (John 13:34; Romans 12:3-8; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Galatians 6:2; Ephesians 4:11-16; 5:19-21; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Hebrews 10:24-25), and to scatter on mission to make disciples among all peoples both locally and globally (Matthew 24:14; 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Romans 1:7, 14; 10:12-15; 15:14, 20-21; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23; 10:31-11:1; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; 2 Timothy 2:2; Titus 2:1-8).

We believe each local church operates under the lordship of Christ. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are elders and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of elder is limited to men as qualified by Scripture. The local church practices congregational involvement under the spiritual care of elders. The members of the local church should honor and submit to their leadership, while also holding such leadership accountable to biblical precepts and qualifications. Elders who persist in sin must be rebuked publicly before the congregation for the purpose of making the church fearful of sinning. Matthew 18:15-20; Acts 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 15:1-30; 1 Corinthians 5:1-8; 11:2-16; Galatians 6:6; Ephesians 4:11; 1 Thessalonians 5:13; 1 Timothy 2:9-14 [cf. Gen 2:5-9, 15-25]; 3:1-15; 4:14; 5:17-22; Titus 3:5-9; Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 5:1-4

We believe in the importance of discipleship and the mutual accountability of all believers to each other, including the need for corrective discipline of unrepentant members of the local church in accordance with Scripture. Moreover, wherever communication between local churches will serve to protect, honor, and promote the gospel, and ensure further care, accountability, or discipline for their members, the local church and its leadership should pursue it. When a local church or cooperation of churches departs from the gospel, it is

proper for faithful, gospel-believing churches to hold such congregations and their leaders accountable by means of warnings, rebukes, and calls to repentance. Matthew 18:15-20; 28:19-20; Acts 5:1-11; Romans 16:1-2; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 16:10-11; 2 Corinthians 8:18-19; Galatians 1:8-9; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2; 4:9-18; Titus 1:10-16; 3:9-11; 1 John 4:6; 2 John 9-11; 3 John 5-12; Revelation 2:23

### **Section 9: Christian Conduct**

We believe that a Christian should live for the glory of God and the well-being of his fellow man, that his conduct should be blameless before the world, that he should be a faithful steward of his possessions, and that he should seek to realize for himself and others the full stature of maturity in Christ. John 14:15, 23-24; Romans 12:1-3; 1 Corinthians 4:2; 10:31; 2 Corinthians 9:6-9; Colossians 1:9-10; Hebrews 12:1-2; 1 John 2:3-6

### **Section 10: The Ordinances**

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has committed two ordinances to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe that Christian baptism by immersion, in the name of the triune God, is the visual representation with water of the believer's identification with Christ spiritually. We believe that the Lord's Supper was instituted by Christ for commemoration of His death. We believe that these two ordinances should be observed and administered until the return of the Lord Jesus Christ. We do not believe these ordinances hold any salvific value—they do not convey saving grace upon the recipient. These ordinances, however, are means by which God reveals His gospel to His people and brings loving encouragement into their lives. Matthew 28:18-20; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 11:23-26

### **Section 11: The Family, Marriage, and Sexuality**

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption. Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalms 78:1-8; 127; 128; Proverbs 14:1; Ephesians 5:21-6:4; 1 Timothy 4:3

We believe that "marriage" has only one meaning, namely, marriage sanctioned by God that joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive, covenant union as delineated in Scripture. Marriage is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and his church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation and thriving of the human race. Thus, God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other and that he has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. Genesis 1:26-27; 2:15-25; Ecclesiastes 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 14:3-4; 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; Romans 1:18-32; 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:1-40; Ephesians 5:21-33; 1 Timothy 3:2; 5:8, 14; Titus 1:6; Hebrews 13:4; Revelation 19:7-9

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is

to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation. Genesis 1:26-27; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; 5:2; Proverbs 5:15-20; 12:4; 18:22; 31:10-31; Matthew 5:31-32; 19:3-9; Mark 10:2-12; Luke 16:18; Ephesians 5:21-33; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 6:9-20; 7:1-16; 11:2-16; Colossians 3:18-19; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; Titus 2:3-5; 1 Peter 3:1-7

Children, from the moment of fertilization, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents. Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 6:20-22; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 22:6, 15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15, 17; 31:10-31; Matthew 18:2-5; Romans 1:30; Ephesians 6:1-4; Colossians 3:20-21; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5

We further affirm that God offers redemption and complete restoration to all who confess and forsake their marital, sexual, or parental sins, seeking God's mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. John 4:1-30, 39-42; Romans 3:21-26; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Ephesians 2:1-10; Titus 3:3-8

## **Section 12: The Christian and Social Order**

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from fertilization to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, justice, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth. Genesis 1:26-31; 2:7; Exodus 20:3-17; 21:22-25; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12, 17-18; 27:17; Job 10:11-12; Psalms 8:3-8; 51:5; 101:5; 139:13-16; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16, 43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 1:41; 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8

## **Section 13: The Christian and Civil Government**

Civil government is ordained by God to restrain and punish evil and to preserve and reward good, which promotes the temporal well-being of humanity, those created in God's image. It is the duty of Christians to pray for those in governing positions and to render loyal obedience to civil authorities in all things not opposed to God's revealed will in Scripture. As Prince over the kings of the earth, Jesus Christ alone is Lord of the conscience, and he has left the conscience free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to his word. The church should not resort to the coercive powers of the state to carry on its work or advance its mission since the gospel of Jesus Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. It is also unjust for the state to usurp the role of any church by enforcing its will in matters contrary to Scripture, yet if the state should do so, the Christian is to respond with humility and faithfulness to the word of God. Genesis 1:26-27; 2:7; Matthew 6:24; 10:17-18; 16:24-26; 22:21; Mark 13:9; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-10; 14:7-9; 1 Corinthians 9:19-23; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-5; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19

#### **Section 14: The Last Things**

We believe in the personal, bodily, and visible return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth, and in His eternal kingdom in heaven. We believe in the resurrection of the body, the final judgment, the eternal felicity (*i.e.*, intense joy) of the righteous who have been saved by the grace of God to worship Him forever, and the eternal conscious torment (in opposition to annihilationism) of the wicked who eternally perish in their sins apart from Christ. Matthew 16:27; Mark 14:62; John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15; Philippians 3:20; 1 Thessalonians 4:15; 2 Thessalonians 1:7-10; 2 Timothy 4:1; Titus 2:13; Revelation 20:4-6, 11-15

### **ARTICLE IV: MEMBERSHIP**

#### **Section 1: General Constitution**

The membership of this church shall consist of persons (1) who confess faith on the Lord Jesus Christ as their personal Savior, (2) who give evidence of regeneration by living consistently with their confession and with the views of faith, doctrine, and practice of this church, as stated in its Constitution and Bylaws (including the Statement of Faith and Redeemer Church Covenant) and in the Church Discipline Signature Form (together hereinafter, "Documents"), (3) who have received believer's baptism by immersion, and (4) who have been received into membership according to the Bylaws of this church. It is required that each person who desires membership in Redeemer Church will go through the necessary membership course.

Furthermore, they are required to submit a membership profile in which they understand and agree to abide by and be held accountable for the church's beliefs, positions, and policies, as outlined in the church's Documents. Should disagreement in any of these areas ever occur, members will inform the elders of the point(s) of disagreement and hold Redeemer Church and its leadership harmless. There will be no appeal to any court (*cf.* 1 Corinthians 6:1-11). Membership in Redeemer Church does not vest in any member any proprietary rights in the church, but shall only entitle the member to affirm or deny those

matters submitted to the church membership by the Council of Elders in accordance with Constitution V.1 and Bylaws II.4.D and II.6.

## **Section 2: Redeemer Church Covenant**

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

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge and holiness; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel to all nations.

We also engage to maintain family and personal devotions; to educate our children in the Christian faith; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all gossip, backbiting, and excessive anger; to seek God’s help in abstaining from practices that bring unwarranted harm to the body or jeopardize our own or another’s faith.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the guidelines of our Savior to secure it without delay.

We moreover engage to encourage one another as we eagerly await the Second Coming of our glorious Savior and King, the Lord Jesus Christ; and, should we move from this place, we will, if possible, unite with a church where we can carry out the articles of this confession and the spirit of this covenant.”

## **ARTICLE V: LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATION**

The officers of the church shall be elders and deacons. The purpose of the elders of the church is to govern lovingly, care for, and equip the membership to do the work of the ministry. The purpose of the deacons is to serve lovingly the physical needs of the membership.

### **Section 1: Council of Elders**

The spiritual oversight of this local church shall be vested in the Council of Elders, who are responsible for governing the church, teaching the Word, and prayerfully tending to all her members. The elders shall be equal in authority, but may be specialized in function. Under the authority of Jesus Christ and the Word of God, this plurality of elders will exercise loving, caring, biblical shepherding of the flock, while the members of Redeemer

Church will mutually submit to and serve one another and the leadership within this local church (Hebrews 13:17; 2 Peter 5:1-6; cf. Ephesians 5:21).

The elders shall seek participation by the members for the following major issues (see Bylaws II.4.D and II.6 for decision-making and member participation):

- (1) Accepting members into the church, giving letters of transfer or recommendation to members, and removing members from the church roll;
- (2) Appointing officers of the church;
- (3) Disciplining unrepentant members for *individual* offenses—as opposed to *corporate* offenses—and disciplining officers by removing them from office (*see* Bylaws II.1.D, II.3.D, and VII.1-3);
- (4) Approving annual budgets of the church, authorizing expenditures of the funds of the church when such expenditures are not covered by an approved budget, and approving any transactions regarding real property;
- (5) Adopting, amending, or repealing the Constitution and/or Bylaws of this church; and
- (6) Approving the call, ministry description, and initial salary of Vocational Pastors and Vocational Ministers.

## **Section 2: Deacons**

Deacons shall assist the Council of Elders by performing services of advice, administration, and implementation of ministry, all as prayerfully determined by the Council of Elders and in accordance with Bylaws II.5.

## **ARTICLE VI: CHURCH PROPERTY**

In the event of a division of this church—from which may God in His mercy save us—the property of this church shall belong to that group of such division as represents the largest portion of the church membership, provided such group is loyal to this Constitution; otherwise, it shall belong to the group remaining loyal to this Constitution, though it may not be the largest group in such division. Should a condition arise at any time in the future when for any reason the church work cannot continue, the church property shall be sold to retire any debt, and the remaining proceeds shall be donated equally between the International Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Wycliffe Bible Translators, Overseas Missionary Fellowship, and The Pregnancy Help Center of Fort Worth.

Should conditions arise where a consolidation with another church of the same beliefs is advisable, the Council of Elders shall be authorized by the membership of the church to propose an advisable course for negotiating the terms of such consolidation that concerns the property of Redeemer Church.

## **ARTICLE VII: AMENDMENTS**

Amendments to this Constitution must be submitted to the Council of Elders in writing for recommendation to the members of Redeemer Church. The amendment(s) will be approved or disapproved by the decision of the Council and the membership of the church in accordance with Constitution V.1 and Bylaws II.4.D and II.6.

# BYLAWS

## ARTICLE I: MEMBERSHIP

### Section 1: General Procedure

All actions regarding membership, either of admission or dismissal, shall be made by the Council of Elders and the membership of the church in accordance with Constitution IV and V and Bylaws II.4.D and II.6.

### Section 2: Admission by Baptism

All applicants for membership professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, giving evidence of a change of heart, and having accepted the faith, aims, and ideals of this church (as expressed in Constitution III and IV) may be received into membership by means of believer's baptism by immersion, upon the affirmation of the Council of Elders and the membership of the church in accordance with Constitution III.1 and V and Bylaws II.4.D and II.6. Valid New Testament baptism is that which is received after one's commitment to Christ. Redeemer Church holds that baptism is not necessary for salvation; rather, it is better understood as an important step of obedience in every believer's life and walk with Christ that results from God's work in the heart to follow His Word. For this reason, believer's baptism by immersion is a requirement for membership at Redeemer Church. Any applicant who has been baptized by means other than immersion shall undergo baptism by immersion before membership.

### Section 3: Admission by Experience or Restoration

All applicants for membership other than by believer's baptism (*i.e.*, by Christian experience if previously baptized by immersion, or by restoration) shall be received into the church in the same way as those by baptism, except the ordinance shall not be administered.

### Section 4: Instruction to New Members

All persons uniting with this church in any of the ways set forth in Bylaws I.1–3 shall do so in accordance with Constitution IV. New members will testify publicly of their faith in Christ and their support of Redeemer Church. By making a public profession of faith and joining the church, new members, without devaluing other areas of obedience, service, and communal life, pledge themselves to fulfill their stewardship obligations regarding corporate worship, Care Group involvement, Members' Meetings, service, and giving.

### Section 5: Transferring Members and Removing Members

Redeemer Church will transfer the care of its members to another local church by a letter of character when all the following are true: (1) the member has made sincere efforts to fulfill their obligations to the church as outlined in the Church Covenant; (2) the member is in good standing and not under the corrective discipline of Redeemer Church; and (3)

the elders believe the church that will receive them will allow them to carry out the spirit of our Church Covenant (Constitution III.8; IV.1-2; V.1; Bylaws I.4; VII.1.B). At all points, the elders and membership should pursue the spiritual well-being of the member in question, trusting that God will bring all his elect to maturity even if using other churches to do so.

Members who unite with another local church without fulfilling the three obligations above, or who forsake regularly assembling with Redeemer Church without Scriptural warrant (Heb 10:25), or who leave Redeemer Church because of a failure to walk patiently with the membership and elders (1 Cor 13:4; Col 3:12-13; Heb 13:17), will be pursued in accordance with Matthew 18:15-20, as outlined in Bylaws VII.2.D, and then removed from membership if unrepentance persists.

## **ARTICLE II: CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

### **Section 1: General Statement**

#### **A. Officers**

The officers of the church shall be elders (comprising a Council of Elders) and deacons. Officers shall be called to office by affirmation of the membership of the church in accordance with Constitution V.1 and Bylaws II.4.D and II.6. All officers of the church shall be members of the church in good and regular standing.

#### **B. Committees and Appointees**

The Council of Elders has the authority to create committees (hereinafter, “Ministry Teams”) and positions to which it may delegate any specified aspect of its responsibilities. The Council has the authority to dissolve any Ministry Team or position on such a Ministry Team. These Ministry Teams shall perform tasks solely in accordance with the expressed purpose of Redeemer Church.

### **Section 2: Vocational Pastors and Vocational Ministers**

#### **A. Definition**

Vocational Pastors are the ordained elders of the church, who, in response to God’s call, have devoted their vocational lives to the ministry of the Word and prayer in the service of the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. Vocational Ministers are the non-ordained ministers of the church who, in response to God’s call, serve the church as their primary vocation. Redeemer Church financially supports both Vocational Pastors and Vocational Ministers in return for their vocational labors.

#### **B. Duties**

In addition to the duties of their office described in Bylaws II.4 and 5, Vocational Pastors and Vocational Ministers shall perform the duties determined by the Council of Elders. The duties shall be in writing at the time of the call to service, and substantial changes shall be approved by the Council of Elders. The church’s call of a Vocational Pastor is a call to

the eldership of the church. Therefore, Vocational Pastors shall be members of the Council of Elders and shall have all the biblical qualifications of an elder.

Vocational Ministers are not necessarily called to the eldership, but are called as assisting partners in the ministry. Vocational Ministers may be added to the Council of Elders (in accordance with Constitution V.1 and Bylaws II.4.D and II.6).

### **C. Calling**

The Council of Elders and the membership of the church shall have the responsibility of all hiring and terminating of Vocational Pastors and Vocational Ministers (in accordance with Constitution V.1 and Bylaws II.4.D and II.6).

### **D. Termination**

A vocational call at Redeemer Church may be terminated as follows:

(1) *Resignation*: The question of terminating the vocational call of a Vocational Pastor or Vocational Minister shall be considered at any time by the Council of Elders upon the presentation of the Pastor's or Minister's resignation.

(2) *Grievance*: Where a grievance exists against a Vocational Pastor or Vocational Minister, either due to his preaching or teaching contrary to the beliefs of the church as set forth in Constitution III, or due to alleged conduct on his part unfitting an elder or minister, such grievance may be brought before the Council of Elders by any two members in good standing, in accordance with Bylaws VII. If the Council, after thorough investigation and consideration, believes the grievance to be true and substantial, then the vocational call of the Vocational Pastor or Vocational Minister may be terminated upon the decision of the Council and the membership of Redeemer Church, in accordance with Constitution V.1 and Bylaws II.4.D and II.6.

## **Section 3: Lay Officers**

### **A. Definition**

Lay officers are the non-vocational elders and deacons of the church.

### **B. Duties**

Lay elders and deacons shall have the duties of their respective offices as described in Bylaws II.4 and 5.

### **C. Calling**

The Council of Elders, on behalf of the membership of Redeemer Church, and in accordance with Constitution V.1 and Bylaws II.4.D and II.6, shall recognize, interview, and investigate candidates for lay officers of the church. The Council shall provide for individual members of the church either to nominate candidates or to present themselves to the Council as candidates for office and for the Council's further investigation. In no instance shall any individual be considered a nominee for office without the nominee's consent. In those cases where the Council concludes that a nominee is not qualified for office, they shall inform the nominee, stating the reasons for this conclusion.

## **D. Removal**

Lay officers at Redeemer Church may be removed as follows:

(1) *Resignation*: An officer may resign his office at any time if he finds he is no longer able to discharge the duties of the office.

(2) *Grievance*: Where a grievance exists against an officer of the church, either due to the adherence to and propagation of beliefs contrary to the beliefs of the church as set forth in Constitution III, or due to alleged conduct on his part unfitting an elder or deacon, such grievance may be brought before the Council of Elders by any two members in good standing, in accordance with Bylaws VII. If the Council, after thorough investigation and consideration, believes the grievance to be true and substantial, then the officer may be removed from office upon the decision of the Council and the membership of Redeemer Church in accordance with Constitution V.1 and Bylaws II.4.D and II.6.

## **Section 4: Council of Elders**

### **A. Composition and Calling**

The Council of Elders shall be composed of the men, God graciously provides to lead, care for, and protect this local church as our elders/pastors/overseers—terms used by Scripture to refer to the different aspects of the one office we are here calling “elder” (Acts 20:17, 28; Tit 1:5-7; 1 Pet 5:1-2). According to Scripture, the Council shall always have more than one elder (Acts 14:23; 20:17; Tit 1:5). On an ongoing basis, this church will joyfully and responsibly seek to recognize the elders God provides according to His wisdom, love, and power to meet our needs and the needs of the ministries He entrusts to us for His glory.

In recognizing God’s gift of elders, we agree to follow these steps because they rightly emphasize who elders are, what they do, and what we must do to know if God has given a particular man to us as an elder:

(1) *Initiation*: The man responds to God’s working in his life by expressing a desire to serve this local church as an elder (1 Tim 3:1; cf. Acts 20:28; 1 Pet 5:2).

(2) *Consultation*: The Council of Elders and the aspiring man discuss the biblical qualifications for elder, the nature and expectations of the ministry in general and at Redeemer Church, observations and evidence that God has equipped the man as a pastor for Redeemer Church, agreement with the Documents of Redeemer Church, and other areas that may be necessary or beneficial (1 Tim 3:1-7; 2 Tim 1:13-14; 2:2; Tit 1:5-9; 1 Pet 5:1-4; cf. Bylaws II.4.B).

(3) *Confirmation*: The Council of Elders determines if there is enough evidence that God is making the man an elder to call the whole church family to observe him. If unanimously agreed, the elders assume responsibility to work with the man in ways designed to both continue their discernment and further equip the man for possible ministry as an elder at Redeemer Church.

(4) *Demonstration*: The Council of Elders informs the church of the steps taken to that point and calls the church to a period of observation. During that time, the church

observes the elder candidate, his way of life, his home, and his ministry of the word to see if he meets the biblical qualifications for elder and if he has been equipped by God to function as an elder at Redeemer Church. Each member will seek to do what is reasonably necessary to make this determination for himself/herself. The elders will assign the candidate specific responsibilities of ministry in the church for a period of time they determine is sufficient in each case. In determining the candidate's responsibilities and the period of observation, the elders will consider the members' input and their need to observe whether the man has the aspiration, character, capabilities, and heart of one given by God as an elder to lead, care for, and protect this local church. It is likely the observation period will be shorter the longer a candidate has been a member.

- (5) *Presentation:* At a Members' Meeting following the observation period, the Council of Elders lead a discussion regarding what the members have observed and address any concerns brought before or at the meeting. The candidate will be available to answer the members' questions and receive their encouragement and exhortations so that the church is built up by the truth spoken in love whether or not the man is ever recognized as an elder. After this meeting, the members will have at least 30 days to bring their personal observations, encouragement, and concerns to the elders (cf. 1 Tim 5:22).
- (6) *Affirmation:* If after presentation the Council of Elders is unanimous that God has made the man an elder at Redeemer Church, then the elder candidate is presented to the membership at a Members' Meeting for affirmation or denial, in accordance with Constitution V.1 and Bylaws II.4.D and II.6.

## **B. Qualifications and Responsibilities**

Elders and nominees for elder shall be qualified for the office as specified in the Bible. Relevant texts include: 1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:6–9; and 1 Peter 5:1–4. The fundamental responsibility of the elders is to devote themselves to prayer and the Word of God. The elders are responsible for governing the church, teaching the Word of God, and prayerfully tending the flock of God in this local church.

Moreover, the responsibilities of the elders shall include: (1) examining prospective members and acquainting them with the Documents and membership course material; (2) overseeing the process of church discipline; (3) examining prospective candidates for office; (4) overseeing the work of the deacons, appointed church agents, Ministry Teams, and ministry positions; (5) conducting worship services; (6) administering the ordinances of the Gospel; (7) equipping the membership of the church for the work of the ministry; (8) teaching the whole counsel of God both formally and informally; (9) correcting error; (10) overseeing, coordinating, and promoting the ministries of the church; (11) mobilizing the church for both local and world evangelism and missions; and (12) helping establish policies, positions, and practices for Redeemer Church that are consistent with the express purposes of the church.

## **C. Organization**

The Council of Elders shall organize itself however it determines best to achieve the mission of the church. The elders shall be equal in authority, but may be specialized in function. The Council must meet at least once every month. Council meetings may be held at any location and may be conducted by means of electronic communication through which the elders may simultaneously hear each other. Unless the Council provides otherwise, meetings may be held upon immediate notice. A quorum for Council meetings shall be at least one-half of the Council.

The priorities of discussion and action at Council meetings shall be the following:

- (1) *Prayer/Worship*: Prayer, discussions, and decisions pertaining to the shepherding and accountability roles of the elders over the flock (see Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2–3);
- (2) *Management*: Decisions regarding finances, administration, and policies affecting the direction of the ministry (see 1 Timothy 3:5);
- (3) *Church Discipline*: Discussion and initiation of church discipline where necessary (see Hebrews 13:17); and
- (4) *Church Policy and Ministry Methodology*: Periodic discussions regarding doctrine, the ministry, and how to be biblical and effective in the task to which God has called the church and its leadership.

#### **D. Decision-Making**

Decisions shall be reached by the Council of Elders after prayerful consideration only by the unanimous or majority vote of the Council, as differentiated below, in a spirit of humility, each elder thereby regarding others before himself.

Therefore, in essence, whether the decision is one that necessitates a unanimous vote or a majority vote, the Council of Elders must have a spirit of unanimity regarding the direction of the church after all discussions are terminated and binding decisions have been made by the Council. Any violation of this spirit of unanimity must be considered a serious breach of elder qualifications. If it should occur more than once, without genuine repentance, that elder must seek the re-approval of the Council of Elders and the membership of Redeemer Church (in accordance with Constitution V.1 and Bylaws II.4.D and II.6) to continue in the office of elder (*cf.* Titus 3:10–11).

- (1) Unanimity is required on certain matters.

The unanimous vote of the members of the Council of Elders, whether voting in person, or by telephone to be confirmed later in writing, is required on these matters: (1) calling and approving a Vocational or non-Vocational officer or minister of the church; (2) supporting a missionary (to be supported by the Missions Budget); (3) proposing an amendment to or modification of the Constitution and Bylaws generally, or the Statement of Faith specifically; (4) approving or modifying a Policy/Position Statement; and (5) modifying the indebtedness limitations outlined in the Bylaws IV.5.

- (2) Majority is required on all other matters.

Decisions on matters other than those listed under the preceding unanimity paragraph shall require a simple majority of the members of the Council of Elders. Those elders in the minority position, after having an opportunity to defend their view from Scripture and sound reason, will humbly yield to the majority position of the Council in the spirit of Philippians 2:3, thereby preserving the spirit of unity that the Council must maintain to the congregation and the public. Therefore, the minority elder(s) must publicly support the decision of the majority of the Council in every situation. Any violation of this spirit of unanimity will be dealt with as outlined in Bylaws II.4.D above.

(3) Elders may be excluded from voting.

Decisions by the Council of Elders that pertain directly to any of the elders themselves (*e.g.*, church discipline, conflict of interest cases, salary review, etc.) may be made with or without the participation, input, or voting of the elder(s) concerned, at the discretion of the majority of the other elders.

### **E. Chairman**

The Council of Elders will appoint a Chairman of the Council by a majority vote. The Chairman will provide leadership for Council meetings and will represent the Council to the congregation at Members' Meetings. The Chairman must be appointed or reconfirmed every 12 months.

## **Section 5: Deacons**

### **A. Composition and Calling**

The number of deacons shall be determined by the needs of the ministry and by the call and qualification of individuals in the membership of Redeemer Church, in accordance with Constitution V.1 and Bylaws II.4.D and II.6.

### **B. Qualifications**

Deacons and nominees for deacon shall be qualified for the office as specified in the Bible (1 Timothy 3:8–12).

### **C. Responsibilities**

The deacons shall inform and be ready to assist the elders regarding any service that supports and promotes the ministry of the Word, new and existing ministries of the church, and care for members of the congregation. The deacons' responsibilities may include (but are not limited to) the following:

- (1) Administering a fund to assist the poor and needy, and otherwise providing aid in times of crisis or distress;
- (2) Assisting the greeting and welcoming ministries of the church;
- (3) Assisting the administration of the ordinances of the Gospel;
- (4) Assisting at fellowship gatherings of the church;
- (5) Caring for and maintaining the church properties; and

(6) Administering the business affairs of the church that pertain to its material assets.

**D. Organization**

The elders shall organize the deacons however the elders determine best to achieve the mission of the church. The elders may designate any specific deacon or group of deacons to specialize in some particular diaconal function.

## **Section 6: Church Participation**

The elders will seek participation by the members of the church in decisions on major issues (in accordance with Constitution V.1) at a Members' Meeting in the following manner:

- (1) If the Council of Elders is unified in their decision, then there must be a subsequent Members' Meeting convened in order to allow for adequate discussion of the matter(s). If such a meeting allows for ample discussion and reflection on the matter(s), then a two-thirds majority decision is required by the membership in attendance for acceptance or denial of the matters(s).
- (2) In the event that there is not ample discussion, the elders recognize that there are necessary amendments to their proposal, there are questions that are objectionable in nature, or other information presented is deemed appropriate to support an objection, the Council of Elders will reconvene to come to a decision.
- (3) Further discussion from any members regarding questions that are objectionable in nature, or other information deemed appropriate to support an objection, will be directed to one of the elders on a personal basis outside of and within one week from the initial Members' Meeting. If the elder who is presented with the information related to the objection is not able to answer satisfactorily the member's concern, that elder must take the information to the entire Council of Elders for consideration. To assist the elders in their discussion of the issue at hand, the member may be asked to meet with the Council to clarify the concerns or objections.
- (4) Should the Council of Elders reconvene as described in (2) above, the elders must come to a decision in accordance with Bylaws II.4.D.1 or 2. If the elders determine further discussion is necessary, they will re-present the matter(s) at a subsequent Members' Meeting(s). If the elders cannot reach the required unanimous or majority vote, no action will be taken, and the congregation will be informed of this process in a manner deemed appropriate by the elders. If the elders reach a different decision on the matter(s) and reach the required unanimous or majority vote, they will present the newly decided matter(s) at a Members' Meeting as described in (1) above. And if the elders maintain the required unanimous or majority vote on the original matter(s), they will present the matter(s) again at a Members' Meeting as described in (1) above.

## **ARTICLE III: CHURCH EMPLOYEES**

In addition to Vocational Pastors and Vocational Ministers, the church may employ additional personnel. The moneys for such personnel must be approved by the Council of Elders in conjunction with the Budget and Finance Ministry. The Council shall be responsible for determining the duties and hiring of such personnel.

Moreover, we believe that in order to preserve the nature, purpose, function, and integrity of the church as the local body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the church

members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by the church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, should abide by and agree to the “Documents” of Redeemer Church (see Constitution IV.1).

## **ARTICLE IV: CHURCH FINANCES**

### **Section 1: In General**

No method of raising funds shall be entertained that is in conflict with the scriptural ideals of the church. All funds donated shall pass through the financial administrator of the church in order that due record may be made. The deacons and/or elders shall provide assistance to the financial administrator in accounting for funds donated.

### **Section 2: Contributions**

The Lord blesses his people with material resources to support the ministry of the word, meet the needs of the saints, sustain local churches, care for the poor and true widows, and spread the gospel to all nations (Psalm 67:2, 6-7; Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 2:45; Romans 15:27; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, 11; Galatians 2:10; 6:6; Philippians 4:14-19; 1 Timothy 3:1-18; Titus 3:14; 1 John 3:17; 3 John 6). Moreover, the gospel on which the church stands compels us to give regularly, sacrificially, proportionally, and cheerfully through the local church and as the local church (Acts 2:45; 4:34-37; 20:35; Romans 15:26; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, 6; 2 Corinthians 8:1-4 [cf. Luke 21:1-4]; 9:7, 10-11; 1 Timothy 5:3-18; 1 John 3:17-18). Therefore, membership in Redeemer Church involves financial obligations that align with these biblical priorities and principles. Special offerings may be sought by the church, or by any of its organizations, with the approval of the Council of Elders. This shall not preclude individuals from making special offerings or designated gifts at any time as the Spirit of God may move them.

### **Section 3: Financial Planning**

The financial planning of Redeemer Church shall be carried out through the annual budgets related to the various ministries of the church. Annual budgets shall be approved and adopted by the church (in accordance with Constitution V.1 and Bylaws II.4.D and II.6) upon recommendation of the Council of Elders via the Budget and Finance Ministry Team. Matters involving staff compensation shall be the responsibility of the Budget and Finance Ministry in conjunction with the Council.

### **Section 4: Accounts**

Financial receipts from all sources shall be accounted for by the financial administrator according to the purposes for which contributions are designated. The financial administrator shall disburse these funds promptly according to the financial program of the church as detailed in the budget or other authorized designations.

### **Section 5: Indebtedness**

No note or contract exceeding 1% of the total annual budget whereby the credit of the church is pledged shall be made, except by recommendation of the Council of Elders (in consultation with the Budget and Finance Ministry) to the membership in a Members' Meeting in accordance with Constitution V.1 and Bylaws II.4.D and II.6.

## **Section 6: Authority to Bind the Church**

The elders are the only officers who have authority, in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws, and any applicable laws, to execute legal documents relating to real estate, church property, and church finances.

### **ARTICLE V: CORPORATE WORSHIP AND FACILITIES USE**

Public services shall be held on the Lord's Day. The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated on the first Sunday of each month, or at such other times as the Council of Elders may determine. Other religious services may be appointed as the advancement of the work of the church may require.

We further believe that in order to preserve the purity and integrity of the church's witness in advancing Christ's mission, the Redeemer Church facilities and property are to be used solely to promote the name of Jesus Christ and the values and purpose of Redeemer Church. Therefore, we reserve the right to deny the use of our facilities and property to any person(s) whose beliefs or practices contradict the aforementioned values in the "Documents" of Redeemer Church (see Constitution IV.1), especially those values concerning the family, marriage, sexuality, and human life as articulated in Constitution III.11-12 and Bylaws VII.2.A.1-3.

### **ARTICLE VI: ORGANIZATION OF MEMBERS FOR MINISTRY**

Members of this church shall have the liberty to participate in and organize themselves for ministry, provided that such participation and organization does not conflict with Constitution III. Any such organization may seek church sanction from the Council of Elders as an official ministry of Redeemer Church. Such sanction may be granted, provided that: (1) the object, purpose, belief, and conduct of the organization and its members are consistent with Constitution III; and (2) the primary officers of the organization are members of the church who have been approved under guidelines established by the Council. Sanction by the Council does not necessarily imply support of the organization by the church with personnel, finances, or facilities. Such support may be requested as provided by the leadership of the church.

### **ARTICLE VII: DISCIPLINE**

The discipline of members of Redeemer Church shall be a responsibility of its membership, including the Council of Elders, under the guidelines and procedures established on the basis of Scripture as detailed below. All such proceedings shall be executed in prayerful dependence on God, careful submission to His written word, kindness wrought by the Spirit, forbearance characteristic of God's children, and a firm truthfulness demanded by

Christian love (1 Corinthians 13:6; Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 4:15; Colossians 3:12-15; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Peter 5:6).

## **Section 1: General Policy**

The members of Redeemer Church have a unique relationship with one another based on their membership in this local church according to Scripture. We have the privilege of experiencing the full expression of God's love and care in the body of Christ. This expression of love and care includes both *formative* and *corrective* discipline. To maintain a positive corporate witness before non-Christians, promote the spiritual well-being of the church and her members, and reflect the glory of God in our relationship with Jesus Christ, Redeemer Church shall practice both forms of discipline.

### **A. Formative Discipline**

Formative discipline refers to actions by individual members (e.g., exhortation, teaching, correction, rebuke), as opposed to the members acting as a whole, that serve the continual sanctification of every believer in the local church. As an ongoing expression of love, each member has a responsibility to give and receive formative discipline from the other members (1 Corinthians 15:1-2; Colossians 1:21-2:7; 1 Thessalonians 5:11; 2 Timothy 4:2; Hebrews 3:12-13; 10:23-25). Members are encouraged to take formative discipline seriously for the joy of God's people and his glory among them. The absence of genuine repentance—including genuine sorrow over sin and the total forsaking of sin for deeper enjoyment of Jesus Christ and submission to his lordship—ultimately leads to corrective discipline (Matthew 18:15; cf. Luke 3:8; 14:26, 33; Acts 8:22; 20:21; 26:20; 2 Cor 7:10; Heb 6:1).

### **B. Corrective Discipline**

Corrective discipline refers to actions by the entire church and her leadership that comes in the absence of genuine repentance as a final measure to turn a member from sin and/or protect the body and the name of Christ, even to the extent of excluding a professing Christian from membership (e.g., Matthew 18:16-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; Titus 3:10-11). Corrective discipline is not intended to make the church sinless. Rather, corrective discipline recognizes that certain deviations from the truth and godly living essentially reveal a person's refusal to submit to God's reign and gives sufficient grounds for the membership of the local church to correct this refusal through further discipline.

Corrective discipline is regarded as a serious and clear directive in Scripture. No member is above or immune from accountability, including the elders. The church shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation or transfer of membership to another church, either for the purpose of proceeding with a process of corrective discipline, or for any other biblical reason (Matthew 16:18-19; 18:15-20; Luke 17:3; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Corinthians 2:5-10; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 5:19-22; James 5:19-20). Moreover, there can be no appeal to any court as a result of corrective discipline (*see* Constitution IV.1; cf. 1 Corinthians 5:9-6:8).

Corrective discipline shall always be exercised with compassion for the erring member and a sincere desire to seek that person's spiritual good through repentance, reconciliation, and, if applicable, restoration to the fellowship of the local church. Corrective discipline does

not entitle the members of Redeemer Church, including its elders, to abuse any authority over other members of this church (1 Peter 5:1-5). Scripture is clear that the motives of the member(s) and/or the elders dealing with the erring member must be pure before our Savior, His church, and the world, as follows:

- (1) They are to avoid vengeance and arrogant presumption by beginning with self-examination and a spirit of humility sensitive to one's own sinfulness and vulnerabilities to sin (Matthew 7:1-5, 12; Luke 6:41-42; 1 Corinthians 10:12; Galatians 6:1-5; James 3:2);
- (2) They are not to be motivated by hostility or anger, but by a loving concern for the erring member (Galatians 5:19-6:1; Ephesians 4:26; 2 Thessalonians 3:15; James 1:19-20; 5:19-20; 1 John 5:16; Jude 22-23);
- (3) They are to approach the erring member with heart-felt sorrow and a genuine interest in their eternal well-being (Matthew 18:15; Luke 17:3; 1 Corinthians 5:2; 2 Corinthians 2:4; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; James 5:19-20); and
- (4) Upon genuine repentance, they are to be ready to grant both forgiveness, and, whenever applicable, a person's restoration to membership (Matthew 6:14-15; 18:15-35; Luke 17:1-10; 2 Corinthians 2:5-8; Colossians 3:13).

## **Section 2: Offenses Applicable to Corrective Discipline**

The following factors together constitute sufficient grounds for corrective discipline, up to and including excommunication: the sin is outward in nature, it causes serious negative consequences to the life of the church or an individual member, *and* the professing believer practicing the sin is unrepentant (Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; Titus 3:9-11). Scripture addresses at least two categories of offenses for which the church should pursue corrective discipline, *corporate* offenses and *individual* offenses. These categories are not mutually exclusive, but each requires different actions by the church and the elders, as all must proceed with biblical wisdom in assessing the nature, consequences, and effects an offense(s) produces as well as the immediacy of action required to preserve the church's well-being.

### **A. Corporate Offenses**

Corporate offenses are those sinful actions by a member that directly threaten the corporate life, witness, and unity of the entire church. That is, the offense(s) affects the broader church body such that Scripture shifts the focus from dealing with the erring member privately and more methodically—as in the steps of Matthew 18:15-17 (see below)—to protecting more urgently the life and unity of the whole church by removing the erring member from fellowship and even membership for their persistent refusal to repent (e.g., 1 Corinthians 5:4-5, 11-13; Titus 3:10-11).

To ensure the overall protection of the church, the elders may decide to suspend the erring member from corporate gatherings while warning him/her to repent. If the erring member refuses to repent, then the elders shall proceed as Scripture directs, instruct the church to remove that person from membership immediately, and discourage any further personal fellowship with the erring individual. Upon instructing the body in their decision, the elders

shall humbly receive and carefully weigh any objections the membership may have to removing the individual. If no objection persists according to Scripture, then the erring individual in question will be removed from membership, no vote being required.

Examples in Scripture of corporate offenses that require immediate action by the church and the elders include:

- (1) *False Teaching* is a deliberate program of teaching and/or persistent outspoken refusal that would lead the Church to reject the essential truths of the historic Christian faith built upon God's word. These essential truths are reflected in the Statement of Faith of the Constitution of Redeemer Church. (Romans 16:17; Galatians 1:8-9; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 14:37-38; 16:22; 2 Corinthians 11:3-4; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; 6:3-4; Titus 1:9-10; 2 Peter 2:1-2; 1 John 2:19; 4:1-5; 2 John 7-10; Revelation 22:18-19).
- (2) *Divisiveness* is behavior that undermines the unity of Redeemer Church either between members or against God's established authority in the church (Philippians 4:2-3; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Titus 3:10-11; cf. Romans 16:17; Galatians 5:20; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; Hebrews 13:17; 2 John 10; Jude 17-19).
- (3) *Ostentatious Immorality* is all behavior that is morally unacceptable according to Scripture and brings public shame on the testimony of Christ, defiles the local church, and disrupts her mission to the world. Cases of immorality include but are not limited to idolatry, drunkenness, thievery, greed, reviling, swindling, murder (including abortion and euthanasia), and all forms of sexual immorality such as adultery, fornication, homosexual conduct, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography or any attempt to change one's sex, or disagreement with one's biological sex. (1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Corinthians 12:21; Ephesians 5:3; cf. Genesis 1:27; Exodus 22:19; Leviticus 20:1-26; Psalm 139:13-14; Matthew 15:19; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8; Revelation 2:14, 20-21; 9:21; 19:2; see also Constitution III.11-12).

## **B. Individual Offenses**

Individual offenses are those sinful actions by a member that do not immediately threaten the spiritual well-being of the entire church, but can and will threaten the erring member's own spiritual well-being if they refuse to repent. All individual offenses shall be handled by the church and the elders according to Matthew 18:15-20.

- (1) *First Step*: The offended member arranges a private meeting with the offending member, humbly confronting the person with the nature of the offense. If the offending member repents, the matter is closed (Matthew 6:14-15; 18:15; Luke 17:3). Scripture does not specify the number of times that an offender should be confronted on an individual basis. Scripture is clear that believers should exercise patience and possess an unrelenting desire for an offender's repentance (Matthew 18:21-22; 1 Corinthians 13:7; James 5:20; 1 Peter 4:8). If the offending member does not repent and the offense is of the nature categorized above as "Offenses Applicable to Corrective Discipline" (see Bylaws VII.2), then the offended member has a responsibility to move to the Second Step.

- (2) *Second Step:* The offended member sets up another private meeting with the offending member, this time with one or two other witnesses present (Matthew 18:16). This step should never be taken in haste, but should follow biblical discernment and prayerful conviction that the First Step has not availed. If the offending member repents, he should seek forgiveness from the circle of offense, and no further.

It is important to understand the qualifications of a witness and the witness's function in the disciplinary process. Biblically, a witness is a person who bears testimony of another's wrongdoing based on firsthand knowledge. A person is not constituted a witness who bears testimony based on hearsay, gossip, or secondhand knowledge (Deuteronomy 19:15–19; 2 Corinthians 13:1). The Bible condemns false witnesses (Exodus 20:13). Accusations not substantiated by two or three witnesses must be left to the One who knows all things and judges righteously (Genesis 18:25; Numbers 35:30; Psalm 51:3–4; 1 Peter 2:23). It is the function of a witness to ensure that the offense is clearly and impartially presented and that nothing is left unsaid. Witnesses also keep each others' motivations and actions accountable before God (Matthew 18:20).

If the offending member does not repent, the circle of knowledge of the offense must be broadened to include the elders for their consideration of the Third Step, in accordance with Bylaws II.4.D.

- (3) *Third Step:* With the required vote under Bylaws II.4.D, the elders present the matter to the members of Redeemer Church (Matthew 18:17) at a Members' Meeting in accordance with Constitution V.1 and Bylaws II.4.D and II.6. The membership will then have a responsibility, as opportunity provides, to call the offending member to repentance. An equitable period of time will be established by the Council of Elders to optimize the fullest effect of the witness of the entire membership, to allow for the work of the Lord, and to provide more than ample time for repentance.

If the offending member repents, the entire body should be quick to respond with forgiveness, grace, and love (Matthew 6:14-15; Luke 17:3; 2 Corinthians 2:5-8). While repentance and forgiveness are instantaneous, restoration to service will be monitored by the Council of Elders for the benefit and development of the repentant member, and for the health, protection, and well-being of Redeemer Church.

If the offending member does not repent, the elders will bring the matter before the members of Redeemer Church at a Members' Meeting for the Fourth Step, the final step in the process detailed in Scripture.

- (4) *Fourth Step:* The Council of Elders and the membership of the church approves or disapproves removal of the offending member from membership in accordance with Constitution V.1 and Bylaws II.4.D and II.6. If the unrepentant offender is removed from membership, he or she will be considered "a Gentile and a tax collector," as described by Scripture and as specifically instructed in Matthew 18:17.

This phrase contains two interrelated aspects. First, the unrepentant offender is likened to a Gentile, which signifies that the person is outside the community of God's blessing and grace. Second, the offender is likened to a tax collector, which signifies that the person is untrustworthy and potentially dangerous.

By way of application, this constitutes a removal from church membership and personal fellowship resulting in a recognition that the unrepentant offender is outside the blessing of God's covenant community (Matthew 16:19; 1 Corinthians 5:5, 11-13; cf. 2 Thessalonians 3:6; 1 Timothy 1:20). Common ground for intimate friendship has been removed. The entire congregation has an ongoing responsibility to act in unison, calling the person to repentance with all contact, so as not to undermine the Scriptural process or the severe temporal consequences of the person's obstinate behavior and corrupt desires. It is sincerely hoped that there will be repentance and reconciliation as a result of the consistent and loving application of this heart-wrenching, but biblical action.

### **Section 3: Integrity of Knowledge**

In all matters of corrective discipline, if and when members become aware of an offense and/or the disciplinary action (including any and all steps in Bylaws VII.2), the members are expected, without exception, to hold the knowledge with integrity, avoiding gossip and the defamation of character (Ephesians 4:31-32; James 4:11). While all discipline matters concern the members of Redeemer Church and must not be paraded before the world in harmful ways, we will, as a church, submit to the apostolic command to trust God and be generally subject to the governing authorities he establishes (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-17).

### **Section 4: Regarding Church Authority and Non-members**

The nature of corrective discipline as outlined in Bylaws VII.1-3 recognizes the importance of all Christians joining and submitting themselves to the membership and authority of a local church. The discipline practiced by an identifiable assembly of believers, the leadership given over definable congregations, the submission offered to particular elders, the interdependence expressed by each body member, and the corporate nature of the Christian life together make membership to a local church crucial (Matthew 18:17-20; Acts 20:28; Romans 12:4-16; 16:1-5; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 12:12-31; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Timothy 5:9-18; Hebrews 10:25; 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2-3; Constitution III.8). Therefore, members of Redeemer Church have responsibilities and obligations to one another that exceed those shared with other Christians who are *non*-members.

While all genuine Christians share a union with Christ, Redeemer Church, with her elders, carries no authority to perform *corrective* discipline on non-members as outlined in Bylaws VII.1-3. Members of Redeemer do share the responsibility to teach, share, encourage, correct, and rebuke non-members when Scripture applies respectively (e.g., Acts 15:32; 16:40; Romans 1:12; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 2 Timothy 4:2; 3 John 5-10). Members of Redeemer, with her elders, also possess the authority to guard the church from non-members whose doctrine and/or practice may threaten the well-being of Redeemer's membership and mission (e.g., Romans 16:17; 2 John 10-11). Thus, the members of

Redeemer possess authority to discipline only members and then also to keep non-members from fellowship where a non-member's participation would threaten the church's health. In addition, members of Redeemer Church must honor the authority of other gospel-preaching churches, exhort all Christians into the membership of a healthy local body of believers, and trust the Lord to preserve all his elect.

#### **ARTICLE VIII: AMENDMENTS**

Amendments to these Bylaws must be introduced in writing and submitted to the Council of Elders for recommendation to the members of Redeemer Church. The amendment(s) will be approved or disapproved by the decision of the Council and the membership of the church in accordance with Constitution V.1 and Bylaws II.4.D and II.6.