

An Introduction to the Proposed Bylaws for Travis Avenue Baptist Church

The Vision for Change:

God called our spiritual forebears, a group of Christ followers, to establish an independent and nondenominational Sunday School in 1908 which met on Sunday afternoon and was supported by College Avenue Baptist Church, which had formed three years prior, in 1905. Three years later in 1911, College Avenue Baptist Church agreed to sponsor this effort as a church and on January 11th, 1911, the South Side Baptist Church was formed, at the corner of Travis Avenue and Berry streets in Fort Worth, Texas. The name of this church was changed to Travis Avenue Baptist Church (TABC) in 1920. These original members established their order of worship, constitution/bylaws, how they would organize their leadership (governance), affiliations, etc. and called a single elder/pastor to lead them and deacons who have served the church in key areas over time. These founders are now a cloud of witnesses watching how we lead and serve in our church. They were not incorrect in choosing a church governance structure common for their time; and God has blessed the seeds they planted. However as Paul planted churches in the New Testament, he instituted a model of governance using multiple elders, as indicated in the scriptures. These Bylaws implement the governance of TABC by multiple elders, also referred to as a plurality of elders.

Why Change Now?

Over the past 100 years, TABC has expanded and declined in growth, ministry, attendance, and Kingdom of God impact. Recognizing the need for change, in 2015 our pastor led us to envision anew the mission and organization for our church in every area through our members being involved in the Re:Vision—Strategic Leadership Team (SLT) process. This larger SLT was made up of smaller study teams of church members who diligently studied the best and most biblical way forward in each area of our church. The Church Governance Study Team (CGST) was mandated to determine the best and most biblical way for TABC to govern itself and organize its membership, leadership, statement of faith, and constitution/bylaws. TABC mandated that the study team:

- Thoroughly and prayerfully study the Scriptures and church history for guidance in matters related to the governance of our church.
- Review the current operational and governance structure of the church, as set forth in the church's Constitution and Bylaws, including the offices of church leadership (pastors and deacons) and the procedures by which decisions are made at the various levels of church life.
- Examine different models of church governance utilized by other churches, with the services of a church governance consultant as necessary.
- Report and recommend to the deacon body and the church any recommendations for changes related to the manner of the governance of our church.

What is the change?

After months of Bible study, prayer, and discussion; the reading of many books; interviews with pastors and scholars; visits to many other churches to view their organizational structure, the CGST has come to the conclusion that the biblical standard for church leadership is not a single-elder format but a plural-elder format. This does not add another layer of administration to our

church rather it would allow for the elder (shepherding/pastoral) role to be biblically expanded to include men from the congregation (and eventually from the church staff) who fulfill and are held to the biblical criteria for elders.

Why are we proposing this change?

Only in the past 100 years has the single-elder format for leadership predominated in Baptist churches with the pastor running the church like the head of a business; and with others—deacons, trustees, committees, staff, or influential members either making (or influencing) church decisions as if they were also elders of the church. However, these individuals have never been held up to the biblical standard for elder as required according to scripture.

The heavy burden of administrative leadership and most decision-making has fallen almost exclusively upon our single elder, the Senior Pastor. While we have staff that helps the senior pastor in administration, his staff are professionally his subordinates and, for the most part, serve under his leadership.

A move to the plural-elder model will allow the church to recognize officially the spiritual shepherd-leaders within the congregation and give them a voice as pastor/shepherds equal in authority with the single elder (Senior Pastor) who currently leads and serves our members. A plurality of elders will create accountability of the Senior Pastor (Lead Teaching Pastor) through annual review. This model will allow for greater wisdom in decision-making and provide more biblically-focused guidance to the direction of the church.

Who will the change impact?

Elders from the congregation will have the same requirements, spiritual shepherding/leadership responsibilities, and authority as elders from the staff (including the Lead Teaching Pastor). The elders as a co-equal group will be the pastoral leaders of the church, and the ministry staff will report to the elders.

We believe that every member at TABC will be affected positively. Changing to a plural-elder leadership model means redefining how members, elders, deacons, staff, and committees relate to each other and hold each other accountable. However this change in how we govern ourselves will not change that we are an autonomous, congregationally accountable church. It will not change that we are Baptist in affiliation. It will not change or remove our staff, but it will change how decisions are made at TABC.

What are the benefits of the change?

Elders who are not professional ministers bring real-world wisdom to the table, and our church members may be able to talk with them openly and honestly without a forced spirituality reserved for professional ministers. We expect that this leadership change will cause us as a church to be more accountable and more responsive to Christ's leadership and commands.

Elders from among the membership (and not in the employ of the church) will more likely avoid conflicts of interest, thus permitting wiser decisions to prevail while supporting the pastor in shepherding the church. Congregational elders will not have the pressure of directly reporting to the Lead Teaching Pastor, thereby fostering a freedom of thought and speech that may understandably hinder staff elders. Having congregational elders marshals broader resources to shepherd and disciple the church than in a professional staff/single-elder-only model.

While TABC has been blessed with a long-serving pastor, professional ministry staff often move frequently. It is not uncommon for ministry to be viewed as a career path for them, and they may wish to eventually settle and serve nearer to their hometowns and families. However, congregational elders are more likely to remain, and their long-term service in the church helps to smooth transitions when they arise.

What will the change cost us?

Although not using the title of elder, there are men already in the role of congregational elders, shepherding and teaching groups of members, for example, our Bible study teachers. This change will allow these men more involvement in the leadership of our church. It will also lead to deeper commitment by our members. The congregational nature of our church will not change.

What obstacles might we encounter?

Change is often uncomfortable at best, and it may be unsettling and unpopular at first. An initial lack of understanding and fear of a change will be obstacles in this process. Fear of change may be manifested in several ways:

- 1) This just isn't the way we have always done it.
- 2) This new way of church leadership might cause more leadership difficulties at TABC than it solves.
- 3) The loss of power or influence among some existing leaders (staff, deacons, committees, etc.) might raise opposition.

The CGST strongly believes that through prayer, teaching, discussion, and open communication on the subject of New Testament eldership, this lack of understanding and fear of change can be addressed.

What the CGST wants you to know?

The Church Governance Study Team wants you to know that we earnestly seek the wisdom and leadership of our Lord Jesus Christ in all these matters. To the best of our ability, we have endeavored to weigh the biblical standards for leadership, the current and future leadership needs of TABC, the congregational nature of our church, and the necessity of having biblically-qualified, trained, gifted, and wise leadership who are devoted to shepherding our church membership. While change may make us feel vulnerable, we view this as an opportunity for TABC to adopt a biblically balanced, New Testament church polity. We are excited about the future the Lord has for our church.

We the Church Governance Study Team have done our work, and we offer it to you for your study, for your assessment, and for your decision. We are present and available to all members for any discussion concerning these issues.

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Ex officio: Mike Dean, Beth Hampton, Eric Mitchell
(Alphabetical order)

What can members do?

1. Love Christ. Show we are Christians by love of the brethren and unity of spirit.
2. Pray and ask God for wisdom.
3. Attend the sermon series that our pastor will preach from Titus.
4. Attend the Sunday Bible Study specific training sessions as outlined in the schedule of training.
5. Read the Bible study on Plural Elder Leadership which we have written in summary form and will be made available to you. Read the Scriptures cited in the study.
6. Read these Proposed Bylaws.
7. Attend the church conferences ready to ask questions and discuss your reservations —we want to listen to you. Come ready to listen with an open mind and heart by participating in the presentations to the membership.
8. Finally, come and vote on the Proposed Bylaws. This is a vote for our future as a church.
9. Whatever the outcome, agree fervently to serve Christ both individually and as members of the Body of Christ.



Travis Avenue Baptist Church Bylaws

Effective: _____

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREAMBLE	1
ARTICLE I – NAME	1
ARTICLE II – PURPOSE	1
ARTICLE III – STATEMENT OF FAITH.....	1
ARTICLE IV – MEMBERSHIP.....	1
Section 4.1 – Qualifications	2
Section 4.2 – Admission.....	2
Section 4.3 – Duties and Privileges of Membership	3
Section 4.4 – Dismissal.....	4
Section 4.5 – Church Discipline.....	4
ARTICLE V – ELDERS	4
Section 5.1 – Qualifications	4
Section 5.2 – Number	5
Section 5.3 – Duties.....	6
Section 5.4 – Selection and Affirmation	8
Section 5.5 – Term of Office	9
Section 5.6 – Resignation and Removal.....	9
Section 5.7 – Meetings.....	10
Section 5.8 – Definition of Quorum and Passing Vote	11
Section 5.9 – Officers (and Trustees).....	11
ARTICLE VI – DEACONS	12
Section 6.1 – Deacon Definition	12
Section 6.2 – Selection and Qualifications.....	12
Section 6.3 – Responsibilities	13
Section 6.4 – Removal.....	13
ARTICLE VII – STAFF	13
Section 7.1 – Qualifications and Expectations	13
Section 7.2 – Duties.....	14
Section 7.3 – Hiring and Oversight	14
Section 7.4 – Calling of Lead Teaching Pastor.....	15
Section 7.5 – Calling of Associate Teaching Pastor	15

ARTICLE VIII – COMMITTEES	16
Section 8.1 – Designation and Authority	16
Section 8.2 – Qualifications and Expectations	16
Section 8.3 – Selection.....	16
Section 8.4 – Standing Committees	17
ARTICLE IX – PUBLIC WORSHIP AND CHURCH CONFERENCES.....	18
Section 9.1 – Public Worship	18
Section 9.2 – Procedure for Church Conferences.....	18
Section 9.3 – Minutes	19
ARTICLE X – ORDINATION AND LICENSING	19
ARTICLE XI – INDEMNIFICATION	19
Section 11.1 – Mandatory Indemnification	19
Section 11.2 – Permissive Indemnification	19
Section 11.3 – Procedure.....	20
ARTICLE XII – CONFLICT OF INTEREST	20
ARTICLE XIII – CHURCH TRANSACTIONS	21
Section 13.1 – Contracts and Legal Instruments	21
Section 13.2 – Deposits	21
Section 13.3 – Gifts	21
Section 13.4 – Ownership and Distribution of Church Property	21
ARTICLE XIV – BOOKS AND RECORDS	22
Section 14.1 – Required Books and Records	22
Section 14.2 – Fiscal Year.....	22
ARTICLE XV – EMERGENCY POWERS	22
ARTICLE XVI – AFFILIATIONS	23
ARTICLE XVII – NONPROFIT STATUS	23
ARTICLE XVIII – EFFECTIVE DATE AND AMENDMENT OF BYLAWS.....	23
APPENDIX A – TRAVIS AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH STATEMENT OF FAITH	
APPENDIX B – TRAVIS AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH MEMBERSHIP COVENANT	

PREAMBLE

We, the members of Travis Avenue Baptist Church, recognize the need to organize ourselves to more closely conform to God's will for the Church in this age as found in the Bible and prepare ourselves for greater efforts in His name. The Bible is our sole source of authority and guidance. The Bible will always rule supreme in all that we strive to do in following our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. These Bylaws take effect on the first Sunday following congregational affirmation of the initial Elders.

ARTICLE I – NAME

This New Testament Church is duly incorporated under the laws of the State of Texas under the corporate name of Travis Avenue Baptist Church, and is a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the State of Texas organized under the Texas Business Organizations Code. Travis Avenue Baptist Church may be referred to herein as "Travis," "TABC" or the "church."

ARTICLE II – PURPOSE

Travis Avenue Baptist Church is Christ-ruled, plural Elder-led, deacon-served, staff-administered, and congregation-accountable. In aligning with Matthew 28:19-20, our purpose is to "[g]o therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."

ARTICLE III – STATEMENT OF FAITH

Travis Avenue's Statement of Faith, with supporting scripture references, is contained in the "Travis Avenue Baptist Church Statement of Faith," which is incorporated by reference here as if set forth at length. (See Appendix A)

ARTICLE IV – MEMBERSHIP

While we acknowledge that all true believers in Jesus Christ are members of the Church universal, membership in this local body requires participation in, and commitment to:

- A. The beliefs and governance of this church;
- B. Intentional community with members of this local body; and
- C. The use of whatever gift(s) a member has received to serve others in order that members may do their part in faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms.

Section 4.1 – Qualifications

To qualify for membership in this church, a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of being born again, who, following his or her salvation, in obedience to Christ, has been baptized in a church of like faith and order (or is seeking baptism in our church), and who wholeheartedly believes in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible. Each member must affirm the Bylaws, Statement of Faith, and the Membership Covenant (See Appendix B); offer evidence by their confession and conduct, that they are living in accord with their affirmations and these aforementioned Bylaws, Statement of Faith, and Membership Covenant; and actively pursue and continue in a vital fellowship with the Lord, Jesus Christ. The Elders shall be responsible for determining each person's qualification for membership according to Scriptural standards.

Section 4.2 – Admission

Any one of the following is sufficient for admission to membership:

- A. By profession of faith in Christ as Savior and for New Testament baptism by immersion. Any person publicly professing faith in the resurrected Lord Jesus Christ as his/her personal Savior, and declaring it as his/her purpose to follow Him as His disciple, may be received into full fellowship of this church, subject to baptism by immersion in the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
- B. By promise of a letter of recommendation from another Southern Baptist church or by personal statement of faith. Members in good standing of other Baptist churches of like faith and order, seeking membership may be received into membership upon receipt of a letter of transfer from their church, or from another church of like faith and order by personal statement of their faith and the Elders' acceptance of their testimony of faith in Christ. Such persons must have been baptized by immersion as an act of obedience into a church whose view of baptism is that of TABC.
- C. By watch-care. A person living in the area for an interim period who wishes to formally participate in the fellowship and worship may be accepted under watch-care. They will function as a full member of our church while they reside in the community with the exception that: *they may not vote* when it comes to the formal conducting of business of the church; *nor may they teach* unless called upon by the Elders.
- D. By restoration from dismissal as a result of church discipline, upon evidence of his/her repentance and reformation presented to the Elders. Upon the recommendation of the Elders, restoration will formally take place publicly at a regularly scheduled Lord's Supper worship service where the former member will address the congregation regarding their repentance. Upon an affirmative vote of the congregation, the member will be welcomed back into the fellowship of TABC and join in partaking of the Lord's Supper.

- E. A person who, for reasons of health or other circumstances, cannot physically attend the church and publicly expresses a desire to join, by professing his/her faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior, and declaring it as their purpose to follow Him as His disciple, may be received into fellowship at TABC, subject to baptism by immersion in the name of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

To be admitted into church membership, in each instance candidates shall be recommended and brought forward by the Elders for a vote on admission and accepted by vote of the members at any regular or special meeting of the church, and shall at that point relinquish their membership in all other churches. The members of Travis may be referred to herein as “members,” “church members” or the “congregation.”

Section 4.3 – Duties and Privileges of Membership

- A. In accord with the duties enumerated in the Membership Covenant, each member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the church, consistent with God’s leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God. Additionally, a privilege of membership is voting, which is reserved for those age eighteen (18) years of age and older. Only those who are members in good standing of this congregation shall be entitled to serve in the ministries of the church; non-members may serve on an ad-hoc basis with the approval of the Elders, or the Elders’ designee. Notwithstanding, non-members may serve the church for purposes of administration and professional consultation.
- B. TABC members must hold the church accountable to the Bible, and our Statement of Faith, Bylaws, and Membership Covenant.
- C. Members are in good standing as long as they regularly participate in worship services, small group Bible study, church ministry activities, giving, and live a life in accordance with the expectations of a disciple of Jesus Christ. If a member has not reasonably participated in worship services, small group Bible study, ministry activities, or giving for two (2) consecutive years the member may be designated as an inactive member or removed, at the discretion of the Elders. The Elders shall conduct periodic reviews of the membership roster to maintain accuracy and remove inactive members.
- D. If a member is not living a lifestyle in accordance with the expectations of a disciple of Jesus Christ, the member will be encouraged and admonished to correct their actions and lifestyle. This correction may lead to a disciplinary course of action being undertaken by the Elders to confront, instruct, admonish, and encourage repentance leading toward restoration, reconciliation, and spiritual growth.

Section 4.4 – Dismissal

- A. A member shall be dismissed from church membership in one of the following ways:
 - 1. through death,
 - 2. by letter of recommendation to another Southern Baptist church,
 - 3. by becoming active in another church,
 - 4. by request of the member,
 - 5. through exclusion by action of this church through church discipline, or
 - 6. by remaining inactive for an extended period of time without adequate explanation, as determined by the Elders.
- B. Membership dismissal due to church discipline shall be enacted by congregational approval upon recommendation of the Elders at a regular or special meeting of the church. An affirmative vote of 75% of active members present at a called church meeting constitutes congregational approval. Prayer for the repentance and restoration of a member currently under or formerly under church discipline will take place when TABC comes together to partake of the Lord's Supper.

Section 4.5 – Church Discipline

Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so opposing the welfare of the church, shall be subject to the admonition of the Elders and the discipline of the church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15–17 and the example of Scripture. Church discipline should always be contemplated in a spirit and tone of love, kindness, and compassion, and only after individual private admonition has failed. The Church Discipline procedures are available as a separate document maintained and approved by the Elders.

ARTICLE V – ELDERS

There are Congregational Elders (not in the employ of TABC) and Staff Elders who are in the employ of TABC as full-time, or part-time, pastoral ministry staff for TABC.

Section 5.1 – Qualifications

- A. Elders are men whom God calls to their task. Therefore, there should be a strong, inward compulsion or desire to shepherd, which consists of teaching, feeding, caring for, and protecting the flock (I Timothy 3:1). In reality, God is the One who appoints Elders and the church recognizes and acknowledges God's selection. (Acts 14:23). The minimum qualifications for an Elder shall not be less than those listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

- B. One of the main qualifications for Elders is to be able to teach the Bible to believers, or, as Jesus says to Peter, “Feed My sheep...” An Elder should be:
 - 1. Skilled to teach the Bible and exhort in sound doctrine (1 Timothy 3:2; Acts 20:20; Ephesians 4:11; Titus 1:9)
 - 2. Able to silence rebellious men, empty talkers, and deceivers (Titus 1:10-11)
 - 3. Able to refute those who contradict sound Bible doctrine (Titus 1:9)
- C. In addition to the qualifications given in Scripture, an Elder must be a Member who fully subscribes to the TABC Statement of Faith, Membership Covenant, and Bylaws.

Section 5.2 – Number

- A. There shall at all times be a plurality of Elders (Acts 14:23; Philippians 1:1). The desired minimum number of Elders is seven, to include the Lead Teaching Pastor. There will be no necessity to fill this number should there be a lack of qualified candidates. There shall be no maximum limit. At all times, the church shall seek to have a majority of the active Elders be Congregational Elders. Congregational Elders must be members of Travis for an extended period of time and have Bible teaching ministry experience at Travis. Only pastoral staff who have been ordained, and faithfully served under that ordination for a season determined by the Elders, are eligible to serve as Staff Elders.
- B. Staff Elders shall recuse themselves from and not be present for any votes associated with their compensation. With the exception of the Lead Teaching Pastor of TABC home campus, Staff Elders are subject to all Elder election and services rules and requirements. The Elders shall consistently seek to identify and develop others as future Elders.

Section 5.3 – Duties

The Elders are to lead the church to fulfill its purpose as directed exclusively by scripture. Where scripture is not clear or does not speak of issues that are pertinent to leading the church, the Elders shall seek the Lord in prayer, and guide the church following biblical principles through the working of the Holy Spirit, recognizing that the Elders are accountable to God. In fulfilling their purpose, the Elders may receive counsel and recommendations from appropriate staff, committees and teams, and the Elders may designate the implementation of certain tasks to others as they deem appropriate. The Elders' responsibilities may include, but are not limited to:

- A. Teach the church from the authority of the Bible. Discern and direct how the church is to glorify God in carrying out the mission of Jesus to make disciples of all nations by teaching them the commands of Christ (Acts 20:20,27; I Timothy 3:2, 5:17; Titus 1:9; Matthew 28:19-20).
- B. General oversight of the church, its membership, deacons, committees, staff, ministries, finances, and property; holding all accountable to the Word of God and the mission of the Church (Acts 15-16:4; Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17; I Thessalonians 5:12-13).
- C. Direct authority over the pastoral and discipleship staff. The Elders will speak as a unified voice to the staff through one Elder whom the Elders designate. The Elders as a group, or the Elders' designee, will communicate the Elders' vision to the staff or to the Senior Assistant Pastor for Administration.
- D. Protect the church from false teaching and wrong doctrine (Acts 20:28-29) and maintain the doctrinal and theological statements and integrity of the church. This includes authority over filling the pulpit in the Lead Teaching Pastor's temporary absence or permanent departure and the ministry of Bible teaching/preaching (Acts 15; Ephesians 4:11-16; 2 Timothy 3:16).
- E. Pray for the church (James 5:14).
- F. Equip the church by assessing members' overall spiritual health and develop general strategies to present every member complete in Christ (Ephesians 4:11-16; Colossians 1:28; Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2).
- G. Model godliness to the church (I Timothy 3:1-7).
- H. Provide for orderly functioning of the church and oversee committees (Titus 1:5; Acts 6:1-6).
- I. Hold title to church property on behalf of the church and develop general plans to provide for personnel, property and financial needs of the church. The Elders may delegate implementation of the plans and stewardship of the resources as they determine necessary (I Timothy 5:17).

- J. Accept recommendations for Elders, Deacons, and ministry staff candidates; qualify and select such candidates (to be recommended and/or affirmed by the congregation); ordain Elders and Deacons; and ordain qualified ministry staff as Ministers of the Gospel (Acts 6:3; Titus 1:5).
- K. Receive regular reports from the Deacon Chairman and ministry staff (Senior Assistant Pastor for Administration) on the spiritual condition of church members and the achievement of the mission of the church (Acts 15:4).
- L. Oversee matters of church discipline (Acts 20:28; Titus 1:9-16; Matthew 18:15-17)
- M. Speak as a unified leadership voice in directional and missional tasks of the church (Acts 6:1; 15:23).
- N. Interview and recommend to the church candidates for ordination or licensing to the Gospel ministry (I Timothy 4:14) (See Article X).
- O. Present the following major decisions to the congregation for church approval and/or affirmation:
 - 1. Decisions regarding membership status.
 - 2. Changes to by-laws.
 - 3. The affirmation of Elders.
 - 4. The affirmation of deacon candidates.
 - 5. The affirmation/removal of senior pastoral staff¹ hires.
 - 6. The affirmation of ordination/licensing of members.
 - 7. The affirmation of public church discipline.
 - 8. Approval of the annual church budget.
 - 9. The purchase or sale of real property.
 - 10. The acquisition of debt not pre-approved within the annual budget.
 - 11. Any other decisions or significant changes to the governing documents as determined by the Elders.

See Section 9.2, which outlines the procedure for congregational approval and/ or affirmation.
- P. Develop and maintain by-laws and general guidelines for: the proper functioning of the church; for Elders, deacons, and other church leadership; and for the discipleship, training, and spiritual development of members (lay teachers and leaders), deacons, and staff (Acts 20:28), and present same to congregation for affirmation as required herein.
- Q. Organize and lead the search process when a vacancy arises within the Pastoral or Discipleship staff, pursuant to Article VII, below.

¹ As defined in 7.3.A., below.

Section 5.4 – Selection and Affirmation

- A. The Elder selection process should occur at a minimum of every other year and each selection process should seek at least two additional Elders. This will allow for maintenance of at least seven Elders. Church members are encouraged to submit the names of candidates on an ongoing basis, irrespective of the timing of the most recent or next Elder selection process.
- B. The Elders will make recommendations for, and receive recommendations from the members for Elder candidates. The Elders may appoint a committee or group comprised of Elders and qualified others to vet Elder candidates and report its findings to the Elders. A man shall be appointed as an Elder candidate by a unanimous vote of the Elders after he has been tested and proven to meet the qualifications stated above. The Elders shall have the sole authority to bring (or withdraw) Elder candidates to/from the congregation for affirmation.
- C. The name(s) of the proposed Elder candidate(s) to be confirmed by the church, along with the date and time of the affirmation vote, shall be announced at a Public Worship Meeting at least 30 days in advance of the affirmation vote. The affirmation vote shall take place at a Public Worship Meeting or Church Conference, with the date and time to be determined by the Elders in compliance with foregoing requirements.
- D. During the 30-day period, church members shall individually have an opportunity to submit questions, comments, and concerns about any candidate, confidentially to the Elders, in writing, which will be considered by the Elders on a case-by-case basis. Members must evaluate Elder candidates according to Biblical qualifications and are encouraged to approach the Elders in confidence with any information that would invalidate the qualifications of the potential Elder candidate. Further, any member who intends to vote against the confirmation of an Elder candidate must have submitted his or her reason(s) in writing as to why the candidate should not serve as Elder during the 30-day period mentioned above. If no such information has been received from a member voting against affirmation, such member's vote will not be valid.

- E. After the 30-day period allowing for congregational input, the Elders will present the Elder candidates, during a prior announced meeting of the congregation, and allow each Elder candidate to give their testimony. The procedure for the vote of affirmation is as follows:
 - 1. There will be no questions or discussion at this time.
 - 2. Church members will vote by secret ballot to confirm Elder candidates. Upon a 75% affirmation vote by the attending church members in good standing, an Elder candidate will be confirmed as an Elder. An Elder's service will be effectuated upon his ordination by the active serving Elders.

Section 5.5 – Term of Office

- A. Once a man is appointed as an Elder, he is expected to serve in this capacity for a minimum of three years. An Elder may, without congregational affirmation, be reaffirmed to a second three-year term by a passing vote of the Elders. The Elder candidates being reaffirmed shall recuse themselves from voting. Only actively serving Elders may vote.
- B. After serving for a total of six years, each Elder must take a year sabbatical from active service. Following the sabbatical, congregational affirmation will be required to reaffirm an Elder. Staff Elders are subject to these guidelines, with the exception of the staff Elder who serves as the Lead Teaching Pastor of TABC.
- C. If the term of service of an Elder serving as an Elder officer (Chairman, Vice-Chairman, or Secretary) will end before the end of his service as an Officer, the Elders may vote to extend his term of active Elder service to cover his term of service as an Elder officer.
- D. If the Elders determine that an Elder needs an extended sabbatical because of a legitimate need (e.g., illness or tragedy), then such Elder may transition to being an active but nonvoting Elder for a set period of time determined by the Elders.

Section 5.6 – Resignation and Removal

- A. To resign, an Elder shall notify, in writing, the officers of the Elders. Such officers shall notify the remaining Elders, and the congregation. A vacancy in the Elders because of death, resignation, removal or any other cause shall be filled only in the manners prescribed in these Bylaws. Such vacancies may be filled as they occur.
- B. Any Elder may be removed from the office of Elder by the Elders for valid cause. An Elder or a church member may bring specific charges against an Elder to the Elders, consistent with the standards set in Scripture (1 Timothy 5:19)

- C. A written notice of the proposed removal of any Elder shall be given to such Elder at least ten (10) days prior to the meeting at which an action to effectuate such removal is to be taken to ensure that the Elder is given a reasonable opportunity to defend himself. The Elders will only consider an accusation against an Elder on the basis of two or three eyewitnesses (1 Timothy 5:19). The Elders will vote to either receive the accusation and move to hearing or reject the accusation. The accused Elder has the prerogative to answer his accusers at a hearing or to be heard privately by the Elders. The Elder shall have the opportunity to answer the charges in the presence of his accusers. The Elders will meet privately to discuss and vote on his removal/restoration, but the accused Elder shall not be present during the discussion and vote. Such removal shall take place only upon and after a unanimous passing vote of all active Elders (with the exception of the accused Elder).
- D. The Elders shall not vote on any church business while an Elder is under consideration for removal (from the time of the Elders vote to receive the accusation until the Elders take a vote on either removal or reinstatement), except in the instance of an emergency as defined in Article XV.
- E. The Chairman of the Elders will make a public report to the congregation at the first Church Conference following their adjudication of the proposed removal of the Elder in question – either to exonerate the Elder or to explain the facts of the dismissal.
- F. Notwithstanding the foregoing, a staff Elder who voluntarily or involuntarily leaves the employment of the church is deemed to have resigned as an Elder effective upon the last day of his employment, unless the remaining Elders determine otherwise.

Section 5.7 – Meetings

- A. Regular meetings of the Elders shall be held at a time and in a location the Elders deem appropriate, and the Elders are required to meet at least one time per month. Any meeting may be held by telephone conference or similar communication equipment, as long as all of the Elders participating in the meeting can hear one another. All Elders participating electronically shall be deemed present at such meetings. The Senior Assistant Pastor for Administration and Chairman of the Deacons may be in attendance at the meetings at the discretion of the Elders.
- B. Congregational Elders may attend scheduled staff meetings. They should make every effort to inform the Senior Assistant Pastor of Administration, or his designee, prior to the meeting of their desire to attend along with any discussion items they wish to add to the meeting agenda.

Section 5.8 – Definition of Quorum and Passing Vote

A proper quorum is defined as seventy-five percent (75%) of the active Elders. Except as otherwise provided herein, a quorum is required for voting matters. A passing vote must be equal to or greater than seventy-five percent (75%) of the Elders present. Voting by proxy is prohibited. If 75% is not an even number of Elders, the count will be rounded upwards.

Section 5.9 – Officers (and Trustees)

- A. Officers of the Church shall be active Elders. The Officers shall consist of a Chairman, Vice Chairman, and Secretary. These three Officers, and such other officers as deemed necessary by the Elders, are designated with the power to act as legal “trustees” of the church.² The Elder Officers shall be elected from the Congregational Elders.
- B. Officer Positions:
 - 1. **Chairman** - The Chairman shall perform such duties as are incumbent upon such Officer and make certain that all orders and resolutions of the Elders are carried into effect. The Chairman has oversight of the Elder Meetings. The Chairman’s duties shall include, without limitation: establishing meetings, setting the agenda and presiding over the meetings (including Church Conferences). The Chairman, or his Elder designee, will serve in an ex-officio liaison capacity on the church Committees.
 - 2. **Vice Chairman/ Chair-Elect** - The Vice Chairman shall serve as Chair-Elect and in the absence of a duly appointed Chairman, or in the event of the Chairman’s inability or refusal to act, perform the duties and exercise the powers of the Chairman and shall perform such other duties, as the Elders shall from time to time prescribe.
 - 3. **Secretary** - The Secretary shall be responsible for recording the church minutes of all meetings of the Elders, and Church Conferences, and all votes taken at such meetings. He shall have charge of the official records and seal of the church, and he shall perform such other duties as are incident to the office of Secretary and as may be assigned by the Elders or the Chairman, under whose supervision the Secretary shall be.

² The designation or power to act as legal “trustee” does not eliminate or avoid any requirement described in these bylaws as necessary to take certain action, including but not limited to a required passing vote of the Elders and/or congregational approval. The designation and power to act as legal “trustee” is intended as a means to legally effectuate otherwise valid decisions made by the Elders and/ or congregation and to comply with the Articles of Incorporation and laws of the State of Texas.

- C. The Officers of the Elders shall be elected by a passing vote of the Elders and shall serve terms of at least two (2) year terms, as long as they remain a member of the Elder body. Officers may be re-elected. The Vice Chairman will serve two years and then move up to and serve as Chairman for (2) years. The secretary will serve a minimum of one (2) year term. The Elders will elect a Vice Chairman and Secretary every (2) years. The Elders may vote to extend the active Elder service of an Elder Officer to coordinate with his term of service as an Officer (see Section 5.5 B).
- D. Non-voting Elders on sabbatical will not hold an office.

Vacancies in the Officers of the Church by reason of death, resignation or otherwise, shall be filled by election of the Elders as soon as is reasonably possible. Until such time, an Inactive Elder may be temporarily appointed by the remaining Elders to serve in such a vacancy.

ARTICLE VI – DEACONS

Section 6.1 – Deacon Definition

- A. A Travis deacon is a born-again follower of Christ full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom. He is active in small group Bible study and worship service attendance, and who models a vibrant walk with God. As a member of Travis, he meets and lives the spiritual characteristics stated in Acts 6:1-6 and I Timothy 3:8-13. He has a good reputation both in and outside the church.
- B. A Travis deacon prays for and submits to the authority of the Elders. He serves the church by obeying the Great Commission and ministering to the body of Christ. He assists in administering the church ordinances and promotes harmony and unity in the church. The deacon is guided and governed by the *TABC Deacon Handbook*, which is available as a separate document maintained through consultation with the deacons, but ultimately approved by the Elders.

Section 6.2 – Selection and Qualifications

- A. The Elders shall accept recommendations for deacon candidates from the congregation and shall qualify and select such candidates to be recommended and/or affirmed by the congregation.
- B. Deacon candidates must meet the qualifications as specified in I Timothy 3:8-13.
- C. Deacons will serve a term of three years with a year off between terms. A deacon can then be reappointed to active status by affirmation of the Elders.

Section 6.3 – Responsibilities

- A. The overall responsibility of the diaconate is to assist the Elders in their service and equipping functions.
- B. In accordance with Acts 6:1-6 and I Timothy 3:8-13, deacons will assist the Elders and the staff to:
 - 1. Care for the physical, temporal, and spiritual needs of the individual members of the church.
 - 2. Tend to the physical details related to the corporate gatherings of the church (receiving offerings, greeting, security, serving the Lord's Supper, assisting with baptism, etc.).
 - 3. Administer financial and physical assistance to church members in need.
 - 4. Conduct ministries that meet human needs and proclaim the Gospel (Acts 7 and 8).
- C. The role of deacons is further explained and substantiated in the *TABC Deacon Handbook*, which is available as a separate document maintained and approved by the Elders. Such resource provides additional explanation but shall not be incorporated into these Bylaws by reference, nor shall it replace the responsibilities listed above. In the event of any disagreement of the Deacon Handbook with these Bylaws, the Bylaws shall prevail.

Section 6.4 – Removal

Any deacon may be removed from office for valid cause. A written notice, from either the Elders or the deacon leadership, of proposed removal of any deacon shall be given to the Elders and the deacon at least ten (10) days prior to the meeting at which an action to affect such removal is to be taken to ensure that the deacon is given a reasonable opportunity for defense. The deacon shall have the opportunity to answer the charges in the presence of the accusers, but shall not be present during the discussion and vote on removal. The removal of a deacon requires a passing vote of the Elders.

ARTICLE VII – STAFF

Section 7.1 – Qualifications and Expectations

- A. All personnel employed by the church shall act in accordance with the current *Personnel Handbook*, as it may be revised, amended or restated from time to time, which is available as a separate document maintained and approved by the Elders.

- B. The church will reserve employment for men and women who believe, affirm, and ascribe to the Bylaws and the Statement of Faith. Additionally, the church reserves the right to terminate the employment of any existing employee who fails to meet this general standard of faith and practice. All ministry staff must believe, affirm, ascribe to, and teach according to the Bible and the Bylaws and Statement of Faith of TABC.
- C. All church staff positions will have titles and job duties defined by the Elders to meet the appropriate needs of the church. The Elders may assign committees to study and make recommendations for existing and new positions.
- D. The church may hire specially-skilled staff from outside the church for specific non-ministerial tasks whom they determine meet a Biblical standard of moral behavior.

Section 7.2 – Duties

The staff shall assist and advise the Elders (in accordance with Ephesians 4:11-13), as follows:

- A. In carrying out Christ's mission in the church and direction of the church through their assigned ministries.
- B. Implementing the overall strategic focus determined by the Elders.
- C. Working with the deacons to minister to the physical, temporal, spiritual and emotional needs of the members of the church.
- D. With advice from deacons, committees and teams, making recommendations to the Elders related to the overall health and functioning of the church.

Section 7.3 – Hiring and Oversight

- A. The Elders will approve and vet candidate(s), for the ministry of the church, including "senior pastoral staff," defined as the Lead Teaching Pastor, Associate Teaching Pastor, the Senior Assistant Pastor for Administration, Assistant Pastor for Worship, and Assistant Pastor for Discipleship. The procedure for calling a Lead Teaching Pastor and Associate Teaching Pastor are described in more detail below. The Elders will approve and vet candidates for any other positions deemed necessary by the Elders for the proper functioning of the church. The utilization of search committees, congregational input, and staff recommendations may be considered and used as needed under the direct leadership of Christ, within a context of prayer and scriptural guidance.
- B. The Senior Assistant Pastor for Administration will have day-to-day (administrative) oversight of pastoral and discipleship staff, and will oversee administrative staff in consultation with the Elders.

Section 7.4 – Calling of Lead Teaching Pastor

- A. In the absence of a Lead Teaching Pastor, the Elders shall lead the search process for a Lead Teaching Pastor candidate for TABC or any of its missions or off-campus sites. The Elders should consider an Associate Teaching Pastor, as described below in Section 7.5, as a potential candidate for the Lead Teaching Pastor Role. The Elders may also form a search committee, at their discretion, in order to aid in the search for candidates for the Lead Teaching Pastor.
- B. The Elders will qualify the candidate according to the Biblical criteria for Elders and will simultaneously act as ordination council for the candidate (questioning and challenging the candidate as one seeking ordination to the pastoral ministry of the Gospel). The Elders will only present a candidate to the church whom they unanimously affirm meets the criteria for both pastoral ministry ordination and Elder ordination. The Elders will present their Lead Teaching Pastor candidate to the church, giving the congregation time to meet with and question the candidate, hearing both his testimony, teaching, and preaching in multiple venues. The candidate shall be vetted by the Elders and affirmed by secret ballot of church members in good standing, with a majority of 75% or greater of ballots cast at a specially called Church Conference. Upon affirmation by the congregation, the candidate shall become the Lead Teaching Pastor and an Elder.

Section 7.5 – Calling of Associate Teaching Pastor

- A. It is desirable that the Lead Teaching Pastor may first serve as an Associate Teaching Pastor and Elder. In order to accomplish this, the Elders may determine that having multiple Associate Teaching Pastors, preaching and teaching in a shared role alongside the Lead Teaching Pastor is in the best interest of the church. In this manner, an Associate Teaching Pastor may come alongside the Lead Teaching Pastor, sharing the teaching/preaching ministry, and other pastoral duties, maturing in his role and seeking to know the congregation before any recommendation from the Elders to the office of Lead Teaching Pastor.
- B. The calling of an Associate Teaching Pastor shall follow the same procedure outlined above in Section 7.4 for the calling of a Lead Teaching Pastor.

ARTICLE VIII – COMMITTEES

Section 8.1 – Designation and Authority

Recognizing that Scripture dictates there is wisdom in a multitude of counselors, certain standing committees, as hereinafter described, shall exist under the leadership of the Elders to assist the Elders and staff in carrying out the Church's mission and purpose. At all times, the Elders will prioritize the commands of Christ, the interests of the church, and the service and support of the congregation under the headship of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, in the creation and appointment of committees. The Elders may delegate additional responsibilities to the standing committees, or to other specially created committees or ministry teams.

Section 8.2 – Qualifications and Expectations

- A. Individuals selected to serve on committees and/or ministry teams must be members of Travis Avenue Baptist Church.
- B. All findings and recommendations of committees and/or ministry teams will be brought to the Elders, or the Elders' Designee, for consideration. Upon the approval of the Elders, as deemed necessary, the findings and recommendations will be brought before the congregation.
- C. Based upon spiritual giftedness (I Corinthians 12:4-11; Romans 12:3-8), committees and/or ministry teams will assist and advise the Elders (providing wise counsel on legal, financial, personnel, property, ministry and membership matters).

Section 8.3 – Selection

- A. Church members are encouraged to submit recommendations for committee members on an ongoing basis, irrespective of the timing of the most recent or next committee selection process. The Elders have the final authority to appoint committee and ministry team members.
- B. It is recommended that no church member concurrently serve on multiple standing committees. The normal term of office shall be three years, and it is recommended for members to serve no more than two consecutive terms on a committee.

Section 8.4 – Standing Committees

- A. **Finance Committee** [Senior Assistant Pastor of Administration and Business Administrator as Ex-Officio member]

Responsible for working with the Elders in developing a proposed financial budget and encouraging Biblical stewardship. In developing the church budget, the Finance Committee shall consider requests and recommendations from all Staff, committees, ministries and organizations, develop and recommend financial policies and procedures to the Elders for presentation to the church members.

- B. **Missions Committee**

Responsible for working with the Elders and Staff in promoting the church's spirit of world concern and global and local missions. The Missions Committee shall recommend to the Elders the allocation of the World Missions Offering and shall make recommendations concerning the budget for all missions, including the Cooperative Program and Associational Missions.

- C. **Personnel Committee** [Senior Assistant Pastor of Administration as Ex-Officio member]

Responsible for working with the Elders in matters relating to church employees. The Personnel Committee shall make recommendations to the Elders, as follows:

1. Need for additional staff and personnel;
2. Preparation of an organizational chart and position descriptions for personnel;
3. Propose salary and staff benefit plan; and
4. Propose staff policies and procedures.

- D. **Property Committee**

Responsible for working with the Elders toward the general care and maintenance of all church property. The Property Committee shall make recommendations to the Elders, as follows:

1. The purchasing of major equipment.
2. Determine that adequate insurance is carried on all property; see that policies are not allowed to lapse.
3. Recommend policies for the use of church buildings by outside groups or individuals.
4. Develop plans for proper space for all ministries, allowing for necessary adjustments for growth in the church.

E. Other Committees

The Elders may appoint or form such other committees, standing or ad hoc, as they shall deem necessary and appropriate, and for such duration as is required.

ARTICLE IX – PUBLIC WORSHIP AND CHURCH CONFERENCES

Section 9.1 – Public Worship

Meetings for public worship shall be held on Sunday, absent extenuating circumstances, and at such other times and days as may be provided for under the direction of the Elders.

Section 9.2 – Procedure for Church Conferences

- A. Church Conferences (also known as business meetings) shall occur at a minimum of three times per year.
- B. The Elders shall announce the dates and times of Church Conferences, at a Public Worship Meeting, at least 14 days in advance of the meeting. The Elders shall determine the best time for these Church Conferences to achieve the greatest possible attendance. Special Church Conferences shall be held when deemed necessary by the Elders in like manner, and the dates and times of such meetings shall be announced at a Public Worship Meeting at least 14 days in advance of the meeting. The Chairman of the Elders shall preside at the Church Conference. At all regularly scheduled Church Conferences, oral reports from the Elders, and others as determined by the Elders, shall be received.
- C. A current, complete, printed, summary budget for all church expenses and a current balance sheet for the previous and upcoming years will be made available for any church member wishing to see same at least 14 days in advance of a Church Conference where the budget will be voted upon.
- D. Votes shall take place after a time of discussion and questions from the congregation, with the dates and time to coincide with the aforementioned requirements. Church member approval and/or affirmation privileges are limited to those who are at least eighteen (18) years of age and remain in good standing with the church. Except where specified, a passing vote shall be considered a simple majority of members present and in good standing.
- E. Any actions taken by Elders, deacons, staff, committees, church members, or congregation which are contrary to the Bible, the Statement of Faith, Bylaws, or Membership Covenant will be considered invalid and having no legitimate standing or authority, and will be non-binding upon the church (Acts 6:2-6; 15:22).

Section 9.3 – Minutes

The Secretary of Elders, or his designee, shall keep minutes of each meeting to be filed in the church business office. The Simplified Handbook of Parliamentary Procedure shall govern all proceedings, except when in conflict with these bylaws, in which event these bylaws shall govern.

ARTICLE X – ORDINATION AND LICENSING

- A. TABC, as a community of faith recognizes God's calling upon, and setting aside of, individuals to appoint them for a particular ministry task (e.g., Acts 6:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:7; Titus 1:5). This is what is called “ordination.” These individuals will have demonstrated loyalty to Christ, His Gospel message, His Great Commission commands, and to TABC (or to another local SBC affiliated church of like faith and practice—in the case of staff hired from outside TABC) through active membership, fruitful service, and giving, as well as meet the Biblical criteria for service in the ministry task to which they will be ordained. Ordination signifies for the individual: the sense of God’s call upon them and their committing their life to a particular ministry. Ordination signifies for the TABC congregation that they acknowledge, approve and authorize the individual to serve the church in ministry.
- B. The church’s ordination and licensing processes are explained and substantiated more fully in the *TABC Ordination and Licensing Guidelines*, which is available as a separate document maintained and approved by the Elders.

ARTICLE XI – INDEMNIFICATION

Section 11.1 – Mandatory Indemnification

If a legal claim or criminal allegation is made against a person because he or she is or was an officer, employee, or agent of the church, the church shall provide indemnification against liability and costs incurred in defending against the claim if the elders determine that the person acted (a) in good faith, (b) with the care an ordinarily prudent person in a similar position would exercise under similar circumstances, and (c) in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the church, and the person had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful.

Section 11.2 – Permissive Indemnification

At the discretion of the Elders, the church also may indemnify any person who acted in good faith and reasonably believed that his or her conduct was in the church’s best interest and not unlawful.

Section 11.3 – Procedure

If a quorum of the Elders is not available for an indemnification determination because of the number of Elders seeking indemnification, the requisite determination may be made by the membership or by special legal counsel appointed by the membership.

ARTICLE XII – CONFLICT OF INTEREST

- A. It being of paramount importance to safeguard the integrity of the decision-making process of the church, a Travis member will exercise particular care that no detriment to the interests of the church or a member of the church may result from a conflict of interest or the appearance of a conflict of interest.
- B. A conflict of interest can arise whenever a member (a) has existing or potential financial or personal interests which impair or might reasonably appear to impair such member's independent, unbiased judgment in the discharge of his responsibilities to the church; (b) such member is aware that a member of his or her family or any organization in which such member (or a member of his or her family) is an officer, director, employee, member, partner, Trustee, or controlling stockholder, has such existing or potential financial or personal interests; or (c) such member or a member of his or her family may receive a material benefit from knowledge of information which is confidential to the church.
- C. No member will vote on any matter, under consideration at any Elder, deacon, committee or other Church Conference, in which such member has a conflict of interest. The member will abstain from participating in the discussion of that matter at the earliest practicable time. The minutes of such meeting will reflect that a disclosure was made and that the member having a conflict of interest abstained from participating. Any members who are uncertain whether they have a conflict of interest in any matter may and should request a determination as to whether a conflict of interest exists, and the question will be resolved by a majority vote of those in attendance at the meeting in question. Any church member may raise the issue of conflict of interest for discussion if the member does not recognize the conflict of interest or the possibility thereof. All information concerning actual or potential conflicts of interest under this policy will be held in confidence unless the best interests of the church dictate otherwise.

ARTICLE XIII – CHURCH TRANSACTIONS

Section 13.1 – Contracts and Legal Instruments

The Elders may authorize an individual Elder, employee or agent of the church, or any combination or group of the foregoing, to enter into a contract or execute and deliver an instrument in the name of and on behalf of the church. This authority may be limited to a specific contract or instrument, or it may extend to a series of possible contracts or instruments.

Section 13.2 – Deposits

All funds of the church shall be deposited to the credit of the church in banks, trust companies, or other depositories as selected by the Elders.

Section 13.3 – Gifts

The Elders may accept on behalf of the church any contribution, gift, bequest, or devise for a general or specific purpose of the church, including but not limited to gifts of money, annuity arrangements, securities, tangible and intangible personal property, real property and interest therein. The Elders may make gifts and give charitable contributions that are not prohibited by these bylaws, Articles of Incorporation, state law, or any requirements for maintaining the church's federal and state tax status.

Section 13.4 – Ownership and Distribution of Church Property

- A. The church's property guidelines are explained and substantiated more fully in the *Church Property Policies and Procedures*, which is available as a separate document maintained and approved by the Elders.
- B. The church shall hold, own and enjoy its property without any right of reversion to another entity, except as provided in these bylaws. The Elders shall hold title to the property of the church on behalf of and for the benefit of the church, and shall be empowered to execute deeds, deeds of trust, mortgages, liens, notes, or other pecuniary obligations, and to transfer, assign, and convey all church property, or any part thereof, only upon officially recorded instructions of the church in a Church Conference. To the extent necessary, the Officers of the Church shall act as the legal trustees, pursuant to Section 5.9. All powers and duties of the Elders shall be conformable with the Articles of Incorporation and the laws of the State of Texas.
- C. Upon discontinuance of the church by dissolution or otherwise, the property and other assets of the church remaining after payment of any liabilities shall be transferred or otherwise disposed of to another Christian church or other organization that is exclusively organized, operated and/or qualified as a religious, educational or charitable organization and at the time qualified as an exempt organization(s) under Section 501(c)(3), Internal Revenue Code, as amended.

ARTICLE XIV – BOOKS AND RECORDS

Section 14.1 – Required Books and Records

- A. The church shall keep correct and complete books and records of financial accounts. The church shall also keep correct and complete minutes from every Church Conference, which minutes are to be recorded by the Secretary of the Elders, or his designee, and filed in the church business office.
- B. The Elders shall maintain and approve all policy and procedure manuals, including but not limited to, the Membership Covenant, Church Discipline Procedures, Deacon Handbook, Personnel Handbook, Ordination and Licensing Guidelines, Church Property Policies and Procedures, and the current version of each shall be filed in the church business office. Such resources provide additional explanation but shall not be incorporated into these Bylaws by reference. In the event of any disagreement of a policy and procedure manual with these Bylaws, the Bylaws shall prevail.

Section 14.2 – Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the church shall commence on April 1 of each year and shall end with March 31.

ARTICLE XV – EMERGENCY POWERS

An “emergency” exists for the purposes of this section if a quorum of the Elders cannot readily be obtained because of some catastrophic event. In the event of an emergency, the Elders may (a) modify lines of succession to accommodate the incapacity of any Elder, officer, employee or agent; and (b) relocate the principal office, designate alternative principal offices or regional offices, or authorize employees to do so. During an emergency, notice of a meeting of the Elders only needs to be given to those Elders for whom such notice is practicable. The form of such notice may also include notice by publication or radio. One or more Elders present at a meeting of the Elders may be deemed Elders for the meeting, as necessary to achieve a quorum. Corporate action taken in good faith during an emergency binds the church and may not be the basis for imposing liability on any Elder, officer, employee or agent of the church on the ground that the action was not authorized. The Elders may also adopt emergency bylaws, subject to amendments or repeal by the full Elder council, which may include provisions necessary for managing the church during an emergency including (a) procedures for calling a meeting of the Elders; (b) quorum requirements for the meeting; and (c) designation of additional or substitute Elder board members. The emergency bylaws shall remain in effect during the emergency and not after the emergency ends.

ARTICLE XVI – AFFILIATIONS

Travis Avenue Baptist Church is autonomous and maintains the right to govern its own affairs, under the authority and headship of Jesus Christ. The church is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention, the Baptist General Convention of Texas, the Southern Baptist of Texas Convention and the Tarrant Baptist Association. The church may voluntarily affiliate or disaffiliate with other churches and conventions by a passing vote of the church membership.

ARTICLE XVII – NONPROFIT STATUS

The church is a nonprofit corporation under the laws of the State of Texas and is organized under the Texas Business Organization Code, as amended (the “Code”). Federal tax exemption is granted under Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3), as amended.

ARTICLE XVIII – EFFECTIVE DATE AND AMENDMENT OF BYLAWS

These Bylaws take effect on the first Sunday following congregational affirmation of the initial Elders and shall then expressly repeal and supersede all prior versions. After the effective date, the Bylaws may be amended or repealed by a simple majority of members present and in good standing at a Church Conference. The language of a proposed amendment or repeal shall be provided to the church in writing at least 30 days before the vote.

Appendix A

TRAVIS AVENUE BAPTIST CHURCH STATEMENT OF FAITH

From the time of the New Testament to today, Christians have highlighted commonly held doctrine (beliefs) in brief, definitive statements. As those who know God, we believe it necessary to set forth in a concise fashion the cornerstone truths of our church as guided by Scripture. Our Statement of Faith summarizes essential Christian beliefs, shows unity in Christ, and guards the church from error. All who join our church are required to affirm the Travis Avenue Baptist Church (TABC) Statement of Faith. It follows the format of the great traditional statements of faith held by Southern Baptists over the past century (Baptist, Faith and Message 1923, 1963, & 2000) but is reshaped to highlight issues current to our times. This statement registers our belief in historic Christianity, evangelical Christianity, believer's baptism, and congregational polity. Once we as members agree to the statement, we are responsible for believing and living in accordance with it.

I. The Scriptures

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a true, righteous, enlightening, and eternal testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation. As such the Scriptures lead to the fear of the Lord, wisdom, the joyful transformation of the soul, and are sufficient to meet every need of the human soul.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 1:7-8; 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 12:47-50; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:24-25; 2 Peter 1:19-21; Revelations 22:18-19.

II. God

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God exists in three persons, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, of one substance, power, and eternity, each having the whole divine essence, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

A. God the Father

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalms 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

B. God the Son

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; 53; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

C. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Savior, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration, He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

III. Man

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He 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. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. Rejection of one's biological gender, and a lifestyle presenting gender opposite from one's biological gender, is a rejection of the image of God in that person. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original holiness and righteousness whereby his posterity inherit a corrupted nature in bondage to sin, and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become actual transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. 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. Therefore, all human life is of inestimable worth in all its dimensions, including pre-born babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. We are therefore called to defend, protect, and value all human life.

Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Deuteronomy 22:5; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; 139; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

IV. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord. God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

- A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Savior.
- B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.
- C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.
- D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

V. God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

*Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.;
Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48;
John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6, 12, 17-18; Acts 20:32;
Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28;
Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19;
Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.*

VI. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation 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 (pastors) and deacons. The church recognizes, sets apart, and affirms men scripturally qualified, gifted, and willing to serve as elders. According to the Scriptures, elders devote their time to prayer, Bible teaching, exhortation of sound doctrine, and shepherding the congregation. For the purposes of church doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, the elders are the church's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application. The elders may submit changes/additions to the statement of faith for approval by the church. Subject to the will of the congregation, the elders oversee the ministry and resources of the church. 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 church also recognizes, sets apart, and affirms those scripturally qualified, gifted, and willing to serve as deacons. According to the Scriptures, deacons "serve" the temporal needs of church members and as role models for Christian discipleship and service. Deacons also serve to accommodate public worship and assist the elders administratively as needed. The New Testament speaks also of the church as the 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; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:1-7; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing and signifying the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

VIII. The Lord's Day

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; I Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.

IX. The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by surrender of themselves to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10,23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.

X. Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

XI. Evangelism and Missions

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

*Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8;
Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53;
John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15;
Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10;
Revelation 22:17.*

XII. Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

*Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12;
Matthew 6:1-4,19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21,42; 16:1-13;
Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4;
2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.*

XIII. The Christian and the 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 the sins of: racism; every form of greed and selfishness; and all forms of sexual immorality. Sexual Immorality includes sex outside of marriage, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, attempting to change one's biological gender (or otherwise acting upon any disagreement with one's biological gender), and pornography, all of which are sinful and offensive to God. Christians should strive to be good ambassadors for Christ, avoiding any vice or behavior which provides a negative view of Jesus Christ to non-believers; taking care not to lead fellow believers into what is, to them, sin. 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 conception to natural death. We teach respect for all but hold firmly to biblical convictions. We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accordance with Scripture nor the doctrines of the church. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, 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.

Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; 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 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.

XIV. Religious Liberty

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group, denomination, religion, or atheistic group should be favored by the state more than any other. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. It is also the duty of Christians to civilly disobey any government law, regulation, order, or entity which violates scripture. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind, whether they are spoken, preached, taught, or lived out in the marketplace; nor does the state have the right to compel Christians to accept, endorse, financially support, or promote messages, ideas, actions, or events that violate our faith. Sharing the Gospel of Jesus Christ with non-believers and teaching biblical doctrine, in public and in private, is a part of the command of Jesus Christ upon all believers. The state has no right to interfere with the public or private expression a Christian's faith through words, prayer, action, or symbols. The state has no right to impose fees, taxes, or penalties for the support of any form of religion or anti-religion group. The state has no right to subject Christians to any religious court, or arbitration. The state has no right to compel the Church or individual Christians to pay for (through taxes, fees, or penalties), to offer, or to participate in, events, acts or services which are contrary to Scripture. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7, 24; 16:26; 22:21; 28:18-20; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Acts 5:29; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

XV. The Family

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.

Marriage has only one meaning and that is marriage sanctioned by God which joins one originally and currently biological male presenting as a man with one originally and currently biological female presenting as a woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in scripture under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Marriage for Christians is the uniting of one man and one woman of like faith in covenant commitment for a lifetime. Scripture encourages Christians to marry Christians avoiding marriage to non-Christians. It 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 of the human race. God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. For these reasons, the ministers and staff of the Church shall only participate in, and the church property or resources may only be used for, weddings between one man and one woman who maintain these criteria.

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.

Children, from the moment of conception, 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.

Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; 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; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; 2 Corinthians 6:14ff; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.

XVI. Statement of Biblical Authority

The statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our faith. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. The freedom of a Bible teacher in a church is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the church exists. While there are issues of biblical interpretation over which Christians disagree amicably, there are many which are foundational to Christian Doctrine (and therefore non-negotiable). There are likewise many issues which are distinctive of who we are as Baptists and of who we are as a church. For this reason, we require members in teaching positions (elders, deacons, staff, Bible teachers, etc.) to teach in accordance with, and not against, our statement of faith.

Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff.; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7,11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2; 7:24ff.; 28:19-20; Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3,8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.

Appendix B

Travis Avenue Baptist Church Membership Covenant

Expectations of Church Members

As a member of the Body of Christ at Travis Avenue Baptist Church (TABC) (*1 Corinthians 12:27; Romans 12:4-5*), I commit before Christ, that I will fulfill the following expectations:

- 1) I will regularly worship the one true God with other Travis Avenue Baptist Church members, including participating in the church ordinance of the Lord's supper, for as long as I am physically able (*Hebrews 10:24-25; Romans 11:36; Hebrews 13:15*).
- 2) I will seek the Lord Jesus Christ daily through personal Bible reading and prayer and through Bible Studies & Accountability groups offered through Travis Avenue Baptist Church; as I go, I will seek to walk in holiness, chastity and fidelity in all areas of life refraining from illegal, immoral, sinful, and foolish behavior as dictated in the Bible (*Luke 18:1; Acts 2:44-47; 17:11; Romans 1:28-32; 12:1; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20; 9:24-27; 10:8; Galatians 5:19-21; Ephesians 5:3, 12-22; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Hebrews 13:4; James 3:3-18; 1 Peter 1:13-16, 4:1-3*).
- 3) I will strive always to exhibit a humble, servant attitude of obedience to Jesus Christ and His commands found in Scripture – i.e. to share the gospel, make disciples by teaching them Christ's commands, do good works, and to support missions to the ends of the world (*Acts 1:8; Mark 10:45; John 14:21; Philippians 2:5-11; Matthew 28:16-20; Ephesians 2:10; 1 Peter 4:10; Revelations 7:9*).
- 4) I will Honor God by voluntarily giving to Him abundantly and joyfully from my goods, talents, spiritual gifts, and service (time) - recognizing God as the owner of all things (*Proverbs 3:9; Psalm 24:1; Malachi 3:10; Matthew 6:19-24; 25:14-30; Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 1 Peter 4:10-11*).
- 5) I will abound in love and service toward my fellow members always seeking unity, and in so doing, I will put the interests of others above my personal preferences; and will avoid presenting stumbling blocks (i.e. enticements to sin) before another member (*Ephesians 4:1-6; Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 1:22; 3:8-9; 4:8; 1 Corinthians 8:1-13*).
- 6) I will seek to preserve the gift of marriage and agree to walk through the steps of marriage reconciliation through Travis Avenue Baptist Church before pursuing divorce from my spouse (*Matthew 19:1-12; Mark 10:1-12; Luke 16:18; 1 Corinthians 7:10-11; for the role of the church in the process of divorce, see Paul's concern for the resolution of legal matters within the assembly of the church in 1 Corinthians 6*).

7) I will guard the reputation of Christ, His Church and its members. In so doing, I will submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues and I will submit to the discipline of God by receiving righteous loving correction from fellow believers/the church elders for any sin problems in my life; and will respond in repentance and confession of my sins to God and fellow believers. Correspondingly, I commit lovingly to seek repentance and restoration where sin is evident in a fellow believer (*Matthew 18:15-20; Psalms 119; 141:5; Romans 8:13; Colossians 3:5; 1 Timothy 3:14-16; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; Hebrews 12:5-11; James 5:16; 2 Peter 1:19-21; 1 John 1:6-10*).

8) I will pray for, follow, and submit to the elders and leaders of Travis Avenue Baptist Church I will pray privately and with the church corporately for the unity of the church, for people to accept Christ and for my fellow disciples to grow in Christ (*Ephesians 4:1-3; Hebrews 13:17-18; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13; 1 Peter 5:5*).

9) Should I leave TABC, I will notify the elders or staff at TABC and will seek another church with which I can carry out my biblical responsibilities as a follower of Jesus Christ.

With Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior, being baptized by immersion after my salvation, being led by the Holy Spirit, and being in agreement with Travis Avenue Baptist Church covenant, doctrine, and leadership, I joyfully unite with this church and commit myself to God and the other members.

Signature

Date

Print Name

What you can Expect of the Elders of Travis Avenue Baptist Church

We commit as the elders/shepherds within the body of Christ to join Travis Avenue Baptist Church in fulfilling the expectations of church members in the above section. Additionally, we commit that:

1) We will seek Christ's guidance for Travis Avenue Baptist Church in order to set the vision for ministry through Travis Avenue Baptist Church and to steward the resources entrusted to the church in a way that fulfills the great commission and gives God glory (*Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4*).

2) We will pray for each member, care for the church and lead with grace, truth, and love (*Matthew 28:16-20; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:15-16; James 5:14; Colossians 1:28*).

3) We will each teach/feed the church members all of God's Word at all costs; faithfully teaching the knowledge and understanding of the Scriptures (*John 21:15-17; 1 Timothy 4:1-5; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Jeremiah 3:14-15*).

4) We will equip members of the church for the work of ministry (*Ephesians 4:11-16*).

5) We will publicly protect the doctrine of Travis Avenue Baptist Church, and we will openly and forcefully guard the church against false teachers and false teaching (*Acts 20:28; Matthew 7:15; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; Titus 1:9*).

6) We will act in a way that is above reproach, making our own families a priority of our ministry (*1 Timothy 3:1-7*). We understand the way we live will affect the flock we lead, and we commit to live in a way that elevates the reputation of Jesus Christ among the members of Travis Avenue Baptist Church and our community (*1 Peter 5:3*).

7) We will lead the church in exercising discipline in a way that is gracious and loving, protecting the health of the church as a whole (*James 5:19-20; Matthew 18:15-20; 1 Corinthians 5; Galatians 6:1*).