

## **Proposed Bylaws**

### **Explanations**

The Church Governance Study Team (CGST) solicited and carefully considered several written questions and suggestions from members related to the proposed new bylaws. In response to this input from the congregation the CGST has made corrections and additions to the proposed bylaws. The accompanying document shows the changes to the original version in red.

In addition to the attorney members of the CGST, the proposed bylaws have been reviewed by an outside attorney that works with non-profit entities and is experienced in church law and religious liberty. He has confirmed that the proposed bylaws are in compliance with current state and federal laws. If the proposed bylaws are adopted, we will need to file a Restated Certificate of Formation with the State of Texas to conform to the change in our governance structure; he has prepared this formal legal document for the Church, as well.

Some of the more significant revisions include:

- Making capitalizations and references consistent throughout the document
- The previous removal of an age requirement for members to vote on church matters
- A clarification in Section 4.3.C. related to members in good standing. Wording was added to insure that consideration is given to members with extraordinary circumstances such as being homebound, away on missionary service, extended illness, etc.
- A clarification in Section 5.2.A. related to always maintaining a majority of Congregational Elders
- A clarification in Section 5.4.B. related to the manner in which potential Elders are qualified and ordained
- The removal of the stipulation in Section 5.4.D. that election ballots would not be counted if the member had not first approached the Elders with a concern about a potential Elder
- The stipulation that handbooks, policy manuals and other documents will be made available by the Elders as separate documents not included in the bylaws

These bylaws reflect the commitment of our church throughout our 107 year history to maintain two vital distinctives. The first is congregational rule. As a Baptist church we understand the design of Christ's church and the importance of the body to take responsibility and to be accountable to line ourselves up under Christ. "God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way" (Eph.1:22-23).

Our existing bylaws call for congregational involvement in the major decisions to be made by the church. The new bylaws retain the same level of congregational involvement and further define what that involvement looks like in interaction with the God-called spiritual leaders of the church.

The second distinctive is trust in the spiritual leaders God places in the church to seek Christ and to shepherd His church. “Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood” (Acts 20:28). “To the elders among you ... Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, watching over them...” (I Pet.5:1-2).

The existing bylaws broadly define the role of the pastor in interaction with the church, deacons and committees. Through the years our church has understood that if we too narrowly define the leadership of the pastor it erodes the biblically mandated trust members are to have in their spiritual leaders. Hebrews 13:17 admonishes believers, “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.”

The new bylaws retain that trust in our spiritual leaders while specifying that the spiritual leadership of the church should not rest on the shoulders of a single pastor (elder) but on a group of God-called, congregationally-recognized pastors, the majority of whom will be not be employees of the church.

These two distinctives (congregational-rule and elder/pastor/overseer-led) must be kept in the proper balance. To go too far toward congregational rule enmeshes the congregation in a decision-making process that is cumbersome, distracting the congregation from the task of making disciples. To go too far toward elder-led potentially limits the congregation's responsibility to govern themselves under Christ. The new bylaws proposed by the CGST and the Deacons carefully maintain both of these historic Baptist distinctives thereby freeing the church to actively pursue the commission of Christ to make disciples.