

MODEL BYLAWS for CHURCHES

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AUTHOR'S NOTES:

Church governing documents—which may include articles of incorporation, a charter, constitution, bylaws, and/or policy manuals—serve important purposes. They clarify the structure and/or processes of an organization when Scripture does not elaborate, provide the organization guidelines and guardrails, give new members a snapshot of the organization, and emphasize some necessary components of the life and work of the body of Christ.¹ The bylaws of a church should promote efficiency in the operation of the organization, articulate the organization's mission and methodology, promote unity on matters of Christian living, and protect the organization from liability.² Ideally, the governing documents should require minimal (if any) amending, and use language that is precise yet understandable to anyone who might read them.

Bylaws should be functional, and kept as simple as possible to avoid confusion. While some topics require more detail and length than others, bylaws that are too lengthy or detailed are less practical to use. Actual use is important to a church, as the document is ineffective without adherence.

Below is a sample set of church bylaws. Where necessary, the text of each article is preceded by a brief description of the article's function and composition. The text provided here is merely a sample and should be adjusted to fit the unique circumstances of each congregation. For many articles, we have provided more than one option of sample language.

Note that in some states, such as Louisiana, “[t]he bylaws of a corporation shall operate merely as regulations among the shareholders or the members, and shall not affect contracts or other dealings with other persons, unless those persons have actual knowledge of the bylaws.” LSA-R.S. 12:222(B). Accordingly, our attorneys advise churches and religious organizations in affected states to make their bylaws publicly “known.” There may be a number of ways to do this, such as linking a copy of the bylaws on the church's website, and attaching a copy of the bylaws to any church facility rental applications and contracts, etc.

Other legal caveats may exist as well. For example, in Louisiana, after any amendment of a church's Articles of Incorporation has been duly filed with the Louisiana Secretary of State, a certified copy or duplicate original set must be filed for record in the office of the recorder of mortgages of the parish in which the registered office of the corporation is located. LSA-R.S. 12:238(C). We encourage each church to have an attorney review their final governing documents before they are formally adopted.

For further guidance or specific questions, please feel free to contact us at www.FreedomGuardNOW.org.

¹ Jaime Elliott, *Making a Church Constitution a Spiritual Document: Eight issues to Address* (Columbus: Jamie Elliot, 2006), 1.

² S. Michael Houdmann, “What is the purpose of church by-laws (bylaws)?,” www.gotquestions.org/church-by-laws.html.

BYLAWS of
[INSERT CHURCH NAME]
A Louisiana Nonprofit Religious Corporation

PREAMBLE

A Preamble is optional, and serves to lay out the reason(s) for adopting the bylaws.

Example 1:

We declare and establish these Bylaws to ensure that [insert church name] is governed in an orderly manner and in harmony with the principles of our faith. These Bylaws shall also serve to ensure that each member retains their liberties and that [insert church name] shall be free to act in relation to third parties.

Example 2 (specific to a Southern Baptist church):

For the more certain preservation and security of the principles of our faith, and to the end that this body may be subject to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and governed in an orderly democratic process under the direction and leadership of the Senior Pastor (hereinafter referred to as “Pastor”) with the accepted tenets of the Southern Baptist Churches, and for the purpose of preserving the liberties inherent in each individual member of [insert church name], and the freedom of action of this body with respect to its relation to the churches of the same faith and order, we do declare and establish this as [our Constitution and] Bylaws.

ARTICLE I – NAME AND PRINCIPAL OFFICE

The name of the church is “[INSERT CHURCH NAME],” and it is referred to in these Bylaws as the “Church” or “Corporation.” The Church maintains its principal office at [insert address] _____. The Leadership Team of the Church shall have full power and authority to change the principal office from one location to another, and shall have the authority to amend this section as necessary.

ARTICLE II - PURPOSE/OBJECTIVES

The Purpose/Objective is a broad statement of the reason the church exists. Examples might include a mission statement, usually consisting of three or four sentences, or key goals, with a short description of each goal.

Example 1:

The Purpose of [*insert church name*], a church committed to the full counsel of God as set forth in the Scriptures, shall be: to bring glory and honor to Jesus Christ alone through the making of disciples in fulfillment of the Great Commission; to facilitate and encourage corporate, small group, and individual worship; to encourage fellowship among the saints; to edify believers; and to minister to all people so that they might come to have a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ as LORD and Savior. Any conflicts between the Holy Scripture and any governing document or provision shall be resolved in favor of the Holy Scriptures.

Example 2:

The Mission or purpose of the Church is to be a Biblically based community of believers dedicated to impact our world with the good news of Jesus Christ. We are committed to seeing the five purposes of worship, fellowship, discipleship, service, and evangelism accomplished through this body both individually and collectively.

Example 3:

The Purpose of [*insert church name*], a church committed to the full counsel of God as laid out in the Scriptures, shall be:

1. Evangelism-To encourage and facilitate the church as a whole and the individual members to fulfill the Great Commission to create disciples of Jesus Christ.
2. Worship- To encourage and facilitate corporate, small group, and individual worship in meetings and in everyday life.
3. Fellowship-To encourage and facilitate cooperation and harmony among believers within (*insert church name*) and in other church bodies.
4. Discipleship-To encourage and facilitate spiritual growth among the believers of (*insert church name*) and believers in other church bodies.
5. Ministry-To encourage and facilitate acts that display the name of Jesus Christ to the world as a church and as individual members for the purpose of bringing individuals to a personal knowledge of Jesus Christ as LORD and Savior.

Any conflicts between the Holy Scripture and any governing document shall be resolved in favor of the Holy Scriptures.

ARTICLE III – MEMBERSHIP

The Membership article defines what is required for an individual to become a member of the church; the responsibilities, duties, and rights of membership; and the process of church discipline. Churches with a formal membership policy and membership agreement have greater legal protections when they find it necessary to impose church discipline on individuals in their congregations.

A. Requirements for Membership

Membership in this Church shall consist of all persons who have met the qualifications for membership and are listed on the membership roll. In order for an individual to be a candidate for membership in the Church, the individual desiring membership shall:

1. Make or have made a public profession that Jesus Christ is LORD and Savior; and
2. Shall be or have been baptized by [*insert method of baptism*] as a testimony of salvation.

An individual may demonstrate a desire for membership by providing to the Church:

1. A profession or statement of faith and baptism as specified above;
2. A promise of a letter of good standing/transfer of membership from a church of like practice/belief; or
3. A recommendation of restoration to membership status from the [*insert disciplinary body name*] after completing the disciplinary process outlined in Article III, Section D.

All eligible individuals shall be presented to the congregation for a vote of acceptance at any regularly scheduled or specially scheduled meeting of the Church. An individual shall be accepted for membership upon a majority vote of the members present. An individual who has completed the disciplinary process shall be restored to membership after a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present.

B. Responsibilities and Duties of Members

Example 1:

Every member of [*insert church name*] shall have the following responsibilities and duties:

1. Agree with the governing documents of the Church;
2. Discover, develop, and deploy his/her unique spiritual gift(s) for the purpose of ministry within the Church and to the community;
3. Conduct his/her life in harmony with the Holy Scriptures and the governing documents of the church;
4. Regularly attend scheduled meetings of the Church;
5. Be in communion with God through prayer and the studying of His Word; and
6. Engage in evangelism, discipleship, worship, ministry, and fellowship.

Example 2:

Every member of [*insert church name*] shall have the following responsibilities and duties:

1. Live a life of holiness;
2. Engage in all relationships in a Christian manner;

3. Invest in the Church and the community; and
4. Agree to abide by the governing documents of the Church.

Example 3:

Every member is expected to demonstrate his/her love for and commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and to this Church in the following ways:

1. Should seek to develop a vital devotional life, including daily Bible reading and prayer (Acts 2:42-47; 2 Timothy 2:15-16);
2. Should seek to attend regular Church meetings such as worship services (Sunday morning, Sunday evening, Wednesday evening), Bible Study (*i.e.* Sunday School), revival meetings and other special services as scheduled by the Church, unless providentially hindered (Hebrews 10:25; Acts 2:42-47);
3. Should practice “storehouse tithing”, which means to give 10% of one’s income to the budget of this church in an undesignated fashion as a minimum of his/her expression of financial stewardship (Malachi 3:8-12);
4. Should seek to live a Christlike, holy life (1 John 2:3-6; 1 Peter 1:13-17; Matthew 22:37-39), and agree with and abide by the teachings of the Bible and the governing documents of the church;
5. Should seek to verbally share the gospel of Jesus Christ with lost people for the purpose of persuading them to be converted to Him in salvation (Matthew 28:18-20);
6. Should positively submit to and follow the leadership of the Pastor, ministerial pastors and lay leadership of the Church. Should preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace within the fellowship by striving to be a peacemaker rather than a troublemaker (Hebrews 13:17; Philippians 2:1-4);
7. Should strive to love one another and show an attitude of forgiveness and unity toward each other as an example to the world of Christ’s love for His Church (John 13:34-35; Matthew 22:37-39; 1 John 3:16).

C. Rights of Members

By virtue of his/her membership, every member of the Church shall be entitled to:

1. Participation in the ordinances of the Church;
2. Eligibility for any elected or volunteer position(s) within the Church;
3. The ability to bring any unresolved dispute between members before the Church for resolution, after attempting to settle the dispute privately and in accordance with Matthew 18:15-18; and

Example 1:

4. A single vote on all matters presented to the members for a vote, provided the member is at least eighteen (18) years of age and present for the vote.

Example 2:

4. A single vote on the following matters: any amendment of the Articles of Incorporation or the Bylaws, the annual budget of the Church, the election of the Leadership Team, the disposition of all or substantially all of the assets of the Church, the merger or dissolution of the Church and the calling or removing of the Pastor. There shall be no proxy voting. Unless otherwise provided for in the Articles of Incorporation or the Bylaws, the members shall approve matters by a majority vote of the members present and voting at a meeting called and held for such purpose by giving notice to the members in accordance with the provisions herein.

D. Discipline of Members

Example 1:

Every reasonable measure will be taken to minister to any troubled member. The Pastor, ministerial pastors, deacons and members will seek redemption rather than punishment. Should a serious problem arise regarding the conduct or activities of a member which would cause that member to become a liability to the welfare and interest of the Church, then the Pastor, ministerial pastors and/or their delegates will seek to resolve the problem according to Matthew 18:15-20.

Members dismissed by the Pastor or his delegates may be restored to membership by the Pastor or his delegates upon evidence of his/her repentance and reformation according to the spirit of 2 Corinthians 2:7-8.

Example 2:

1. Discipline of a member shall commence upon any member becoming aware of a breach of biblical morals and/or ethics, a violation of the Church governing documents, or unresolved dispute between members that hinders the spiritual growth or testimony of any member or hinders the Church in a similar manner.
2. Any member with knowledge of the above offense(s) shall go to the member who has committed any of the above offenses in private to warn and admonish the offending member. Should the offending member confess and repent of the offense, the disciplinary process shall end.
3. Should the offending member continue in the offense, the member with knowledge of the offense, accompanied by two or three additional members, shall go to the offending member again to warn and admonish the offending member. Should the offending member confess and repent of the offense, the disciplinary process shall end.

4. Should the offending member continue in the offense, the member with knowledge of the offense, accompanied by the two or three additional members mentioned above, shall notify the [*insert disciplinary body name*].
5. After notification, the [*insert disciplinary body name*] shall conduct an investigation. Should the investigation reveal no offense, the disciplinary process shall end. Should the investigation reveal an offense, the [*insert disciplinary body name*] shall call the offending member, the member with knowledge of the offense, and the two or three additional members who accompanied the member with knowledge of the offense for a hear concerning the matter. Should the offending member confess and repent of the offense, the disciplinary process shall end.
6. Should the offending member continue in the offense and should the [*insert disciplinary body name*]'s investigation reveal an offense, the [*insert disciplinary body name*] shall recommend to the Church that the offending member be placed under disciplinary measures or removed from membership. Upon a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present, the offending member shall be placed under disciplinary measures or the membership of the offending member shall be terminated. Following the vote, a notice of disciplinary measures or termination of membership shall be sent to offending member within ten (10) business days.
7. Should the member be placed under disciplinary measures and should the member confess and repent of the offense, the member may request that the disciplinary measures be removed.
8. Should the member be removed from membership and should the former member confess and repent of the offense, the former member may request restoration to membership.
9. Upon a request to remove disciplinary measures or be restored to membership, the [*insert disciplinary body name*] shall prayerfully consider the request. Should the [*insert disciplinary body name*] determine that removing disciplinary measures or restoration is not appropriate, the [*insert disciplinary body name*] shall notify only the member/former member of the determination within ten (10) business days. Should the [*insert disciplinary body name*] determine that removing disciplinary measures or restoration is appropriate, the [*insert disciplinary body name*] shall notify the former member of the determination and recommend removing disciplinary measures or restoration to the Church.
10. Upon recommendation of the [*insert disciplinary body name*], the members shall vote to remove the disciplinary measures or restore the former member. Removal of disciplinary measures or restoration shall be granted by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present.

E. Termination of Membership

Membership in the Church shall terminate in any of the following ways:

1. Death of the member;
2. Inactivity for six (6) months, not caused by sickness, infirmity, military deployment, academic pursuits, or other circumstances to be considered on a case-by-case basis, followed by notification from the Church that membership has been terminated;
3. Transfer of membership to a church of like practice/belief;
4. Proof of regular attendance of a church not of like practice/belief;
5. A two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members as a result of the disciplinary process; or
6. A written request of termination by the member.

ARTICLE IV – OFFICERS

Different churches may define the responsibilities, duties, and rights of church officers in different ways, and may include various leaders such as Trustees, Deacons and/or Elders, a Treasurer, a Clerk, or a Moderator, in addition to the Pastor and Pastoral Staff. The descriptions provided in this model are by way of example only, and will likely require modification to be tailored to each church's unique structure and needs.

The officers of the church shall be the Pastor, Deacons and Trustees.

A. Pastor

1. Qualifications

The initial qualifications for the position of Pastor shall be those listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, such that any individual desiring the position of Pastor must be: blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, well-behaved, hospitable, able to teach, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy, gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous, one who rules his own house well, not a novice, and have a good testimony among those who are outside the church. In addition, the individual must be licensed by a church of like practice/belief, and may be ordained by [*insert church name*] or a church of like practice/belief.

2. Selection Process

Should the position of Pastor be vacant, a Pastor Search Committee shall be formed. The Pastor Search Committee shall be formed and function as described in ARTICLE VII. The Pastor Search Committee shall submit an individual for consideration to the congregation. The name of the individual shall be announced and distributed to the congregation at least fourteen (14) days prior to a vote on the individual, which shall

be by secret ballot of the members. There shall be at least a quorum of thirty percent (30%) of the members present at the meeting at which the vote is held. A minimum three-fourths (3/4) vote of all members present shall be required to call an individual to become the Pastor.

3. Responsibilities and Duties

The Pastor shall:

- a. Faithfully teach the Scriptures;
- b. Proclaim the Gospel to the Church and the world;
- c. Oversee the work of the Church;
- d. Counsel and shepherd the congregation; and
- e. For purposes of Church doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, the Pastor shall be the interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

4. Rights

In addition to the full rights of membership listed in these Bylaws, the Pastor shall have all authority necessary for the carrying out of the above responsibilities and duties, subject to the limitations of Scripture and the governing documents of [*insert church name*]. The Pastor shall serve an indefinite term, and shall receive compensation in a manner and amount that shall be determined by the Church.

5. Discipline

The Pastor shall be subject to the general disciplinary process described in ARTICLE III of these Bylaws, except that the Personnel Committee shall hear any complaints against the Pastor because the complaint may trigger disciplinary measures and/or the termination process. Should the Personnel Committee determine after an investigation that there is a valid complaint and that disciplinary measures and/or termination are appropriate, the Personnel Committee shall make such a recommendation to the Deacon body. The Deacon body shall then consider the recommendation. Should the Deacon body determine that disciplinary measures are appropriate, the Deacon body may recommend such to the congregation. Any recommendation shall be announced and distributed to the congregation at least seven (7) days prior to vote on the recommendation. A meeting of the church shall be called for the sole purpose of taking the vote. There shall be at least a quorum of thirty percent (30%) of the members present at the meeting. A vote to place the Pastor under disciplinary measures shall be by secret ballot and require a two-thirds (2/3) vote to enact disciplinary measures. Disciplinary measures shall be effective upon announcement of the vote.

6. Termination

- a. The Pastor is employed at will and may resign after giving notice to the Deacon body at least fourteen (14) days prior to the effective date of the resignation.
- b. The Deacon body may ultimately recommend to the congregation that the Pastor be terminated as a result of the disciplinary process outlined herein above. Any recommendation of termination shall be announced and distributed to the congregation at least seven (7) days prior to vote on the recommendation. A meeting of the Church shall be called for the sole purpose of taking the vote. There shall be at least a quorum of thirty percent (30%) of the members present at the meeting. A vote for termination shall be by secret ballot and require a three-fourths (3/4) vote to remove the Pastor. Termination shall be effective upon announcement of the vote.

B. Deacons

1. Qualifications

The qualifications for the position of Deacon shall be those listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-6. According to 1 Timothy 3:8-13, an individual desiring the position of Deacon shall be: reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy, holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience, blameless, and the husband of one wife. If the individual is married, his wife shall fit the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:11, and thus be reverent, not a slanderer, temperate, and faithful in all things. Should the individual and his wife have children, they shall manage their children and house well, as required by 1 Timothy 3:12. According to Acts 6:1-6, an individual desiring the position of Deacon shall be: of good repute, full of the Holy Spirit, and wise.

2. Number of Deacons

Example 1:

There shall be no fewer than three (3) but no more than nine (9) Deacons. The number of Deacons should be odd.

Example 2:

There should be a Deacon to member ratio of one (1) Deacon for every fifty (50) members.

3. Selection Process

Deacons shall be selected in compliance with the process outlined in Acts 6 and affirmed by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the congregation.

4. Classification of Deacons

There shall be two classifications of Deacons. The classifications shall be Active and Inactive.

5. Length of Service

A Deacon shall serve a three (3) year term as an Active Deacon, which begins at the close of the annual business meeting, or until his successor is elected. The Deacons shall serve on a rotational basis with one-third (1/3) becoming Inactive every year.

6. Responsibilities and Duties

The Deacons shall:

- a. Assist and counsel the Pastor in any matter related to the Pastor's responsibilities and duties as deemed necessary or required;
- b. Minister to the physical and spiritual needs of the congregation;
- c. Be peacemakers within the congregation; and
- d. Perform any other duties assigned to the Deacons in the governing documents.

7. Rights

In addition to the full rights of membership specified in these Bylaws, the Deacons shall have all authority necessary for the carrying out of the above responsibilities and duties, subject to the limitations of Scripture and the governing documents of [*insert church name*].

8. Discipline

The Deacons shall be subject to the general disciplinary process described in ARTICLE III of these Bylaws, except that the [*insert disciplinary body name*] shall hear any complaints against any Deacon because the complaint may trigger disciplinary measures and/or dismissal from office. Should the [*insert disciplinary body name*] determine after an investigation that there is a valid complaint and that disciplinary measures and/or dismissal from office are appropriate, the [*insert disciplinary body name*] shall make such a recommendation to the Deacon body. The Deacon body shall then consider the recommendation. Should the Deacon body determine that disciplinary measures are appropriate, the Deacon body may recommend such to the congregation. Any recommendation shall be announced and distributed to the congregation at least seven (7) days prior to vote on the recommendation. A meeting of the Church shall be called for the sole purpose of taking the vote. There shall be at

least a quorum of thirty percent (30%) of the members present at the meeting. A vote to place a Deacon under disciplinary measures shall be by secret ballot and require a two-thirds (2/3) vote to enact disciplinary measures. Disciplinary measures shall be effective upon announcement of the vote.

9. Dismissal From Office

A Deacon shall be dismissed from office upon:

- a. Resignation from office; or
- b. The Deacon body may ultimately recommend to the congregation that a Deacon be removed from office as a result of the disciplinary process outlined herein above. Any recommendation of removal shall be announced and distributed to the congregation at least seven (7) days prior to vote on the recommendation. A meeting of the Church shall be called for the sole purpose of taking the vote. There shall be at least a quorum of thirty percent (30%) of the members present at the meeting. A vote for removal shall be by secret ballot and require a three-fourths (3/4) vote to remove the Deacon. Removal shall be effective upon announcement of the vote.

C. Trustees

1. Qualifications

The qualifications for the position of Trustee shall be those listed Acts 6:3 and that the member be in good standing. According to Acts 6:3, an individual desiring the position of Trustee shall be: of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit, and full of wisdom.

2. Number of Trustees

a. Number

Example 1:

There shall be no fewer than three (3) but no more than nine (9) Trustees. The number of Trustees should be odd.

Example 2:

There should be a Trustee to member ratio of one (1) Trustee for every fifty (50) members.

2. Selection Process

Trustees shall be nominated by the Committee on Committees and approved by a vote of the church.

3. Length of Service

The Trustees shall serve a three (3) year term and may be reelected for a second three (3) year term, being a maximum of six (6) consecutive years, which begins at the close of the annual business meeting, or until his successor is elected. The Trustees shall serve on a rotational basis with one-third (1/3) being elected every year.

4. Responsibilities and Duties

The Trustees shall:

1. Hold the Church property in trust;
2. Buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer Church property, upon a vote of the Church authorizing any such action;
3. Sign any document required for the purchase, sale, mortgage, lease, transfer, or rental of property or any other legal document which requires a signature, upon a vote of the Church authorizing such action; and
4. Perform any other duties assigned to the Trustees in the governing documents.

5. Rights

In addition to the full rights of membership listed in these Bylaws, the Trustees shall have all authority necessary for the carrying out of the above responsibilities and duties, subject to the limitations of Scripture and the governing documents of the Church.

6. Discipline

The Trustees shall be subject to the general disciplinary process described in ARTICLE III of these Bylaws, except that the [*insert disciplinary body name*] shall hear any complaints against any Trustee because the complaint may trigger disciplinary measures and/or dismissal from office. Should the [*insert disciplinary body name*] determine after an investigation that there is a valid complaint and that disciplinary measures and/or dismissal from office are appropriate, the [*insert disciplinary body name*] shall make such a recommendation to the Deacon body. The Deacon body shall then consider the recommendation. Should the Deacon body determine that disciplinary measures are appropriate, the Deacon body may recommend such to the congregation. Any recommendation shall be announced and distributed to the congregation at least seven (7) days prior to vote on the recommendation. A meeting of the Church shall be called for the sole purpose of taking the vote. There shall be at least a quorum of thirty percent (30%) of the members present at the meeting. A vote to place a Trustee under disciplinary

measures shall be by secret ballot and require a two-thirds (2/3) vote to enact disciplinary measures. Disciplinary measures shall be effective upon announcement of the vote.

7. Dismissal From Office

A Trustee shall be dismissed from office upon:

1. Resignation from office; or
2. The Deacon body may ultimately recommend to the congregation that a Trustee be removed from office as a result of the disciplinary process outlined herein above. Any recommendation of removal shall be announced and distributed to the congregation at least seven (7) days prior to vote on the recommendation. A meeting of the Church shall be called for the sole purpose of taking the vote. There shall be at least a quorum of thirty percent (30%) of the members present at the meeting. A vote for removal shall be by secret ballot and require a three-fourths (3/4) vote to remove the Trustee. Removal shall be effective upon announcement of the vote.

ARTICLE V – CHURCH STAFF

The Church Staff article is optional. If included, it should be written in such a way that the language allows for both expansion and contraction of the staff. Many churches will also distinguish between “Called Staff” and hired staff.

The Church may hire and fire staff as deemed necessary. Should it be deemed necessary to hire or fire any staff member, the Personnel Committee shall be responsible for the hiring and firing process, except for Called Staff. All practices of the Church shall be in compliance with federal, state, and local law(s), unless any such law is in violation of Scripture. Any staff hired shall receive compensation, which shall be determined by the Church on an individual basis.

ARTICLE VI – MEETINGS

The Meetings article may define and distinguish the types of meetings conducted in the church, how each meeting is to be organized and conducted, and what constitutes a quorum.

The meetings of the church shall be worship meetings and business meetings. The quorum for all meetings shall be the members present, unless stated otherwise in the governing documents.

A. Worship Meetings

The Church shall meet regularly on Sunday mornings, Sunday evenings, Wednesday evenings, and at any other time designated for biblical worship. Regularly scheduled meetings may be canceled by a vote of the congregation or by agreement of a majority of the officers. Worship meetings shall be open to all members and to the public.

B. Business Meetings

There shall be an annual business in the month of September. There may also be regularly scheduled, specially called, or emergency business meetings throughout the year. Specially called business meetings shall be announced to the congregation at least seven (7) days prior to the meeting. Emergency business meetings may be held as needed, without prior announcement. All business meetings shall be conducted in accordance with *Robert's Rules of Order - Newly Revised*.

ARTICLE VII – COMMITTEES

The Committees article sets forth a list of all standing committees with a description of each, and may include any number of ad hoc committees. Flexibility should be allowed for the creation or termination of committees in the future. This article should also include details about how each committee will operate, as well as its specific rights and responsibilities.

All committee members shall be members in good standing. Every committee shall consist of at least three (3) members, but not more than nine (9) members. Every committee should consist of an odd number of members. Every committee shall have a chairperson, who is a voting member of the committee. The Pastor, or his appointed representative, shall be *ex officio* on all committees. The Pastor, or his appointed representative, shall be *ex officio* without a vote on the Nominating Committee and the Committee on Committees. *Ad hoc* committees shall be created upon necessity and approval of the Church, and shall terminate upon completion of their specified task(s), reporting to the Church, and/or recommending action to the Church. All committees shall report to the congregation at the annual business meeting, and may report at any other business meeting.

A. The standing committees of the Church shall be the Committee on Committees, the Nominating Committee, the Finance/Budget Committee, and the Personnel Committee.

1. Committee on Committees

The Committee on Committees shall consist of seven (7) members. The members shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee and approved by a vote of the Church. The Committee on Committees shall be responsible for nominating the members of every

committee within the Church, except the Committee on Committees. All nominations shall be confirmed by a vote of the Church. Members shall sever on a rotational basis with one-third (1/3) being elected every year.

2. Nominating Committee

The Nominating Committee shall consist of seven (7) members. The members shall be nominated by the Committee on Committees and approved by a vote of the Church. The Nominating Committee shall be responsible for nominating the members of the Committee on Committees and members for volunteer positions within the educational/discipleship ministries of the Church. All nominations shall be confirmed by a vote of the Church. Members shall serve on a rotational basis with one-third (1/3) being elected every year.

3. Finance/Budget Committee

The Finance/Budget Committee shall consist of five (5) members. The members shall be nominated by the Committee on Committees and approved by a vote of the Church. The Finance/Budget Committee shall be responsible for preparing and monitoring the Church budget and all of the other financial business of the Church. The Finance/Budget Committee shall also evaluate all expenditures and requests for expenditures and may make recommendations based on these evaluations. Members shall serve on a rotational basis with one-third (1/3) being elected every year.

4. Personnel Committee

The Personnel Committee shall consist of five (5) members. The members shall be nominated by the Committee on Committees and approved by a vote of the church. The Personnel Committee shall be responsible for recruiting, interviewing, and recommending to the church for hiring all paid staff, except the Called Staff listed in ARTICLE VII, Section A. The Personnel Committee shall be responsible for creating and maintaining job descriptions, policies, and procedures for all paid staff, except the Called Staff listed in ARTICLE VII, Section A. The Personnel Committee shall recommend compensation for all staff to the Finance/Budget Committee. The Personnel Committee shall hear complaints against all staff. Members shall sever on a rotational basis with one-third (1/3) being elected every year.

- B.** The *ad hoc* committees of the Church shall be the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, the Building and Grounds Committee, the Search Committee, the Disciplinary Committee, and any other committee or committees the Church might deem necessary and appropriate.

1. Constitution and Bylaws Committee

The Constitution and Bylaws Committee shall consist of seven (7) members. The members shall be at least one (1) Deacon, one (1) Trustee, and five (5) members to be nominated by the Committee on Committees and approved by a vote of the Church. The Constitution and Bylaws Committee shall be responsible for drafting, revising, and updating to the governing documents of the Church. Any draft, revision, or update shall be submitted to the church through the process outlined in Article VIII herein below.

2. Building and Grounds Committee

The Building and Grounds Committee shall consist of five (5) members. The members shall be nominated by the Committee on Committees and approved by a vote of the Church. The Building and Grounds Committee shall be responsible for the maintenance of all Church property. Regular repairs and maintenance may be conducted without approval of the Church. Improvements that have been approved by the Church shall be overseen by the Building and Grounds Committee. Upon notice of the necessity of an emergency repair, the chairperson of the Building and Grounds Committee shall notify the chairperson of the Finance/Budget Committee. The Building and Grounds Committee shall notify the Church of the necessity of the emergency repair at a business meeting, as described in Article VI(B) herein, so that the Church may take appropriate action. The church shall likewise be notified of any necessary expenditures at a business meeting.

3. Search Committee

The Search Committee shall consist of five (5) members with two (2) alternate members. The members shall be nominated from the membership and approved by a vote of the Church. The committee shall be responsible for recruiting, interviewing, and recommending to the Church for calling all Called Staff.

4. Disciplinary Committee

The Disciplinary Committee shall consist of seven (7) members with (2) alternate members. The members shall be at least one (1) Deacon, one (1) Trustee, and five (5) members to be nominated by the Committee on Committees and approved by a vote of the Church. The Disciplinary Committee shall hear all complaints against the Deacons, Elders, and Trustees. Should the Disciplinary Committee determine that disciplinary measures and/or removal from office is appropriate, the Disciplinary Committee shall recommend such action to the Deacons as outlined in Article III herein.

ARTICLE VIII – RECORDS AND REPORTS

The Church shall keep correct and complete books and records of account, and all receipts of monies and expenditures shall be properly recorded according to accepted accounting principles. A record of the proceedings of all business and members' meetings shall also be kept, and a record of the names and addresses of Church members entitled to vote shall be maintained at the principal office of the Church. All books and records may be inspected by any member for any proper purpose at any reasonable time pursuant to the Louisiana Nonprofit Corporation Law.

ARTICLE IX – AMENDMENTS

Any proposed amendment(s) to these Bylaws shall be duly considered by the Constitution and Bylaws Committee, and then announced and distributed in writing to the congregation at least thirty (30) days in advance of a vote on the proposed amendment(s). Any amendment(s) to these Bylaws must be adopted by a minimum of two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present at a duly called and noticed business meeting.

ARTICLE X - CONSTRUCTION AND DEFINITIONS

Unless the context requires otherwise, the general provisions, rules of construction and definitions in the Louisiana Nonprofit Corporation Law shall govern the construction of these Bylaws. If any provision of these Bylaws, or application thereof to any person or circumstance is held invalid by a court of appropriate jurisdiction, such invalidity shall not affect other provisions or applications of these Bylaws which can be given effect without the invalid provision or application, and to this end the provisions contained herein are declared severable.

ARTICLE XI – DISSOLUTION

To cover all scenarios, it is wise to specify in a Dissolution article what would be required to dissolve an organization at some point in the future, and what would happen to its net assets.

Written, oral, and/or electronic notice must be given to the congregation at least thirty (30) days prior to a vote to dissolve and liquidate the Church. Approval of dissolution shall require a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the members present at a duly called and noticed business meeting. Should [insert church name] ever disband and/or cease to exist, all net assets shall be transferred to [insert other non-profit entity name] or [insert governing body name] shall appoint (2) two members

as liquidators with the full powers granted under the laws of this state. Any dissolution of the Church corporation shall be in exact compliance and consistent with the provisions of the Louisiana Nonprofit Corporation Law and the Internal Revenue Code, § 501(c)(3), *et seq.*

ARTICLE XII - STATEMENT OF FAITH

The Statement of Faith article articulates the core doctrinal beliefs of the Church, and is strongly recommended so that no court or outside party may question those beliefs.

This article may incorporate portions of any other governing documents and/or outside documents by reference, state a church confession/statement of faith and/or church covenant, and/or delineate the church statement of faith/confession. In some denominations, this statement may be unique to each individual congregation. Others will refer to and rely upon universal language. For example, a Southern Baptist church may specifically adopt and include The Baptist Faith and Message 2000 doctrinal statement, with the addition of added language concerning emerging issues on marriage and human sexuality issues, etc.

*The following examples may be helpful. **Example 1** adopts and incorporates an external document as the statement of beliefs. **Example 2** is styled similar to a creed/confession/statement of faith. **Example 3** is styled as an illustrative listing of major beliefs with specific topic headings and brief explanations of each. Following the third example below is language concerning marriage and sexuality issues that we strongly recommend be duly considered and adopted by every church today.*

Example 1:

This statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. However, [*insert church name*] does affirm and adopt as its own statement of beliefs, the [*insert creed/statement of faith/church covenant/external document/etc.*], attached hereto as Addendum A.

Example 2:

This statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. However, [*insert church name*] affirms that:

1. The Scriptures are the inspired Word of God and contain His plan and will for Creation;
2. The Scriptures are the ultimate authority under which the Church operates;
3. God the Father created heaven and earth, which includes man;
4. Man sinned and was eternally separated from God;
5. Jesus Christ, God the Father's only Son and our LORD, was sent to earth to reconcile God and man;
6. Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born to a virgin;
7. Jesus lived a life free of sin;
8. Jesus was crucified, died, and rose from the dead after three (3) days;

9. After being raised from the dead, Jesus ascended to be seated at the right hand of God the Father;
10. Jesus will return to judge the living and the dead;
11. The Holy Spirit is a real and active part of the life of the believer;
12. There is one universal Church to which all believers belong;
13. Jesus' death and resurrection provided the atonement for sin;
14. There will be a resurrection of the physical body;
15. God has existed in eternity past, exists in the present, and shall exist in eternity future;
16. Man shall live with God in heaven through eternity future or man shall live in hell separated from Good through eternity future.

Example 3:

This statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. However, [*insert church name*] affirms that:

A. Holy Scriptures

The Holy Scriptures shall be the ultimate authority of the Church. Any conflicts between the Holy Scripture and any governing document shall be resolved in favor of the Holy Scriptures. The Holy Scriptures are the inerrant and inspired word of God, written through men inspired by the Holy Spirit, and contain God's plan and will for Creation. The Holy Scriptures are the ultimate authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of man. For the purposes of Church doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline the [*insert officer/body*] shall be the interpretive authority on the Holy Scriptures' meaning and application.

B. God

There is one true living God who is intelligent, spiritual, and personal. God is omnipotent, omniscient, and most holy. God has existed from eternity past and will exist in eternity future as a triune God revealed as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, each of whom are distinct persons but are not divided in their nature, essence, or being.

1. God the Father

God the Father reigns over Creation as provider and with the purpose of demonstrating His attributes. He is also faithful in His provision for the saints and acts in a fatherly manner for all of mankind.

2. God the Son

Jesus Christ is the incarnation of God the Son who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of a virgin, lived a life without sin, died on the cross, was buried, three days later rose from the grave, appeared to the apostles, and ascended into heaven to the right hand of God the Father. Christ's death was the substitution atonement for the sins of mankind so that mankind might be reconciled with God. One day Jesus shall return to judge the living and the dead.

3. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the person of the trinity that inspired the authors of Scripture. The Spirit works in the hearts of mankind to bring conviction of sin, righteousness, and the judgment to come. Upon salvation, the Spirit is the agent of regeneration, sanctification, and granting of spiritual gifts. The Spirit serves to comfort, enlighten, encourage, and empower believers.

D. Man

Man is the crowning work of God's act of creation that was formed in His image. God created both the male and female. Man was created without sin, with free will, and with perfect fellowship with God. However, man choose to sin and thus fell out of fellowship with God. This allowed sin to enter into the world and sin now affects all man, thus creating the need for a savior for all man. Only the sacrifice of Jesus Christ, provided by the grace of God, can bridge the gap created by sin and restore man to his original condition. The unique creation of man is evidence of the specialness of man and the inherent worth and dignity of each individual.

E. Salvation

Salvation is the redeeming of man and his reconciliation with God. Salvation is offered as a free gift to anyone who will accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior. Salvation is only through an individual and personal faith in Jesus Christ. Salvation is both an event and a process. The process of salvation is salvation, justification, sanctification, and glorification.

1. Salvation is the creation of a new man in Jesus Christ by the putting to death of the old man. Salvation is the response to the conviction of sin by the Holy Spirit, which consists of the choice to completely and totally turn from sin toward God and righteousness and is accompanied by committing one's self completely and without reserve to Jesus Christ. This is accompanied by an act of the Holy Spirit to change the heart from desiring sin to desiring righteousness.
2. Justification is a display of God's grace in that He credits the righteousness of Jesus to the account of an individual at the moment of salvation. Justification allows the individual to

be removed from a state of war and broken fellowship with God to a state of peace and fellowship with God.

3. Sanctification is the process that begins with salvation and justification and lasts until death or glorification. Sanctification is the progression toward spiritual and moral maturity through the work of the Holy Spirit that distinguishes and prepares an individual for their role in God's plan.
4. Glorification is the final result and completion of salvation, justification, and sanctification. Glorification is the eternal state of the saints upon the completion of salvation.

*The Statement of Faith article should cover a broad range of the Church's religious beliefs. The more detailed, the better. It is also **strongly recommended** today that any Statement of Faith should include specifically articulated beliefs of the Church about three important areas: marriage, human sexuality and the sanctity of human life. Some example language is provided below.*

Statement of Biblical Authority

The statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible, as the inspired and infallible Word of God, which is the final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, shall be the sole and final source of all that we believe. For purposes of Church doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline the [insert officer/body] shall be the final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

Statement on Marriage and Sexuality

We believe the term "marriage" has only one meaning and that is marriage sanctioned by God which joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture. We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to only occur between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

We believe that any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography or any attempt to change one's sex, or disagreement with one's biological sex, is sinful and offensive to God.

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of the church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the Church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by the Church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, should abide by and agree to this Statement on Marriage and Sexuality and conduct themselves accordingly.

Because we believe in the biblical teaching that marriage is between one man and one woman, marriages outside those parameters will not be performed by Church officials or on Church property.

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

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 accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of the Church.

Statement on the Sanctity of Human Life

We believe that all human life is sacred and created by God in His image. 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 therefor called to defend, protect and value all human life. (Ps. 139.)

CERTIFICATION OF ADOPTION

THE FOREGOING BYLAWS have been duly accepted [as amended] this _____ day of _____, 2015, by the membership of the [*insert church name*].

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, witness the hand of the undersigned duly authorized persons on such date.

Name
Position or office

Name
Position or office

Name
Position or office



FREEDOM GUARD is a not-for-profit legal organization dedicated to defending the foundations of American liberty and contending for the Christian faith through strategic litigation, education initiatives and public advocacy.

If our attorneys can provide your church or organization additional assistance in the preparation of its governing documents, or with any other matter, please do not hesitate to contact us.

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