Angelo Bible Church

Constitution & Bylaws



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CONSTITUTION
ANGELO BIBLE CHURCH

ARTICLE I: NAME AND HISTORY
The original constitution and bylaws were adopted in 1986 and amended on October 23, 1994.

The name of this church is Angelo Bible Church and its principle place of worship is located at 3506 Sherwood Way, San Angelo, Texas.

The church held its first public meeting on April 24, 1977.

In October of 1977, the church received its charter of incorporation from the State of Texas.

In September of 1983, the church purchased its first property at 104 E. 17th, San Angelo, Texas. This property was sold to the Greater Independent Methodist Episcopal Church of San Angelo on September 21, 1992.

The Sherwood Way location was purchased on September 22, 1992 and the first worship service was held at that location on February 13, 1994.

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE
To the glory of God, Angelo Bible Church is established to carry out the following God-ordained responsibilities:

A. WORSHIP - to create an environment conducive to offering reverence to God, from the heart, as consistent with His revealed truth. (John 4:23–24; Philippians 3:3; Hebrews 10:22)

B. INSTRUCTION - to teach the historic, fundamental truth of the Church as received in the Scriptures in order to equip believers to live Christ-like lives. (2 Timothy 1:13; 4:2; Hebrews 10:23; Jude 1:3)

C. FELLOWSHIP - to promote the development of meaningful relationships among believers as a result of our common bond in Jesus Christ. (Galatians 5:13; Ephesians 4:15–16; Colossians 3:12–16; Hebrews 10:24–25)

D. EVANGELISM - to participate in the work of bringing individuals to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ, both in this community and abroad. (Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:18–21; Philippians 2:15; 2 Timothy 4:5)

ARTICLE III: DOCTRINE

Section A: The Importance of Doctrine

As an independent, evangelical church, we are governed in our actions and beliefs by the Word of God. This makes doctrine a very vital part of our distinctive ministry; therefore, all members will be required to fully agree with the Articles of Faith (Section B, this article, page 4). Regular teachers and deacons will be required to support the Full Doctrinal Statement (Section C, this article, page 4). Elders, paid ministerial staff and missionaries must agree to the Full Doctrinal Statement (Section C, this article, page 4).

Section B: Articles of Faith

1. *The Trinity* - God exists in three, co-equal persons: the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit.

2. *The Person of Christ* - Jesus Christ is complete deity and complete humanity united in one, sinless, virgin-born person who has no beginning or end. He will one day return for His Church.

3. *The Work of Christ* - The death of Christ served as a perfect, God-satisfying payment for the penalty of the sins of the world. Our justification is assured because of His bodily resurrection from the dead.

4. *Personal Salvation* - One can be delivered from eternal separation from God and given the certainty of eternal life only through personal trust in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Salvation is not a work of man but a gift from God.

5. *The Scriptures* - The Bible is the place where God has specifically revealed Himself to man and given a pattern for Christ-like living.

Section C: Full Doctrinal Statement

1. *The Scriptures* - We believe that "all scripture is inspired by God" in the sense that "men moved by the Holy Spirit" wrote the very words of Scripture. We believe that this divine inspiration extends equally and fully to all parts of the Old and New Testaments. We believe the whole Bible in the originals is therefore without error. Consequently, the Bible is the only infallible and authoritative guide for faith and conduct. (Matthew 5:18; Luke 24:44; John 5:39; 10:35; 16:12–13; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 1 Timothy 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16–17; 2 Peter 1:21)

   We believe that the Scriptures interpreted in a normal literal sense reveal divinely determined dispensations. These are not ways of salvation but distinguishable economies in the outworking of God's purpose which define man's responsibilities in successive ages. (Ephesians 1:10; 3:2; Colossians 1:25–26)

2. *The Godhead* - We believe that the Godhead eternally exists in three district persons – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit – and that these three are one God having precisely the same nature, attributes and perfection worthy of precisely the same worship, confidence and obedience. (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 28:19; John 10:30; Acts 5:3–4; 2 Corinthians 13:14)

3. *The Lord Jesus Christ* - We believe that the eternal Son of God became man without ceasing to be God, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal the Father and redeem sinful man (Luke 1:27, 35; John 1:1–2, 14, 18)

   We believe that He did not possess a sinful nature nor commit any act of personal sin. (1 Peter 2:22; Hebrews 4:15)

We believe that He accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross as a substitutionary satisfaction of the wrath of God against sin and that our justification is assured because of His bodily resurrection from the dead. (Romans 3:24–26; 4:25; Ephesians 1:7, 20; 1 Peter 1:3; 2:24; 1 John 2:2)

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ ascended into heaven, and is now exalted at the right hand of God where, as our high priest, He fulfills the ministries of intercession and advocacy. (Acts 1:9– 10; Romans 8:34; Ephesians 1:20–21; Philippians 2:9–10; Hebrews 1:3; 3:1; 7:25; 9:24; 12:2; 1 John 2:1)

4. *The Holy Spirit* - We believe that since the day of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit has had the special ministries of indwelling every believer and baptizing every believer into the body of Christ at the moment of salvation. At the moment of salvation the Holy Spirit also imparts eternal life and seals the believer until the day of redemption. (John 3:5–6; 14:16–17; Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 6:19; 12:13; Ephesians 1:13–14; 4:30)

   We believe that the gift of tongues was, like the gifts of apostleship and prophecy, given during the founding of the Church (Ephesians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 13:8; 14:21–22). While we recognize that God may give any gift to the Church at any time, we believe that the current resurgence of the practice of tongues which is not scripturally regulated is not the biblical gift of tongues.

   We believe that God heals in answer to prayer and in accordance with His sovereign will. Healing cannot be claimed on the same basis as salvation and it is not always His will to heal. Deliverance of the body from sickness or death awaits the consummation of our salvation in the resurrection. (Acts 28:8; 1 Timothy 5:23; 2 Timothy 4:20; Romans 8:23)

5. *The Personality of Satan* - We believe that Satan is a person, a fallen angel, "the father of lies," the god of the present world system, and the cause of the fall; that he is the enemy of God and man though he "disguises himself as an angel of light" and that he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire. (Genesis 3:1–6; Job 1:6–7; Isaiah 14:12–17; Matthew 4:2–11; 25:41; John 8:44; Ephesians 6:11–12; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 20:10)

6. *Salvation* - We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God, but that in Adam's sin the race fell, inherited a sinful nature, and became alienated from God; and that man is thus totally depraved. This means that man is utterly unable to remedy his lost condition. (Genesis 1:26–27; 6:5; Psalms 14:1–3; 51:5; Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 3:23; 5:12; Ephesians 2:1–3)

   We believe that man's salvation from his lost condition is God's gift of eternal life brought to man by grace and received only by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ whose precious blood was shed on the cross for the sins of the whole world. Therefore, we believe that salvation is by grace through faith and that no other acts such as confession, baptism, prayer, or faithful service are to be added to believing as a condition of salvation. At salvation a person is in possession of every spiritual blessing and absolutely complete in Christ, therefore that person is not required by God to seek a so-called "second blessing," or a "second work of grace." (Leviticus 17:11; Matthew 26:28; John 1:12; 5:24; 6:29; Acts 13:39; 16:31; Romans 1:16–17; 3:22, 26; 4:5; 5:1, 6–9; 1 Corinthians 3:21–23; Galatians 3:22; Ephesians 1:3, 7; 2:8–9; Philippians 3:4–9; Colossians 2:10; James 1:18; 1 Peter 1:18–19; 1 John 2:2; 4:17; 5:11–12)

   We believe that from the moment of salvation all believers are secure forever. (John 6:37–40; 10:27–30; Romans 8:1, 31–39; 1 Corinthians 1:4–8; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 1:24)

We believe that assurance of salvation is the privilege of every true believer and that it is based upon the written Word of God rather than upon feelings. (2 Corinthians 5:1, 6–8; 2 Timothy 1:12; 1 John 5:13)

7. *The Church* - We believe that all believers are baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ and thus are members of the universal Church which began at Pentecost and is completely distinct from the nation of Israel. (Matthew 16:16–18; Acts 2:42 –47; Romans 12:5; 1 Corinthians 12:12–27; Ephesians 1:20–23; 2:11–22; 4:3–10; Colossians 3:14–15)

   We believe, however, that the establishment and continuance of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament. It is the responsibility of the local church to observe the ordinances, edify itself, and evangelize the world. (Matthew 28:19–20; Acts 2:42; 14:27; 20:17–28; Ephesians 4:11–16; Philippians 2:3–4: 1 Thessalonians 5:11; 1 Timothy 3:5; Hebrews 10:23–24)

8. *The Ordinances* - We believe that water baptism and the Lord's Supper are the only ordinances of the church. We believe that water baptism was instituted by the Lord Jesus Christ to symbolize the work of the Holy Spirit in identifying the believer with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. We practice the ordinance of baptism by immersion in water after conversion and believe that it is the solemn responsibility of every believer to bear this testimony of trust in Jesus Christ by being baptized. We believe that the Lord's Supper is the remembrance of His death until He comes, and should always be preceded by careful self-examination. (Matt 28:19; Luke 22:19–20; Acts 2:38–42; 10:47–48; 16:31–33; 18:8; 1 Corinthians 11:23–34)

9. *Future things* - We believe in the personal, imminent coming of the Lord Jesus Christ for the Church prior to the seven-year tribulation period which will be concluded at Christ's return to earth in power

and glory to establish His millennial kingdom. (Isaiah 9:2–7, 11; Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 9:24–27; Zechariah 14:4–11; Matthew 24:3–31; John 14:1–3; 1 Corinthians 15:50–54; Philippians 3:20; 1 Thessalonians 1:9–10; 4:13–18; Titus 2:13; Revelation 3:10; 6:1–18, 24; 19:11–21; 20:6)

We believe that at death believers immediately pass into the Lord's presence and there remain in conscious bliss until the resurrection of the body at His coming, when soul and body reunited shall be with Him forever in glory. We believe that unbelievers remain after death in conscious misery until the great white throne judgment at the close of the millennium, when soul and body reunited shall be cast into the lake of fire. Thus we believe in the eternal life and blessedness of all believers in heaven and the eternal existence and punishment of all unbelievers in hell. (Matthew 25:46; Luke 16:19–26; 23:43; John 3:36; 5:28–29; 11:25–26; 2 Corinthians 5:8; Philippians 1:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:6–10; Jude 1:6–7; Revelation 20:5–6, 11–15; 21:1–22:5)

ARTICLE IV: MEMBERSHIP

Section A: Qualifications

Membership into Angelo Bible Church is open to anyone who is a member of the universal church (1 Corinthians 12:12), namely a true believer. It is primarily a responsibility of the individual who is directly accountable to God for the decision. However, because it is the responsibility of elders to maintain the purity of the local body, this decision must meet with their approval. Approval will be granted when the following evidences of salvation have been acknowledged by one or more of the elders:

1. A profession of faith in Christ.
2. A complete agreement with our Articles of Faith (Article III, Section B, page 4).
3. An affirmation that no gross immorality exists such as that in 1 Corinthians 5 or 6.

4. A general acceptance of the Covenant of Fellowship (Section D, this article, page 10).

Section B: Types of Members

1. *Regular Members*
   Any member 18 years of age and older shall have the right to vote on all matters brought before the congregation.

   Members who have been adequately informed of matters to be taken up in a vote but are unable to attend the meeting, may give their proxy to an immediate family member or to any one of the elders who will cast the vote according to the absent member's desire

2. *Non-voting Members*
   Anyone who desires fellowship at Angelo Bible Church but does not or cannot seek membership shall be considered a Non-member and will not have any of the rights of membership. Any member absent from the fellowship for a period of six months, without a satisfactory explanation, shall be automatically considered a non-member. Reinstatement to membership shall then follow the procedure in Section A, this article, page 9.

Section C: Removal of Members

1. *Voluntary removal*

   Any member can be removed from the membership rolls by a written request submitted to the Elder Board. If needed, a letter of good standing shall be written by the Board for use in another church.

2. *Involuntary removal (Church Discipline)*

   Any member who is out of harmony with the beliefs and practices of this church may be dropped from membership without his or her consent. Before taking such a step, prayerful consideration will be

given in accordance with the church policy on discipline (refer to Article II of the Bylaws, page 18-21).

Section D: Covenant of Fellowship

All members of Angelo Bible Church shall covenant before God and one another, as the Lord enables, to strive for the following in their fellowship:

1. To love one another, just as Christ loved us.
2. To be thoughtful and courteous to one another, exercising concern and watchfulness.
3. To strive to maintain unity, be slow to take offense, and to be quick to forgive and seek forgiveness.
4. To engage in regular, personal Bible reading with an emphasis on application.
5. To assist in the work of the church with a spirit of willingness.
6. To discover, use and develop spiritual gifts.
7. To contribute, as the Lord prospers, to the financial support of the church, including the physical needs of the body.
8. To bring up children entrusted to our care in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
9. To pray for one another, the church and its ministries.
10. To maintain a consistent witness toward unbelievers.

ARTICLE V: CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Section A: General

1. The ultimate authority for the operation of this church resides in the Head of the church, Jesus Christ. The administration of His authority shall be achieved through a representative form of government. The congregation is thus represented by and through its elected officers. The elected officers in this church shall be elders and deacons.

   Their holding of an office is by:

a. The calling of God by the Holy Spirit.

b. The conviction of the will of God on the part of the candidate.

c. The approval of the existing Board of Elders.

d. The concurrence of the congregation.

2. Those who receive financial support (Pastor-Teacher, Secretary, Missionary, etc.) are not, by virtue of exercising their spiritual gift(s), officers of the church. This also applies to all appointed positions (Youth Director, Sunday School Superintendent, etc.). Both groups are subject to the Board of Elders. Any of the above, however, may qualify for the office of elder or deacon; he would then have authority equal to every other member within the respective board.

Section B: Elders

1. *Description of Office*

   Elders are active, mature, male members of the church who are charged with the general oversight and care of the church. As such, the elders "watch over the souls" of their people as "those who will give account" to the Lord (Hebrews 13:17). This leadership is not one of "lording it over" the church (1 Peter 5:3) rather, it is patterned after Christ's instruction to His leaders to be "servants" first (Luke 22:26). The elders shall be the administrative officers of the church. They will delegate to the deacons such responsibilities as needed and as specified by this constitution (Section C, this article, page 14).

2. *Responsibilities*

   The responsibilities of the elders include:

   a. To direct the affairs of the church (1 Thessalonians 5:12)

   b. To develop personal relationships with the people (1 Thessalonians 2:8–11)

   c. To serve the Lord with faithfulness (Acts 20:24)

d. To feed the flock by teaching the Word of God (1 Thessalonians 5:12)

e. To exercise church discipline (1 Timothy 5:19–20)

f. To refute those who teach false doctrine (Titus 1:9)

g. To be an example to the congregation (1 Peter 5:3)

h. To pray with and for the members of the church (James 5:13–18)

i. To visit the membership, giving counsel and comfort to those with special needs. (Thessalonians 5:14)

j. To share the gospel with non-believers (2 Timothy 4:5)

k. To develop and ordain new elders and deacons (1 Timothy 5:22)

l. To receive new members into the church (1 Peter 5:3)

3. *Selection*

The minimum number of elders including the pastor shall be three, which is consistent with the Articles of Incorporation.

The following procedure shall be followed to select elders:

a. The existing board of Elders shall select the candidate on the basis of his apparent qualifications, after he has received some exposure to what it means to be an elder.

b. The candidate shall be personally interviewed by elders (along with his spouse if possible) in the areas of doctrine, philosophy of ministry, moral character and relationships.

c. The Board of Elders shall vote on each candidate interviewed as to whether or not they are deemed to be the Holy Spirit's choice for the office. A unanimous elder vote shall be necessary for selection.

d. Selected candidates will then be submitted to the congregation for their endorsement. For a period of at least three consecutive

Sundays, members will have the opportunity to indicate their approval or disapproval of the candidates in confidential written form. A majority of votes in disapproval will nullify an approval on the part of the Board of Elders.

e. The newly selected elders shall be recognized before the congregation at an ordination service.

4. *Qualifications*

The specific qualifications for the office of elder are found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 and may be summarized as follows:

a. He must have the desire to hold the office of an elder (1 Timothy 3:1) and thus aspire to the responsibilities of an elder as enumerated in Section B, subheading 2. Responsibilities, pages 12.

b. He must be a man who has a sound moral character and reputation in the community.

c. He must not be a new convert, but someone who is spiritually mature.

d. He must be able to get along with others without being contentious.

e. He must be able to teach the truths of the Word of God to others.

f. He must have his home-life in order, bearing exemplary relationships with his wife and children.

g. He must be an active member for at least six months except in the case of the church pastor.

5. *Tenure and Removal from Office*

The office of non-salaried elder is a six year term that can be prematurely terminated by resignation or disciplinary action. At the end of the term, a one year period will pass prior to being eligible for return to the board.

Section C: Deacons

1. *Description and Responsibilities*

   Deacons are active mature male members of the church selected to carry out those aspects of the ministry delegated to them by the elders. These may include, but are not limited to, the following:

   a. To submit an annual church budget for approval by the elders and to collect and disburse monies according to that budget.

   b. To oversee the buildings, furnishings, grounds and all church property, and to provide for its operations, maintenance and improvements.

   c. To oversee ushering duties.

2. *Selection*

   At a regular or special called church meeting, names will be submitted from the congregation by secret ballot. The elders will initially approve those who are qualified according to the need (Acts 6:3–5) and present their names to the congregation for three consecutive Sundays for comment. If three weeks pass without substantial negative comment, the elders will give final approval for installation.

3. *Qualifications*

   a. Those outlined in Acts 6:3–5 and 1 Timothy 3:8–13.

   b. Must be in support of the full doctrinal statement (Article III, Section C, page 4-9).

   c. Must have been observed within the fellowship for at least six months and be an active member prior to selection.

4. *Tenure and Removal from Office*

   a. Deacons will serve for a period of three years. The selection process will begin in March of the years when existing terms are ending or when additional deacons are required as determined by the elders. Staggered three year terms are desired to prevent a complete turnover within the board. They may be reselected

and approved as long as they continue to meet the qualifications.

b. A deacon may be removed from office by voluntary resignation, failure to discharge duties of deacon, or disciplinary action.

ARTICLE VI: MEETINGS

Section A: Annual Business Meeting

The annual business meeting will be held in October each year. The date shall be decided by the elders.

Section B: Called Meetings

1. Quarterly Meetings: Quarterly business meetings may be held in January, April and July as directed by the elders.

2. Special Business Meetings: Special business meetings may be called by the elders. The purpose of the meeting must be announced publicly on at least two Sunday mornings prior to the meeting. Only such matters as have been announced may be taken up for decision.

Section C: Quorum, Agenda, Approval

1. One third of the regular members must be present, or represented by immediate family members or proxy as stated in Article IV, Section B, subheading 1. Regular Members, second paragraph, to constitute a quorum, page 9.

2. All items taken up for decision must have been previously approved by the elders.

3. Approval of any item shall be by the majority of those regular members present. A higher percentage for approval of an item may be established by the elders.

4. The board of elders will select a chairman for each congregational meeting.

ARTICLE VII: PROPERTY

1. The church may buy, own and operate such property as is essential to carry out its purpose as stated in Article II. Legal matters having to do with the sale, purchase, donation, mortgaging, or encumbering in any manner, the real or personal property of the church, or which

may legally bind the church in contract or obligation shall not be entered into except by two-thirds majority consent of each separate deacon and elder board as witnessed by their signatures on required documents.

2. In the event the church should for any reason be divided, the property and all funds of the church shall remain in the hands of those abiding by this constitution.

3. Should the church be dissolved or cease to function, all property and funds held by the church shall be distributed by the Board of Elders to other evangelical corporations.

ARTICLE VIII: ORDINATION

Section A: Approval for Ordination

Any man who desires ordination to the ministry of the gospel shall meet with the elders. Upon their recommendations, a committee of examination shall be formed.

1. The committee of examination shall consist of three ordained men and at least two elders.

2. The prospective candidate shall appear before this committee to review his qualifications and call to ministry.

Section B: Public Ordination

Upon the approval and recommendation of the committee for examination, the elders may proceed with the public ordination.

ARTICLE IX: AMENDMENTS

This constitution may be amended or revised by a vote of three-fourths of the regular members present at a duly called business meeting. Proposed amendments or revisions must first be approved by the Board of Elders.

BYLAWS
ANGELO BIBLE CHURCH

ARTICLE I: DIVORCE AND REMARRIAGE

Section A: Commitment to Marriage

1. God intends marriage to be a lifetime commitment (Matthew 19:3–8; Romans 7:2–3) and divorce is an abomination to our Lord and Creator (Malachi 2:16). Therefore, marriage should be entered into and ever held as a lifetime commitment.

2. In view of God's original purpose of marriage (Matthew 19:3–8; cf. Romans 7:2–3), the healing power of our Savior's death (1 Peter 2:24), His victorious resurrection (2 Corinthians 5:14–15), and His power which enables us to do all things (Philippians 4:13); this church body commits itself to do everything possible—both individually and collectively—to restore those who are seeking or contemplating a divorce or an unscriptural marriage.

Section B: Divorce and Remarriage

Scripture recognized two instances which permit but do not require divorce and remarriage.

1. Sexual infidelity after marriage (Matthew 5:32; 19:9). Remarriage by one partner to a third partner constitutes sexual infidelity (Mark 10:11–12).

2. Desertion by an unbelieving spouse (1 Corinthians 7:15, 27–28, 39). Desertion by a believing partner who is subsequently disciplined by the church leaves the remaining partner free to divorce and remarry since the church discipline process treats the one disciplined as an unbeliever (Matthew 18:17).

Section C: Reconciliation

1. If the unfaithful or deserting partner repents and asks forgiveness, the remaining partner is bound by God's word to extend this forgiveness and restore the marriage (Luke 17:3–4; Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:12–13).

2. In no case is an existing marriage to be dissolved to restore a former marriage (1 Corinthians 7:20, 24).

3. In situations where reconciliation is scripturally impossible by the one who deserted or was unfaithful, this one may remarry if he repents of his past sin. Reconciliation is scripturally impossible only if the wronged spouse has died or has remarried. If the wronged spouse has not died or remarried, the one who deserted or was unfaithful must remain single or be reconciled to the wronged spouse (1 Corinthians 7:11).

Section D: Limits of the Policy

Godly and earnest believers may disagree concerning the question of divorce and remarriage. Some believe there are no scriptural grounds for divorce and remarriage. Still others believe that sexual infidelity is the only ground. As long as this policy is respected, those who hold these views may teach, serve and hold positions of responsibility in this church. Any teaching or practice that goes beyond the limits set forth will be considered heretical.

ARTICLE II: CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Section A: Purpose

1. The purpose of church discipline is to cause a fellow believer to repent of sin and be restored to full fellowship with Christ. Discipline is a vital part of the corrective ministry of the body of Christ.

2. Since God alone can change a person, abundant time must be given to allow for repentance to take place. Every effort will be made to exhort and encourage the sinning fellow believer to repent before taking the final steps of discipline.

Section B: Reasons for Church Discipline

1. The primary reasons for church discipline are persistence in sinning and resistance to repentance. Some Biblical examples are:

    a. Immorality (1 Corinthians 5:1–13)

    b. Doctrinal Heresy (Romans 16:17–18; 1 Timothy 6:3–5)

    c. Divisiveness (Titus 3:10–11; 2 Corinthians 12:20)

d. Refusal to be reconciled to another believer (Matthew 5:23–24; 18:15; 1 Corinthians 6:1–8)

2. Discipline does not focus on faults and defects of others nor is it to be applied to matters where Scripture allows freedom (Matthew 7:1–5; Romans 14; Galatians 5:13–15).

Section C: Goals of Church Discipline

1. To repent and to restore fellowship with God (Galatians 6:1)

2. To demonstrate the church body's love and concern for the sinning fellow believer (Galatians 6:1– 2; 2 John 1:5–6).

3. To restore fellowship between believers (Matthew 18:15; 1 Corinthians 6:1–8).

4. To preserve sound doctrine and godly behavior among believers (Galatians 5:9; Romans 16:17– 18; Titus 3:10–11; 1 Corinthians 5:6–8).

Section D: Steps in Church Discipline and Restoration

The first step occurs when a fellow believer sins. The one who notes it should talk to him alone. (Matthew 18:15) If the sinning fellow believer listens and agrees to confess the sin to God in an attitude of repentance (Luke. 17:3–4), then the matter is to be dropped.

The second step is taken only when the fellow believer refuses to heed the first step. The believer who first confronted him should take one or two others as witnesses and repeat the process (Matthew 18:16). Those who are spiritual and aware of their own capacity to be similarly tempted should be the ones taken (Galatians 5:22–23; 6:1). If the one who has sinned responds in repentance, the matter is to be dropped (Luke. 17:3–4).

The third step is taken when there is refusal to repent by reporting the matter to the church as represented by the elder board (Matthew 18:17). The elder board will review the issue. If lack of repentance is involved, the elder board will prayerfully exhort the offender to repent. This exhortation should be personally delivered where possible (to the offender). If personal contact is not permitted by the offender, a letter may be used.

If repentance occurs, the matter is to be terminated (Luke. 17:3–4).

If repentance is refused, the fourth step is for the elder board to inform the congregation that the offender is to be treated as an unbeliever (Matthew 18:17). Treating him as an unbeliever would not mean ceasing to speak to him. The congregation should continue to exhort him to repentance (2 Thessalonians 3:14–15). However, he would not be treated as a part of the church body (1 Corinthians 5:12–13). This would include not having meetings or meals for the purpose of fellowship with him (1 Corinthians 5:9–11).

The fifth step is to restore the sinning fellow believer to the full fellowship of the church when he repents and affirms this fact to the elder board (2 Corinthians 2:6–11). This affirmation will be announced by the elders to the congregation at a duly called meeting. The church should then affirm their love and forgiveness for the sinning fellow believer and receive him back into full fellowship.

Section E: Church Discipline Against an Elder (1 Timothy 5:19–20)

Discipline of an elder will follow the steps outlined above. In addition he is to be publicly rebuked in the presence of the congregation.

Section F: Incomplete Disciplinary Actions

1. If during the church discipline process the sinning believer leaves the church, the elder board will call a special congregational meeting to explain:

    a. That restoration efforts were attempted. The person will be named and the sin(s) will be named. (1 Timothy 1:18–20).

    b. That the person left the church. Just as a person who is disciplined by a local church (to the extent of being treated as an unbeliever) is delivered over to Satan (1 Corinthians 5:4–5), so when a person voluntarily leaves without repenting he delivers himself over to Satan.

2. No action beyond this will be taken by the elder board or the congregation in relation to incomplete discipline since the person has already removed himself. The church will be encouraged to continually urge him to repent as the opportunity arises (2 Thessalonians 3:14–15).

Section G: Meetings for Disciplinary and Restoration Purposes

When a meeting is needed for church discipline or restoration, it will be called as a special business meeting as outlined in Article VI, Section B of the Constitution, subheading 2. Special Business Meetings, page 15.