

**Amendments to Our Constitution
September 4, 2015**

i. Article of Incorporation - Article 2 - Registered office and Agent -

Address was updated to our current location

ii. Bylaws - Article 2 - Beliefs- G- The following was added:

1. including unborn babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death
2. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person. The term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as described in Scripture.

**ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION
OF
COVENANT COMMUNITY CHURCH of PEARLAND**

The articles of incorporation of Covenant Community Church of Pearland are as follows.

ARTICLE I - NAME

The name of this corporation is Covenant Community Church of Pearland (hereafter referred to as Covenant).

ARTICLE II - REGISTERED OFFICE AND AGENT

The registered office of this corporation is at 4106 West Pearland St, Ste B, Pearland, TX 77581. The registered agent of this corporation is Daniel Davis.

ARTICLE III - TERM

This corporation shall have perpetual existence until Christ's physical return to earth.
Come Lord Jesus!

ARTICLE IV - PURPOSES

- A. Covenant exists to glorify God by making disciples through planting and growing authentic Gospel community.
- B. We will seek to accomplish our vision through various ministries including but not limited to: gathering in communal worship services of celebration, administration of the Lord's Supper and Baptism, intimate prayer and discussion in community groups, in-depth study and discipleship of the radical life of a follower of Christ, counseling and support services, various community services, and other initiatives as deemed necessary by the governing body.
- C. The general purpose for which this corporation is formed is to operate exclusively for such religious, charitable, and educational purposes as will qualify it as an exempt

or such religious, charitable, and educational purposes as will qualify it as an exempt organization under section 501 (C) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 or corresponding provisions of any subsequent federal tax laws, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations which qualify as tax-exempt organizations under that code.

D. This corporation will not, as a substantial part of its activities, disseminate propaganda or otherwise attempt to influence legislation; nor shall it participate or intervene (by publication or distribution of any statements or otherwise) in any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

E. No part of the net earnings of this corporation will inure to the benefit of any individual or member.

ARTICLE V - MEMBERS

The members of this corporation will be those persons who are duly designated as elders and deacons of Covenant Community Church of Pearland, and such other persons as from time to time hereafter may become members in the manner provided in the by-laws.

ARTICLE VI - GOVERNING BODY

Jesus Christ is the Lord and head of this church and He rules primarily through the Scriptures.

The biblical offices in the church are elders (pastors) and deacons/deaconesses. Our ecclesiology is both elder-led and congregational. Elders will lead the congregation in the daily governance of the church. The church is also governed by the congregation in matters of church discipline, disputes, doctrine and membership.

ARTICLE VII - THE ANNUAL MEETING

A congregational meeting shall take place at least once per year.

ARTICLE VIII - BY-LAWS

The members of the corporation may adopt such by-laws for the conduct of its business and the carrying out of its purposes as it may deem necessary from time to time. By-laws must be approved by the consensus of the Elders and two-thirds (2/3) vote of the membership of the corporation. Fifty percent of the congregation shall be considered a quorum for changes to the by-laws.

ARTICLE IX - AMENDMENTS

These articles of incorporation may be amended by a consensus approval of the elders and a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the membership of the corporation. Fifty-percent of the congregation shall be considered a quorum for amendments.

ARTICLE X - DISSOLUTION

No person, firm or corporation shall ever receive any dividends or profits from the undertaking of this corporation and upon dissolution of this corporation all of its assets remaining after payment of all costs will go to causes furthering the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, in the evangelical tradition, which have qualified for exemption under Section 501 (C) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. None of the assets will be distributed to any member or officer of this corporation.

BY-LAWS OF COVENANT COMMUNITY CHURCH

ARTICLE I - NAME

This church will be known as Covenant Community Church of Pearland. This will be a non-profit corporation of the State of Texas. This church is autonomous and maintains the right to govern its own affairs, independent of denominational control. Recognizing, however, the universal communion of followers of Christ and the benefit of a wider association, this church will be affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention in its national, state, and local expressions. Covenant is also a member of the Acts 29 network and will cooperate and partner with them as well. Covenant may partner with other churches and networks whose partnership its leadership deems beneficial for the growth and spread of the Gospel.

ARTICLE II - BELIEFS

The doctrinal outlook of the corporation is reflected in the following statements:

A. WE BELIEVE GOD WROTE THE BIBLE THROUGH MEN WITHOUT ERROR. The Old and New Testaments, in their entirety, constitute the written Word of God and are without error in the original manuscripts. They were written by men, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, and are therefore fully authoritative in all matters for the follower of Christ.

B. WE BELIEVE THAT GOD EXISTS ETERNALLY IN TRINITY: FATHER, SON, AND HOLY SPIRIT. There is one God, infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, holiness, love, justice, goodness, and truth, eternally existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who desires that we should know Him intimately and live a life of fulfillment through the pursuit of His glory.

C. WE BELIEVE IN GOD THE FATHER, AN INFINITE, PERSONAL SPIRIT, PERFECT IN HOLINESS, WISDOM, POWER, AND LOVE. We believe that He infallibly and sovereignly knows all that shall come to pass, that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of men, that He hears and answers prayer, and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through Jesus Christ.

D. WE BELIEVE THAT JESUS CHRIST IS THE SECOND PERSON OF THE TRINITY WHO BECAME A MAN, LIVED A SINLESS LIFE, DIED ON A CROSS, WAS BURIED, ROSE BODILY FROM THE GRAVE TO REDEEM SINFUL HUMANITY AND IS CURRENTLY REIGNING AS KING OVER ALL CREATION. He is True God of True God, begotten, not made. Sent by the Father, He became human, conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the virgin Mary, and made His dwelling among us, living a full life without sin. His perfect life and death on the cross provide the only atonement that satisfies the righteous requirements of God for the sinner. The death of Jesus Christ fully and finally paid for sin, and was redemptive, substitutionary, and efficacious for all who believe. The historic fact of Jesus Christ's resurrection from the dead testifies powerfully to His deity, and is itself humanity's ultimate hope. Jesus Christ will make a personal and imminent return to the earth; this return is a sanctifying hope having vital bearing on the life of every Christian.

E. WE BELIEVE THAT THE HOLY SPIRIT IS THE SUPERNATURAL AGENT IN SALVATION, BAPTIZING ALL CHRISTIANS INTO THE UNIVERSAL CHURCH AT CONVERSION, INDWELLING AND SEALING THEM UNTIL THE DAY OF CHRIST'S RETURN. The Holy Spirit bears persuasive testimony to the realities of Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit is the personal, divine third member of the Godhead. He convicts the world of sin and its consequences; He brings repentance and faith to the believer; He indwells the believer with the radical life of Jesus Christ; He gives gifts to every believer for mutual service within the Body of Christ; He unites each believer in the Body of Christ and seals them in that relationship; He bears the fruit of Christian character in the lives of every believer; He guides, instructs, and empowers the believer for godly living and service. He is worshipped with the Father and

the Son, having been sent by them.

F. WE BELIEVE ALL HUMANS ARE SINFUL AND IN NEED OF SALVATION. SALVATION IS THE GIFT OF GOD BROUGHT TO HUMANS BY GRACE ALONE, AND RECEIVED BY PERSONAL FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. A TRUE CHRISTIAN WILL BE KEPT BY GOD'S POWER FOREVER. God has created every person in the image of God, but we have fallen into sin, and are therefore lost; only through the regeneration by the Holy Spirit can we obtain salvation and spiritual life. All humans are sinners and face the judgment of God. The shed blood of Jesus Christ and His resurrection provide the only ground for justification and only those who place faith in Jesus Christ and initiate a relationship with God on the basis of the work of Christ are delivered from the wrath of God toward sin required by His holy character. Those who receive Jesus Christ by faith are said by Holy Scripture to be justified, regenerated, redeemed, and adopted into the divine family as co-heirs with Christ of all the blessings of the Godhead. We proclaim that all persons must consciously repent of their sins and confess that Jesus Christ is Savior and Lord.

G. WE BELIEVE THAT GOD HAS CREATED ALL HUMANS IN HIS IMAGE. HE HAS CREATED THEM UNIQUELY FEMALE AND MALE. All humans are created in God's image; therefore all human life is sacred, including unborn babies, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death. In creating humans as male and female, God communicated His image in harmonious interpersonal relationships, equality of personhood and importance with distinction in role and authority. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person. The term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as described in Scripture.

H. WE BELIEVE THAT THE CHURCH IS A SPIRITUAL ORGANISM MADE UP OF ALL BELIEVERS EVERYWHERE FOR ALL TIME. All Christians in all times and in all places have been united into a single body by an operation of God. This resultant union is called the Body of Christ, the Universal Church.

I. WE BELIEVE IN THE AUTONOMY OF THE LOCAL CHURCH AND RECOGNIZE BELIEVER'S BAPTISM AND THE LORD'S SUPPER. Christ commanded that all Christians band together in assembly for instruction, worship, service, and fellowship. These assemblies are called local churches. As a local church, Covenant embraces the rich and vibrant traditions of the Universal Church. Only those who are members of the Universal Church shall be eligible for membership in the local church. Membership in the local church is essential to both the health of the believer and the local church body and is the context in which sanctification occurs. Baptism of believers by immersion and the Lord's Supper are the only two ordinances to be observed by the local church in the present age. These ordinances are not to be regarded as means of salvation. Still, they are vital to Christian holiness and piety.

J. WE BELIEVE THAT JESUS WILL RETURN TO EARTH TO JUDGE ALL PEOPLE AND TO RULE AND REIGN WITH HIS SAINTS FOREVER. All people will be resurrected to give account of their lives before God. The believer in Christ will be resurrected to everlasting blessedness and joy in the presence of God. The unbeliever will be resurrected to judgment and everlasting conscious punishment.

K. We hold these truths in humble conviction.

ARTICLE III – CORE VALUES

Covenant has three core values: Gospel, Community, and Mission. These give shape and purpose to everything we do. Supporting and informing these values is the Bible, God's perfect Word.

A. THE BIBLE: We believe that the Bible is the perfect and sufficient source of our Faith. The gospel is our central value, but without Scripture, we would not know the gospel. "These are the Scriptures that testify about me [Jesus]." John 5:39.

We commit to esteeming the Bible as a gift of God, given for our encouragement and protection. We commit to using the Bible as the primary source, influence, and tool in our exercise of community and mission. "All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work." 2 Timothy 3:16

B. THE GOSPEL: We believe the Gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ, changes everything. It is our central value from which all others flow. **We need to be rescued.** We have rebelled against God having chosen to live only for ourselves. For this we deserve death. **The Gospel saves us.** The Christian life is founded on and flows from the great news that Jesus Christ has come to this earth, lived among us perfectly, and died in our place. It is through his death that our sins have been paid for and we are made at peace with God. We are saved when we, through the power of God's Spirit, embrace Christ's work on our behalf and trust in him as Lord. It is the means of salvation and the means of growth as a Christian. "For I am not ashamed of the Gospel for it is the power of God for salvation for all who believe." Romans 1:16

We commit to responding to the gospel with humility, prayer, thanksgiving, and worship. We commit to living gospel-centered lives, lives that are always defined by God's grace toward us in Christ. We commit to relating to God, those within the church and those without the church through the lens of the gospel. "Therefore, as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving." Colossians 2:6-7

C. COMMUNITY: We believe the Gospel draws us into the eternal family of God and calls us to be in deep relationship with other believers based on our union in Christ. This community is marked by a sacrificing and redemptive love, which purifies her for Christ's coming and testifies to the world that the gospel is true. "I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me." John 17:20-21.

We commit to be a people of word and deed who seek gospel transformation for and within the church community. We commit to regarding our lives as not our own but to be spent in service to our brothers and sisters. "For you were called to freedom, brothers.

Only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another. For the whole law is fulfilled in one word: "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." Galatians 5:13-14.

D. MISSION: We believe the gospel calls the church to be a missional community, always pursuing disciple growth through the power of the Gospel, just as we were pursued by God through faithful Christians. "And Jesus came and said to them, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go 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 observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.'" Matthew 28:18-20.

We commit to living as ambassadors for Christ, seeking to expand His Church through church growth, church planting and church revitalization. We know Covenant is only one local expression of God's church and there are many other localities without this message. We commit to helping expand the Gospel's reach in our neighborhoods, in our city, and in the world. "As it is written, 'Those who have never been told of him will see, and those who have never heard will understand.'" Romans 15:21

ARTICLE IV – ELDERS

The senior leadership of Covenant Community Church shall be vested in a governing board of male elders/pastors, hereinafter referred to as the Council of Elders or the elders, which is composed of both paid and unpaid elders/pastors who follow the leading of Jesus, who is the Senior Pastor of Covenant (1 Peter 5:1-4).

A. QUALIFICATIONS: To be considered as an elder, a man must have been called by God into leadership at Covenant (Acts 20:28) and be a man of the highest Christian character according to the qualifications of Scripture (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

1. Relation to God

- a. A man – male, biblically masculine leader
- b. Above reproach – without any character defect
- c. Able to teach – effective Bible communicator
- d. Not a new convert – mature Christian

2. Relation to Family

- a. Husband of one wife – one-woman man, sexually pure (can be single)
- b. Pastor and Shepherd to his children (can be without children)
- c. Manages family well – provides for, leads, organizes, loves

3. Relation to Self

- a. Temperate – mentally and emotionally stable
- b. Self-controlled – disciplined life of sound decision-making
- c. Not given to drunkenness – without destructive addictions
- d. Not a lover of money – financially content and upright

4. Relation to Others

- a. Respectable – worth following and imitating
- b. Hospitable – welcomes strangers, especially non-Christians for evangelism
- c. Not violent – even-tempered
- d. Gentle – kind, gracious, loving
- e. Not contentious – peaceable, not quarrelsome/divisive
- f. Good reputation with outsiders – respected by non-Christians

Additionally, he must competently and consistently accomplish the biblical duties of an elder/pastor which include:

- 1. Praying and studying Scripture (Acts 6:4)
- 2. Leading the church (1 Timothy 5:17)
- 3. Managing the church (1 Timothy 3:4-5)
- 4. Caring for people in the church (1 Peter 5:2-5)
- 5. Giving account to God for the church (Hebrews 13:17)
- 6. Living an exemplary life (Hebrews 13:7)
- 7. Rightly using the authority God has given him (Acts 20:28)
- 8. Teaching the Bible correctly (Ephesians 4:11; 1 Timothy 3:2; 2 Timothy 2:15)
- 9. Preaching (1 Timothy 5:17)
- 10. Praying for the sick (James 5:13-15)
- 11. Teaching sound doctrine and refuting false teachings (Titus 1:9)
- 12. Working hard (1 Thessalonians 5:12)
- 13. Rightly using money and power (1 Peter 5:1-3)
- 14. Protecting the church from false teachers (Acts 20:17-31)
- 15. Disciplining unrepentant Christians (Matthew 18:15-17)

B. The Council of Elders determines the lead elder, who functions as the first among equals and is the lead pastor for the church. It is the duty of the lead elder to help lead the Council of Elders and the rest of the church in obeying God's leading as revealed in Scripture.

C. Selection as an elder pursuant to Article II below confers the authority to preach, marry, and enjoy all the rights and privileges accorded to licensed or ordained ministers under secular law.

D. No loan shall be made from the church to any elder. Any director who assents to the making of such a loan shall be jointly and severally liable for its repayment.

ARTICLE V – ELDER SELECTION

The process of becoming an elder/pastor involves at least the following steps:

1. He must be a member in good standing at Covenant who has demonstrated the calling, character, and competency of an elder.
2. He must make his desire to become an elder known to one of the elders and be interviewed by the lead elder for approval.
3. His nomination must be approved without objection from anyone on the Council of Elders.
4. If accepted as an elder nominee, the man will then undergo a period of training and testing.
5. Training, prior to becoming an elder, will include whatever is deemed necessary to enhance the nominee's understanding of an elder's responsibilities as outlined in Scripture.
6. Upon completing his training and testing process, the man must be approved by all elders without objection to be introduced to the church members as an official elder candidate.
7. If approved as an elder candidate, members of Covenant will be notified that he has met the criteria of an elder. Anyone in or out of the church having a concern regarding the man's qualifications to lead as an elder will have four weeks to notify the elders, who can investigate the matter to determine if there is any reason to disqualify the man.
8. Consensus approval from the elders and a congregational affirmation, indicated by a majority vote, are required prior to installation of an elder.
9. If there are no objections to his installation from any elder, the man will be installed by the laying on of hands, after which he shall be considered an ordained and licensed minister of the gospel.
10. Selection as an elder does not result in contract rights as an employee. All employees are "at will" and the employment relationship may be terminated without regard to such person continuing to serve as an elder.

ARTICLE VI – ELDER SERVICE

A. Once a man becomes an elder at Covenant it is expected that he will continue to serve as an elder indefinitely.

B. If the elders determine that an elder needs an extended Sabbath for a season because of a legitimate need (e.g., illness, tragedy), then that elder can transition to an inactive and non-voting elder for a set period of time as determined by the elders.

C. To resign from the Council of Elders, an elder must notify the Council of his decision in the form of a letter of resignation, which he will give to the lead elder, and which the lead elder will then distribute to the other elders.

D. An elder who senses God's call to leave Covenant to help plant a Covenant-sponsored church plant should make his desire known to the Council of Elders. If the elders confirm his calling, the elder will be sent out with blessing to help lead another church.

E. Any credible charge of moral impropriety, doctrinal error, or anything else that could displease the Lord or harm Covenant, made against an elder shall be investigated by a task force established by the elders. During the investigation, the elder in question shall not be allowed to vote on any church matters and shall be placed on temporary leave. If

not be allowed to vote on any church matters and shall be placed on temporary leave. If the elder task force finds credible evidence of wrongdoing, the elder in question shall be tried by the elders according to the criteria of Scripture (e.g., James 3:1; 1 Timothy 5:19–21). A three-fourths vote of the remaining elders is necessary in order to find an elder guilty of the charges. If such a verdict is rendered by the remaining elders, the consequences for such a finding shall be determined by the remaining elders, with any action (up to and including removal) requiring another three-fourths vote of the remaining elders. In such instance, the members of Covenant shall be notified in a member's meeting of the process and results.

ARTICLE VII – GOVERNANCE

The Council of Elders may structure and organize however they deem necessary for the sake of simplicity, clarity of communication, and efficiency of organization, according to the needs of the church and the size of the Council of Elders so long as it preserves the plurality of elders and the doctrinal and character requirements for elders articulated in this document.

ARTICLE VIII – DEACONS

A. **DESCRIPTION:** A Deacon is a lead servant in the ministry of our church. She/He works with her/his fellow Deacons in extending the overseeing ministry of the Elders into the physical needs of the people and property of the church and responsibilities of this body. Under the Elders' leadership, she/he is to care for and maintain the orderly administration of our fellowship in which God has placed her/him as a Deacon. Deacons are not in a position of authority in areas of teaching, correction, or rebuke.

B. **TERM:** Deacons may take sabbaticals from service as needed upon approval of the elders.

C. **QUALIFICATIONS:**

1. In accordance with the biblical requirements found in 1 Timothy 3, Deacons at Covenant must be respectable, sincere, temperate and trustworthy. They must not be greedy or drunkards. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience, and manage their families well. Deacons will be tested to ensure that their lives qualify them for the task of service.
2. The first Deacons in Acts 6:1-7 were "full of the Spirit and wisdom;" Covenant's Deacons must also demonstrate fullness of the Spirit and wisdom.

D. **OBLIGATIONS:**

1. To develop and meet regularly with ministry groups.
2. To meet specific designated needs in the congregation and broader community.
3. To provide encouragement and help to the Elders in their ministry.

E. **SELECTION:** The following procedure will be followed for adding members to the Deacon community.

1. The Church community should call to the elders' attention all who are excelling in building up the church body in service so that they may be recognized and considered for deacon candidacy.
2. The Council of Elders will first test these members according to the biblical qualifications outlined above for deacons. Those that meet those qualifications will be formally nominated by the Council of Elders.
3. Upon hearing the nominations, the church shall recognize, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections, men and women who are giving of themselves in service to the church, who possess gifts of ministry, and who are called to further service and care for the church's members.

- F. **TERMINATION:** The following are reasons for termination of service.
1. Resignation.
 2. Continued behavior which violates the biblical qualifications for the office (requires $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of elders).
 3. Continued agreement with doctrine which violates the doctrinal outlook of the church (requires $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of elders).

ARTICLE IX - MEETINGS OF THE COMMUNITY

ANNUAL MEETING: At the annual meeting of the community, the elders are required to submit a budget to the members of the corporation for approval. The elders may call other meetings of the congregation, as deemed necessary.

ARTICLE X - MEMBERSHIP IN THE CONGREGATION

- A. **MEMBERSHIP SHALL BE BASED UPON:**
1. A confession of personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior, and the testimony of believer's baptism. Other membership requirements (participation in membership classes, required interviews, etc) may be added as necessary as determined by the elders to maintain the health and purity of the congregation. Current requirements are detailed in the "Current Membership Requirements" document.
 2. An expressed desire to accept the responsibility of living a holy life, to participate actively in ministry, to give generously to Covenant Community Church, and to live an evangelistic lifestyle. As such they solemnly commit to covenant with Covenant Community Church to uphold its fundamental doctrines, to participate in its core passions, to pray for and fellowship with the believers in the church.
 3. A sympathy with and willingness to submit to the doctrinal outlook of the church.
 4. Agreement with and signature of the membership covenant.
- B. **VOTING:**
1. All members over the age of 16 shall have the right to vote in all matters coming before the congregation.
 2. All matters shall be determined by a majority vote unless otherwise specified by the constitution and by-laws.
- C. **DUAL MEMBERSHIP:** Any person who is currently a member of another church, yet through a temporary relocation has routinely been in attendance at Covenant Community Church, shall be encouraged to have dual membership status. This status shall facilitate proper watchcare and oversight while the person is under the care of Covenant Community Church.
- D. **TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP:** Members shall be removed from the roll for the following reasons:
1. Death.
 2. Transfer of membership to another church.
 3. Dismissal by Church Discipline as outlined below.
- E. **RESTORATION OF MEMBERS:** Members who are dismissed by the church community shall be restored by the church when the elders deem it appropriate and reinstated by the church community according to the spirit of 2 Corinthians 2:7-8.

ARTICLE XI – CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Application of church discipline shall be consistent with the biblical approach outlined in Matthew 18:15-18. As such, it is to be exercised against offenders who are members of Covenant. The elders oversee the disciplinary process in service to the church as described below.

A. **OFFENSES ADDRESSED:** General categories of offenses in Scripture that may result in church discipline include:

1. Divisiveness (Titus 3:9-11, Romans 16:17-18, Hebrews 13:17)
2. Scandalous immorality (1 Corinthians 5:9-11, 6:9-10, Exodus 20:12-17)
3. Rejecting doctrines of the Christian faith (1 Timothy 1:19-20, 6:3-5, 2 John 9-11)

B. **METHODS USED:** Matthew 18:15-16 outlines the approach to bring about reconciliation between individuals when offenses occur. If this is unsuccessful, then those who sought the offender's repentance may come to the Council of Elders. The Elders, in turn, are to follow the general procedures below to ensure order. Each of the four following steps represents a separate phase of church discipline; the time required for each depends upon the particular circumstances. Each step in the process below will be documented in writing and will include all pertinent information (e.g. history, proven offenses, expectations, actions taken). The Elders will not entertain anonymous accusations. Except in extreme cases, the person accused of sin has the right to face and answer his or her accusers. Any charges against an Elder must be supported by two or more witness (1 Timothy 5:19) as well as provided in writing.

1. **Investigation:** The elders are to conduct an investigation to determine if the accused is guilty of the charges. If the charges are proven false, then appropriate exhortation will be given to the parties so that reconciliation can occur. If the charges are proven (whether by confession or by witnesses), admonition is to be initiated.
2. **Admonition:** Admonition includes a description of the unacceptable behavior and what must replace it; a procedure for monitoring the behavior over a specified period of time, and a warning that public admonition (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15) or excommunication could follow if the behavior is not corrected. If satisfactory changes occur, the Elders may discontinue further monitoring. Other disciplinary measure, short of excommunication, may include limitation of ministry opportunities, and public admonition.
3. **Excommunication:** If admonition and monitoring fail in correcting the unacceptable behavior, excommunication will occur. This action excludes the offender from the privilege of participation in the public services of the church. He is thus excluded from the Lord's Table. He is also excluded from church social meals, gatherings, and recreational activities and is removed from the membership rolls. The church will be informed by the Elders of the reasons for this decision, and will explain the duty of all members relative to the offender. The Church will vote to affirm this decision and participate actively in the discipline of the offender. The excommunicated member is removed from fellowship (1 Corinthians 5:11-13) and treated as an unbeliever (Matthew 15:18). If the excommunicated member withdraws from any further involvement with the Elders and begins attending another church, the Elders are obliged to inform the new church of the offender's status.
4. **Restoration:** When the excommunicated person repents, restoration begins. Restoration is a process that restores an offender to the full privileges that were withdrawn during excommunication. This will only occur if the Elders are satisfied that full repentance is a reality. The church will then be informed of the excommunicated person's status and will then vote to reinstate him/her into full membership. If restoration is appropriate, the Elders will inform the church of the reasons for this decision and will explain the duty of all members relative to the restored person (2 Corinthians 2:5-11).

The methods described here also cover any and all disputes or claims arising from or related to church membership, doctrine, policy, practice, counseling, discipline, decisions, actions, or failures to act, including claims based on civil statute or for personal injury.

C. **WAIVER OF RIGHT TO LEGAL ACTION:** By joining this church, all members agree that the church shall provide the sole remedy for any disputes arising against the church.

that these methods shall provide the sole remedy for any dispute arising against the church and its agents, and they waive their right to file any legal action against the church in a civil court or agency.

ARTICLE XII – BIBLICAL COUNSELING

All Christians struggle with sin and the effect it has on our lives and our relationships (Romans 3:23, 7:7-25). Whenever a Christian is unable to overcome sinful attitudes or behaviors through private efforts, God desires that he seek assistance from other members, and especially from the Elders who have the responsibility of providing pastoral counseling and oversight (Romans 15:14, Galatians 6:1-2, Colossians 3:16, 2 Timothy 3:16-4:2, Hebrews 10:24-25, 13:17, James 5:16). Therefore, this church encourages and enjoins its members to make confession to and seek counsel from each other and especially from pastoral counselors.

A. PRINCIPLES OF COUNSELING:

Counseling at Covenant Community Church is based on scriptural principles rather than those of secular psychology or psychiatry. The counselors of this church are not trained or licensed as psychotherapists or mental health professionals, nor should they be expected to follow the methods of such specialists.

The counselors of Covenant Community Church seek to apply biblical principles to all aspects of life. If a member or regular attender of Covenant Community Church seeks help in legal, financial, medical, or other technical questions, the counselor will apply scripture to the matter to the best of his ability. The counselor will seek to cooperate with professional advisors and help members or regular attenders consider their advice in the light of relevant scriptural principles.

B. CONFIDENTIALITY IN COUNSELING:

Confidentiality is to be respected as much as possible; however, there are times when it is appropriate to reveal certain information to others. In particular, when the Elders of this church believe it is biblically necessary, they may disclose confidential information to appropriate people. Typical circumstances include:

1. When an counselor is uncertain about how to counsel a person about a particular problem and needs to seek advice from other Elders (Proverbs 11:14, 13:10, 15:22, 19:20, 20:18, Matthew 18:15-17).
2. When the person who disclosed the information, or any other person, is in imminent danger of serious harm unless others intervene (Proverbs 24:11-12).
3. When a person refuses to repent of sin and it becomes necessary to institute disciplinary proceedings (Matthew 18:15-20 and Constitution Article V) or seek the assistance of individuals or agencies outside this church (see Romans 3:1-5).
4. When required by law to report suspected child abuse or other illegal activity.

ARTICLE XIII - FISCAL YEAR

The fiscal year of the corporation shall be January 1 through December 31.

ARTICLE XIV – BUDGET

The budget may be amended in three ways: reallocation, adjustment for growth, and expansion.

1. Reallocation

- a. The budget may be amended by reallocation of funds from one account to another upon approval by the elders so long as the total change in funds does not exceed 5% of the annual budget. This change does not require congregational approval

congregational approval.

b. Elders must approve reallocation of funds by a majority vote by the elders.
c. Reallocation of funds which exceeds 5% of the annual budget requires both approval by the elders and a majority vote of the congregation. In this case, the amendment to the budget must be presented in writing to the congregation and approved by a majority vote at a members' meeting. 50% of the members shall be considered a quorum for this vote.

2. Adjustment for growth

a. The budget may be amended if giving exceeds the amount estimated in the annual budget. Adjustment for growth allows the elders to expand the budget so that what is given can be distributed to various budget items in proportion to the excess giving.

b. Elders must approve adjustment for growth by majority vote.

c. Adjustment for growth does not require congregational approval.

3. Expansion

a. The budget may be amended for the expansion of ministry need. This includes but is not limited to:

i. Expansion of a budget for a ministry that has grown in its need for resources.

ii. Addition of a new budget item, such as a new ministry or staff member.

b. Expansion for budget items less than 5% of the annual budget may be approved by a majority vote of the elders and does not require congregational approval.

c. Expansion for budget items greater than 5% of the annual budget may be approved by a majority vote of the elders and a majority vote of the congregation. In this case, the amendment to the budget must be presented in writing to the congregation and approved by a majority vote at a members' meeting. 50% of the members shall be considered a quorum for this vote.

ARTICLE XV – VOTING

A. OCCASIONS FOR CONGREGATIONAL VOTING: Congregational voting shall occur in the following instances:

1. Affirmation of the annual budget and significant changes in the budget exceeding 5% of the annual budget.

2. Affirmation of elder candidates for installation.

3. Affirmation of deacon candidates for installation.

4. Purchases of land and real estate.

5. Amendments to the constitution and by-laws.

B. QUORUM:

A quorum shall be necessary only in the case of the rejection of a budget, elder candidate, purchase of land or real estate. A quorum is not necessary for a vote of affirmation.

If a vote is taken resulting in the rejection of one of these items, an attendance record is to be taken. If the number of members present is less than 50% of all the membership, the elders are to communicate in writing to all members the result of the vote, and schedule within 45 days, a time for either:

1. A second vote on the same issue, with the goal to have a quorum present at that meeting.

2. A membership meeting to present an alternative (in the case of a budget).

C. CHURCH AFFIRMATIONS: The process for church affirmations shall be interpreted and carried out to fulfill the following principles:

1. Substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, shall be an integral part of the affirmation process.

2. Nominations shall be presented by the elders (pastors).
3. All candidates for church office shall be treated with the grace, kindness, and honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow members.
4. The affirmation process shall express that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration, which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.
5. Only members over the age of 16 are eligible to vote.

ARTICLE XVI – EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

The corporation will not discriminate in employment policies for reasons of race, color, religion, sex, or national origin except in those situations that are in clear disagreement with Scripture.

ARTICLE XVII - RULES OF ORDER

The current edition of *Standard Code of Parliamentary Procedure* by Alice Sturgis shall be the parliamentary authority for all matters of procedure not specifically covered by these by-laws.

ARTICLE XVIII - AMENDMENTS

The corporation may later amend, revise, add to, repeal or rescind these by-laws and/or adopt new by-laws at pleasure by a majority vote of all the members of the corporation at any meeting of the corporation, provided that notice of the proposed alteration, amendment, revision, addition, repeal, or rescision of the by-laws or adoption of new by-laws shall have been given at least thirty days preceding the meeting.

ARTICLE XIX - COMPENSATION

No compensation shall be paid to elders unless a resolution authorizing such remuneration shall have been adopted by the corporation before the services were rendered. The elders have the freedom to hire assistants or office staff without seeking congregational approval, but the congregation should be informed of such decisions. All staffing costs are reflected in the annual budget.

ARTICLE XX - INDEMNIFICATION

A. 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. The church shall purchase appropriate insurance to meet these potential liabilities.

B. 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.

