Connect Church
CONSTITUTION

Preamble

For the more certain preservation and security of the principles of our faith, and to the end that this body may be governed in an orderly manner consistent with the Bible and with the accepted tenets of the Southern Baptist denomination, we do declare and establish this Constitution.

Article I - Name

This gathering of the church shall be known as "Connect Church" of Laurel, MS.

Article II – Church Government and Policy

The government of this gathering of the Church is vested in the Elders, Leaders, and members who compose it and to whom they delegate certain responsibility. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body. The Church may cooperate in special projects with churches of other denominations upon the approval of the Lead Pastor.

Article III - Statement of Beliefs

We affirm the Holy Bible to be the inspired Word of God and ~~is~~ the basis for our belief and practice. This gathering of the church subscribes to the doctrinal statement of The Baptist Faith and Message as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2000.

Article IV - Mission of this Gathering of the Church

The ongoing mission of this gathering of the Church is to evangelize the lost, disciple the believer, worship the Lord, fellowship with one another, and minister to those in need.

Article V - Calendar

The fiscal year and activities calendar shall run from January 1 to December 31.

Article VI - Amendments

This Constitution may be amended by recommendation of the Lead Pastor and the Board of Elders. The recommendations shall be presented to the membership for a vote with at least 10 days' written and oral notice of the proposed amendments ~~proposed~~. Amendments to the Constitution must be approved by at least a three quarters (3/4) majority of the members present and voting at a regular or special called meeting.

BYLAWS

Article I - Membership

Section 1- Qualifications – The membership of this gathering of the Church shall consist of such persons who:
(1) publicly confess Jesus Christ to be their Savior and Lord, (2) after due examination by an official representative of the church as to their Christian experience, ~~(3) after completing a membership class~~ ~~(4)~~(3) have been baptized by immersion after salvation, ~~(5)~~ (4) are not living in open rebellious sin, ~~(6)~~ and (5) are ~~being~~ found committed to the church spiritually, physically, and monetarily.

(A) Spiritual commitment to the church is defined as agreeing with the doctrinal statement ~~to~~ of The Baptist Faith and Message as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2000.

(B) Physical commitment to the church is defined as ~~one that regularly attends~~ regular attendance of church services and meetings. Regular attendance is defined by the Elders.

(C) Monetary commitment to the church is defined as regular tithing and giving to the church.

Section 2 – Equal Vote as Members - All active members shall have an equal vote in decisions presented to the gathering of the church by the Board of Elders, Advisory Board, Leadership Development Team, or Deacons.

Section 3 –Active and Inactive Members - Members ~~that~~ who meet the qualifications for membership will be classified as ~~an~~ active members. Any time a member no longer meets the qualifications for membership, he or she will be classified as an inactive member. Whether a member is classified as active or inactive will be left solely to the discretion of the Elders or Advisory Board.

Section 4 – Termination - The termination of membership may be attained in the following manner:

(A) By death; or

(B) By removal from the roll upon notice of membership in a Church of another denomination ~~and/~~or upon request for a certificate of membership to unite with a Church of another denomination; or

(C) By letters of ~~termination~~ transfer to other churches of like order and faith; or

(D) By remaining on the inactive members list for two or more years; or

(E) By church discipline; or

(F) By resignation.

Section 5 - Church Discipline and Restoration

The threefold purpose of church discipline is

(1) to glorify God by maintaining purity in the local church (1 Corinthians 5:6),

(2) to edify believers by deterring sin (1 Timothy 5:20), and

(3) to promote the spiritual welfare of the believer by calling ~~them~~ him or her to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct (Galatians 6:1).

The discipline of members shall be a responsibility of the Elders in the event that a member is engaged in false doctrine or conduct of open rebellion that violates Scripture. The member shall be subject to church discipline, including the exclusion from membership in the gathering of the church according to Matthew 18:15-18; Galatians 6:1-5; and 1 Corinthians 5:1-13. He or she shall be removed from all roles and positions within the church. He or she shall be allowed to attend as long as his or her actions do not hinder the operations and ministry of the church. A hindrance leading to being trespassed from the property will be the sole discretion to the Elders. ~~Before such action is taken the matter shall be:~~ Before such action is taken, the matter shall proceed as follows:

(1) After reasonable notice which includes an explanation of the charges against the member, he or she will be brought before the Pastor and the Elders for a thorough investigation in accordance with the procedures prescribed by Scripture, including Matthew 18:15-18 and 1 Timothy 5:19. If there is found to be sufficient evidence of the member's heresy or misconduct, after he or she has been appropriately confronted in love, and if he or she has refused to repent, then

(2) The Pastor and the Elders shall inform the ~~Advisory Board~~ Deacons at a called or scheduled ~~leadership~~ meeting in order that they may call the individual to repentance. If the individual demonstrates repentance, then notice to that effect shall be given. If, however, the individual does not repent in response to this, then

(3) The Pastor, the Elders, and the ~~Advisory Board~~ Deacons shall inform the Advisory Board at a called meeting in order that this group may call the individual to repentance. If the individual demonstrates repentance, then notice to that effect shall be given. If, however, the individual does not repent in response to this group, then

(4) The member shall be excluded from membership of the church. He or she shall be removed from all roles and positions within the church. He or she shall be allowed to attend as long as his or her actions do not hinder the operations and ministry of the church. Determining whether a hindrance warrants issuing a trespass notice from the property shall be left to the sole discretion of the Elders.

(5) If the individual, after such exclusion, heeds the warning, demonstrates repentance, and requests reinstatement he or she shall be restored to all the rights, duties, privileges, and responsibilities of membership with the Elders' approval, after he or she has completed a time of restoration set by the Elders. ~~has enrolled in and completed a new member class~~.

The members of this church, and all other professing Christians who regularly attend or fellowship with this church, agree that there shall be no appeal to any court or arbiter because of the dismissal, exclusion, or the necessary public statements to the congregation at any stages of church discipline.

Section 6 - Voting Rights of Membership - Every active member shall have the right to vote on the following matters:

(1) Approval of the annual budget of the Church;
(2) ~~Election~~ Approval of Advisory Board members;
(3) ~~Election~~ Approval of Deacons;
(4) Approval of LDT members;
(5) Merger or dissolution of the Church;
(6) Acquisition of real property ~~which~~ that leads to indebtedness;
(7) The sale of land or buildings;

(8) ~~Call or removal~~ Calling ~~or removing of the Senior Pastor~~ of Elders by a three quarters (3/4) vote;
(9) Removing of Elders by a three quarters (3/4) vote;
(10) Amendments to the Constitution or Bylaws of the Church by a three quarters (3/4) vote; and
(11) Any other major event or decision as designated by the ~~Pastor,~~ Elders, ~~and/or~~ the Advisory Board, LDT, or Deacon Body.

Article II - Public Worship and Members Meeting

Section 1 – This body ~~will~~ shall seek to have at least one regular worship service to be held each week on Sunday. The time of the regular services may be changed or special services conducted by the consent of the ~~Pastor and/ or~~ Elders.

Section 2 - The Church may be called into conference for business on the first Tuesday of November.

Section 3 - Special conferences for business may be called at the request of the ~~Pastor and/or~~ Elders, or by at least a three quarters (3/4) majority of the members present at a regular worship service.

Notice of special meetings shall be given:
(1) by mail or electronic transmission to ~~each~~ active members at least two weeks (14 days) prior to such meeting; or
(2) by announcement at the regular Sunday morning services at least two weeks (14 days) prior to such meeting.

~~(3)~~
No business shall be transacted at a special business meeting except that for which ~~it~~ the meeting ~~is~~ was called.

Section 4 – Quorum and Rules of Procedure. Any members present at a regularly called business meeting ~~will~~ shall constitute a quorum. At a regularly called or specially called business meeting no business shall be transacted except that for which it is listed on the meetings agenda. ~~An agenda for the regularly called business meeting will be made available to the Elders and Advisory Board two weeks before the regularly called business meeting.~~

~~Forty (40%) percent of the active membership shall constitute a quorum for a special called business meeting~~. Members present at a special called business meeting shall constitute a quorum. ~~However, if a quorum is not achieved for any one meeting then a second meeting will take place within three weeks on the same matters. At the second meeting any number of members shall constitute a quorum.~~ An agenda for a business meeting will be made available the day of the business meeting.
In conducting the affairs of this gathering of the Church, the gathering shall be governed by parliamentary procedures set forth in the current edition of *Robert's Rules of Order (Revised Ed)* unless the Articles and Bylaws state otherwise. The mode of vote shall be determined by the Elders.

Article III - Church Officers

Section 1 - Officers Named - The officers of the Church shall be the ~~Lead Pastor,~~ Elders, Advisory Board, ~~Leadership~~ Ministry Staff ~~Team~~, Deacons, Leadership Development Team, Clerk, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary.

Section 2 – Lead Pastor – The Pastor is to lead the Elders, Advisory Board, Deacons, Leadership Development Team, and the church with a clear vision. ~~The Pastor,~~ Elders~~,~~ and Advisory Board will be considered the governing authority of this gathering of the church.

(A)The Lead Pastor will perform the usual duties of a Pastor. The Pastor shall seek to implement the vision God has given him for this gathering of the church.

(1) The Elders shall work alongside him as called men of God.
(2) The Pastor shall serve on all teams, committees, or leadership groups.
(3) All ministry staff, team leaders, committee heads, and church leaders shall be in submission to the authority of the Elders.
(4) The Deacons shall be in submission the authority of the ~~pastor and~~ Elders.

(B) The ~~Senior~~ Lead Pastor shall be called for an indefinite period. The pastoral relationship can only be terminated by a vote of a three quarters (3/4) majority of the membership present at a meeting called with two weeks' written notice in advance for this purpose. If the relationship is terminated ~~by a three quarters vote (3/4)~~, the pastor shall have full salary and benefits for three months from his last day as pastor unless termination is due to a proven or admitted criminal act. The Senior Pastor is at liberty to resign the care of the Church on giving thirty (30) days' notice of his intention. The

thirty-day period may be dispensed with by the mutual consent of the ~~Senior~~ Lead Pastor and Elders. The Lead Pastor shall serve until the relationship is terminated either by mutual consent or by the Pastor or Members. The relationship can be terminated by the Members if there is a three quarters (3/4) majority vote to do so. The pastor shall have in charge the welfare and oversight of the church.

(C) The Lead Pastor is to choose his successor with an ~~eighty~~ seventy-five percent ~~(80%)~~ (75%) vote of those voting in agreement. Election shall be by written ballot. His election shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least two week's public notice shall be given. If the ~~Senior~~ Lead Pastor does not choose a successor or ~~eighty percent (80%)~~ seventy-five percent of the church does not agree with the Pastor's choice, a ~~Senior~~ Lead Pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever this vacancy occurs. The Elders shall seek out a suitable Lead Pastor, and their recommendation will constitute a nomination. The Elders shall bring to the consideration of the church only one man at a time. Election shall be by written ballot, with an affirmative vote of ~~eighty percent (80%)~~ seventy-five percent (75%) of those present and voting being required to elect the ~~Senior~~ Lead Pastor. If the church has ~~less~~ fewer than three Elders the ~~Advisory Board~~ Leadership Development Team will be asked to help the Elders seek out a new pastor.

Qualifications for Lead Pastor

(1) Not living in open, rebellious sin
(2) Has a good reputation with believers and non-believers
(3) Faithful to his wife
(4) Not controlled by sin (drugs, alcohol, lust, and so on)
(5) Teachable (not prideful, not boastful, but selfless)
(6) Not a new believer
(7) Not a gossip
(8) Not greedy
(9) Cannot have a temper
(10) Must be able to teach
(11) Seeking to be godly
(12) Led by the Holy Spirit

Section 3 - Elders – Elders are all ordained male paid ~~ministerial~~ staff. The Elders are to assist in the governing of the church. Elders are any and all ordained male ministers that are hired by Connect Church. The Elders shall serve on all teams, committees, or

leadership groups. ~~Not all employees will be considered ministers, only those who are hired to help disciple the church.~~ ~~The Board of Elders have the sole authority to classify which jobs are ministerial and which are not~~. The ~~Pastor,~~ Elders and Advisory Board will be considered the governing authority of this gathering of the church. Elders shall be called for an indefinite period. ~~Elders can only be terminated by a vote of a three-quarters (3/4) majority of the Board of Elders~~ Elders can only be terminated by a vote of a three quarters (3/4) majority of the membership present at a meeting called with two weeks' written notice in advance for this purpose. If the relationship is terminated, ~~by a three quarters vote (3/4)~~ the Elder shall have full salary and benefits for three months from his last day on staff unless termination is due to a proven or admitted criminal act. The Elder is at liberty to resign on giving fourteen (14) days' notice of his intention. The Church shall have the right to dispense with his services without notice with three months' full salary and benefits.

Qualifications for Church leaders

(1) Not living in open, rebellious sin
(2) Has a good reputation with believers and non-believers
(3) Faithful to his wife
(4) Not controlled by sin (drugs, alcohol, lust, and so on)
(5) Teachable (not prideful, not boastful, but selfless)
(6) Not a new believer
(7) Not a gossip
(8) Not greedy
(9) Cannot have a temper
(10) Must be able to teach
(11) Seeking to be godly
(12) Led by the Holy Spirit

Section 4 – ~~Leadership Team~~ Ministry Staff – The ~~Leadership~~ Ministry Staff ~~Team~~ is any and all ministers not ordained that are hired by Connect Church. Not all employees will be considered ministers, only those who are hired to help disciple the church. The Elders have the sole authority to classify which jobs are ministerial and which are not. The Elders will have the responsibility to ~~hire, and~~ oversee these officers. The Elders are allowed to transfer this responsibility as ~~it~~ they feels ~~it is~~ necessary. These ministers will be given compensation. These ministry staff will be considered part of the ~~leadership team~~ Ministry Staff of this gathering of the church. A

detailed job description written by the Board of Elders and Leadership Development Team will be given to each Ministerial Staff.
~~Leadership Team~~ Ministry Staff members shall be called for an indefinite period. ~~Leadership Team~~ Ministry Staff members can only be terminated by a vote of a three quarters (3/4) majority of the Elders and ~~Advisory Board~~ Leadership Development Team. If the relationship is terminated by a three quarters vote (3/4) the ~~Church leader~~ Ministry Staff shall have full salary and benefits for three months from his or her last day on staff if terminated. The team member is at liberty to resign on giving fourteen (14) days' notice of his or her intention. The Church shall have the right to dispense with his or her services without notice with three months' full salary.
Qualifications for members of the Ministry Staff ~~Leadership Team~~

(1) Not living in open, rebellious sin
(2) Has a good reputation with believers and non-believers
(3) Faithful to his or her spouse
(4) Not controlled by sin (drugs, alcohol, lust, and so on)
(5) Teachable (not prideful, not boastful, but selfless)
(6) Not a new believer
(7) Not a gossip
(8) Not greedy
(9) Cannot have a temper
(10) Must be able to teach
(11) Seeking to be godly
(12) Led by the Holy Spirit

Section 5 – Advisory Board – The Advisory Board will be made up of the Treasurer and six men that are nominated by the Elders, selected by the Advisory Board, and approved the church. ~~selected by the Elders and voted on by the church and the Treasurer.~~ In their capacity as Trustees, members of the Advisory Board are the sole individuals authorized to execute legal paperwork, contracts, and instruments on behalf of the Church for any unbudgeted commitment, excluding checks. Such legal documents require the signatures of at least three (3) active Trustees to be valid.
For routine operational agreements covered by approved budget line items, signature authority is delegated to the Lead Pastor, Treasurer, designated Ministry Staff, or designated Ministry Leader.

Any agreement executed without proper signature authority or delegation shall be unauthorized, in violation of these Bylaws, and subject the unauthorized signatory to

disciplinary action and personal liability to the maximum extent permitted by law."

(1) Each man shall serve three years, with two elected each year.
(2) The Elders will nominate men to serve on the Advisory Board.
(3) The ~~church~~ Advisory Board will choose two men ~~by vote~~ from the list provided by the Elders to present to the Church.
(4) The church will approve these men by vote.
(5) The Advisory Board will assist the Elders in governing the church.
(6) The ~~Pastor,~~ Elders~~,~~ and Advisory Board will be considered the governing authority of this gathering of the church.

~~1. Prospective Board members will be recommended by the Elders.~~
~~2. The recommended members will be voted on by the members of Connect Church.~~

(7) Elected Board members will serve three years; or to fill an unexpired term.
(8) After serving a term of three (3) years, a board member shall be eligible for re-election only after the lapse of at least one (1) year.

Section 6 - Deacons - ~~There shall be at least one (1) deacon for every 15 families who shall be elected for a term of four (4) years. After serving a term of four (4) years, a deacon shall be eligible for re-election only after the lapse of at least one (1) year.~~ Deacons shall be elected for a life term. In the case of death or removal or incapacity to serve, or needs of the church the Church may elect ~~another~~ other deacons to serve. ~~to fill the un-expired term~~.

Deacons shall be elected based on the qualifications listed in Acts 6:1-7 and I Timothy 3:8-13. The election process ~~will begin each year no later than the first Sunday in May~~ will be as follows:

(1) Members of Connect will be advised in writing of Deacon qualifications and will be asked to begin to pray about whom they sense God is calling to serve the church as a Deacon.
(2) Members will be asked to submit names of prospective Deacons to the Elders.
(3) The Elders will screen prospective Deacons.
(4) Prospective Deacons will be interviewed by the Elders.
(5) Prospective Deacons will be interviewed by the current Deacons.

(6) ~~5.~~ Prospective Deacons will be voted on for recommendation by the Elders and Current Deacons.
(7) ~~6.~~ The recommended deacons will be voted on by the members of Connect Church.
(8) ~~7.~~ Deacon ordination will take place for any new deacon.

It shall be the duty of the Deacons to assist the ~~Pastor,~~ Elders~~,~~ and ~~Church~~ Ministry Staff ~~Leaders~~ in serving the members and prospective members of Connect Church. It shall be the duty of the Deacons to assist the Pastor in the administration of the ordinances. Deacons are called to serve. They are not called to oversee, govern, or advise in any way.

A deacon may be considered inactive for a period of time. During this period, no families shall be assigned to his care. He shall continue to attend meetings and participate in deacon-related events and activities. At the deacon's request, he may return to active status, at which time families may again be assigned to his care.

Section 7 Leadership Development Team

The Leadership Development Team (LDT) shall serve under the oversight and authority of the Elders to assist in developing, supporting, and evaluating the leadership of the church's ministries. The purpose of the LDT is to help ensure that every ministry is led by qualified, capable, and spiritually mature leaders who serve in accordance with the mission, vision, and policies of the church.

(1) Each member shall serve three years, with two members approved each year.
(2) The Elders will nominate men and women to serve on the Leadership Development Team.
(3) The Leadership Development Team shall choose two people (one man and one woman) to be presented to the church for approval.
(4) The church will vote to approve the candidates provided by the Leadership Development Team.
(5) After serving a term of three (3) years, a team member shall be eligible for re-election only after the lapse of at least one (1) year.

The Leadership Development Team shall carry out the following responsibilities:

A. Ministry Leadership
(1) Work with the Elders to define and revise volunteer ministry leadership positions as needed.
(2) Identify, recruit, recommend, and develop qualified individuals to serve in volunteer ministry leadership roles.
(3) Recommend the appointment or replacement of ministry leaders to the Elders as needed to promote the health and effectiveness of the church.
(4) They shall not micromanage ministry leaders

B. Leadership Evaluation
(1) Ensure that ministry leaders are serving in accordance with church policies and procedures.
(2) Verify that ministry leaders are working within their responsibilities outlined in their ministry role descriptions (job descriptions).

C. Ministry Coordination
(1) Maintain an organized ministry activity schedule to minimize scheduling conflicts.
(2) Define or clarify ministry scope and responsibilities when necessary in consultation with the Elders.

D. Church Calendar
(1) Maintain the official church calendar.
(2) Ensure that an accurate and current calendar is readily available to the church congregation.

E. Staff Search (Elders and Ministry Staff)
The Elders, after the approval of the candidate by the LDT, shall bring to the consideration of the church only one person at a time. Election shall be by written ballot, with an affirmative vote of seventy-five percent (75%) of those present and voting being required to elect the Elder or Ministry Staff. If the church has fewer than three Elders the Leadership Development Team will be asked to help the Elders seek out the new Elder or Ministry Staff.

For these positions the Elders will:

(1) Praying for God's wisdom and guidance throughout the search process.
(2) Identify and recruit qualified candidates.
(3) Conduct interviews and appropriate vetting of applicants.
(4) Present candidate to the LDT for approval.
(5) Present the approved candidate to the church for a vote.

Section 8 - Clerk - The Clerk shall keep a record of all actions taken during a business conference. The Clerk shall keep a register of the names of members, with dates of admission, dismissal, or death, and a record of baptisms. The Clerk shall issue letters of dismissal and file all communications and written official reports.

Section 9 - Treasurer - It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to receive all money placed in his or her hands and to pay all authorized bills. He or She shall keep a true and fair book of accounts and shall render upon request a statement of the Church's financial condition.

Section 10 - Financial Secretary - It shall be the duty of the financial secretary to assist the Treasurer in receiving funds and paying all authorized bills. He or She shall help keep a true and fair book of accounts and shall render upon request a statement of the Church's financial condition.

Article IV- Church Employees

~~The paid staff shall be under the supervision of the Lead Pastor or someone designated by the Lead Pastor. Any Staff such as worship leader, minister of students, sound crew, lighting crew, ect., shall be hired by the Elders and Advisory Board. Duties will be specified by the Elders and Advisory Board.~~

Section 1 - Elders Accountability

Elders shall be accountable to one another in conduct, work, action, behavior, and belief. The Elders will oversee all other paid staff.

Section 2 - Creation of New Staff

A new staff position may be proposed and established when the following conditions have been satisfied:

(A) The Elders and Leadership Development Team shall recognize a genuine ministry need that warrants the creation of a paid staff position.

(B) The Advisory Board shall determine that sufficient financial resources exist to support the position without jeopardizing the financial health of the Church.

(C) The proposed position shall involve responsibilities that are best fulfilled by a compensated staff member due to the level of experience, training, education, leadership, skill, availability, or responsibility required.

(D) The Advisory Board and the Leadership Development Team shall jointly recommend the creation of the position before it is presented to the Church for approval.

The following process shall be used when establishing a new staff position:

(1) A proposal may be submitted by an Elder, a member of the Advisory Board, or a member of the Leadership Development Team.
(2) The Advisory Board and Leadership Development Team shall jointly evaluate the ministry need, responsibilities, and overall feasibility of the proposed position.
(3) Upon mutual agreement, the Advisory Board and Leadership Development Team shall recommend the creation of the position to the Church.
(4) The Church shall vote on the creation of the new staff position.
(5) The Church shall vote to approve the employment of the recommended candidate.

Article V - Financial Plan and Fiscal Matters

Section 1 -Collections- There will be a collection ~~taken at~~ received during every regular service of the Church. No special collections shall be taken in a regular service of worship without the consent of the ~~Lead Pastor, Board of~~ Elders, Deacons, or Treasurer. The number and means of collections at special services shall be at the direction of the ~~Lead Pastor or~~ Board of Elders.

Section 2 - Budget – When an annual budget has been approved by the Church, it shall not be permissible to exceed the allotment for any category or to apply expenditures for one category to another category without the consent of ~~the~~ two-thirds (2/3) of the church.
The Advisory Board may approve unbudgeted expenses for property upkeep or emergencies, provided a majority of both the Advisory Board and the Elders agree. Individual expenses cannot exceed the annual discretionary limit established during the yearly budget approval.

Section 3 - Debts - No officer or member of the Church shall have the power to create a debt or other obligation for the church outside the budget except for such purposes and in such manner as shall be authorized to them by the church in ~~conference~~ a business meeting.

Section 4 - Designated Contributions. The Church may accept any designated contribution, grant, bequest or devise consistent with its general tax exempt purposes. As so limited, donor-designated contributions will be accepted for special funds, purposes or uses, and such designations generally will be honored. However, the Church shall reserve all right, title and interest in and to and control of such contributions, as well as full discretion as to the ultimate expenditure or distribution thereof in connection with any funds (including designated contributions) to assure that such funds will be used to carry out the Church's tax-exempt purposes.

(1)Acceptance Policy: The Church may accept donor-designated contributions, grants, bequests, or devises that align with its mission and tax-exempt purposes.

(2) Donor Intent: Specific designations for special funds, projects, or uses will generally be honored.

(3) Administrative Control: To comply with IRS regulations for tax-exempt organizations, the Church retains ultimate discretion, ownership, and control over all contributed funds to ensure they are used exclusively to carry out the Church's tax-exempt mission.

Section 5 - Budget and Audit. The Elders, with the help of ~~a Budget Committee made up of no more than three (3) church leaders~~ the Advisory Board shall prepare and submit to the Church for approval at the November Business Meeting an inclusive

budget, indicating by items the amount needed and sought for expenses. The Elders and the Advisory Board ~~Budget Committee~~ should conduct ~~and~~ or arrange for an annual review ~~and~~ or arrange for an audit ~~every three to five years~~ of a type and nature they deem appropriate.

Article VI - Addressing the Congregation

No stranger to the congregation should be allowed to speak to the congregation at any gathering including but not limited to worship service or business meetings, without the express permission from the ~~Lead Pastor or~~ Board of Elders. If there is no Lead Pastor, the Board of Elders must give its express permission to address the congregation.

Article VII - Biblical Counseling

All Christians struggle with sin and the effect it has on our lives and our relationships (see Rom. 3:23; 7:7-25). Whenever a Christian is unable to overcome sinful attitudes or behaviors through private efforts, God commands that ~~he~~ they should seek assistance from other members, and especially from the Pastor, who has the responsibility of providing pastoral counseling and oversight (Rom. 15:14; Gal. 6:1-2; Col. 3:16; 2 Tim. 3:16-4:2; Heb. 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 our pastoral counselors.

We believe the Bible provides thorough guidance and instruction for faith and life. Therefore, our counseling shall be based on scriptural principles rather than those of secular psychology or psychiatry. Neither the pastoral nor the lay counselors of this Church are trained or licensed as psychotherapists or mental health professionals, nor should they be expected to follow methods of such specialists.

Although some members of the Church work in professional fields outside the Church, when serving as pastoral or lay counselors within the Church they do not provide the same kind of professional advice and services that they do when they are hired in their professional capacities. Therefore, members who have significant legal, financial, medical or other technical questions should seek advice from independent professionals. Our pastoral and lay counselors shall be available to cooperate with such advisers and help members to consider their advice in the light of relevant scriptural principles.

Article VIII - Confidentiality

The Bible teaches that Christians should carefully guard any personal and private information that others reveal to them. Protecting confidences is a sign of Christian love and respect (see Matt. 7:12). It also discourages harmful gossip (Prov. 16:28; 26:20), invites confession (see Prov. 11:13; 28:13; James 5:16), and encourages people to seek needed counseling (see Prov. 10:19; Rom. 15:14). Since these goals are essential to the ministry of the gospel and the work of this Church, all members are expected to refrain from gossip and to respect the confidences of others. In particular, the Pastor, Ministerial Staff, Elders, Leaders, and Deacons shall carefully protect all information that they receive through pastoral counseling, subject to the following guidelines.

Although confidentiality is to be respected as much as possible, there are times when it is appropriate to reveal certain information to others. In particular, when the Pastor, Ministerial Staff, Elders, leaders, and Deacons of this Church believe it is biblically necessary or if anyone believes it is legally necessary, they may disclose confidential information to appropriate people in the following circumstances:

(1) When a Pastor, Ministerial Staff, Elder, Leader, or Deacon is uncertain of how to counsel a person about a particular problem and needs to seek advice from other Pastors, Ministerial Staff, Elders, or Deacons in this Church or, if the person attends another Church, from the Pastors, Ministerial Staff, Elders, or Deacons of that Church (see Prov. 11:14; 13:10; 15:22; 19:20; 20:18; Matt. 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 (see Prov. 24:11-12);

(3) When a person refuses to repent of sin and it becomes necessary to institute disciplinary proceedings (see Matt. 18:15-20 and Bylaws Article I, Section 5) or seek the assistance of individuals or agencies outside this Church (see, e.g., Rom. 13:1-5); or

(4) When required by law to report suspected child abuse.

Scripture commands that confidential information is to be shared with others only when a problem cannot be resolved through the efforts of a small group of people within the Church (Matt. 18:15-17). Therefore, except as provided in this Article, a Pastor, Ministerial Staff, Elder, leader, or Deacon may not disclose confidential information to anyone outside the Church without the approval of the Board of Elders or the consent of the person who originally disclosed the information unless legally obligated. The Board of Elders may approve such disclosure only when it finds that all internal efforts to resolve a problem have been exhausted (see, e.g., 1 Cor. 6:1-8) and

the problem ~~can~~ cannot be satisfactorily resolved without the assistance of individuals or agencies outside this Church (see, e.g. Rom. 13:1-5). The limitation shall apply to but is not limited to the giving of testimony in a court of law. ~~and the reporting of abuse.~~ Any and all abuse must be reported as is required by law.
The Pastor, Ministerial Staff, Elders, Leaders, and Deacons may, but need not, provide ~~counsel~~ counselees with written notice of these confidentiality provisions, but these provisions shall be in effect regardless of whether such notice is given.

Article IX – Marriage
We believe that God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.
We hold to the belief that the Bible teaches the term "marriage" has only one meaning. It is our religious belief that marriage was created and authorized by God for the joining together of one person born a biological man to one person born a biological woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture. We hold marriage in high regard because we believe Christian marriage is a representation of Christ's relationship to His church. The above definition of marriage stands at the core of our understanding of ecclesiology (the doctrine of the church).

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 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 conduct themselves accordingly.
We also 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 and the community, it is imperative that any and all property of the church be used in weddings that subscribe to this Statement on Marriage.

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. Confronting a person in compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity about a behavior or belief contrary to our understanding of the Bible is not considered hateful, but loving. We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

Article X – Real Property

Any and all real property and liquid funds will be held in the name of the church. If the church votes in favor of the dissolution of the church, all real property will be given to the Southern Baptist church a 501(c)(3) in Jones County with the highest weekly attendance according to the records of the Jones County Baptist Association.

Article XI - Amendments

These Bylaws may be amended by a ~~two-thirds (2/3)~~ three-quarters (3/4) vote majority vote at any business conference after the proposed change has been clearly presented in writing and the ~~written~~ notice of such a business conference and amendment has been given two weeks in advance.

The above Constitution and Bylaws were adopted on September 13, 2015 and amended in January 2017 by the members at a duly called meeting and that this Constitution and Bylaws are current and in operation as of that date.