

**The Bylaws of**  
**CHRIST'S COVENANT CHURCH, INC.**  
**Updated January 17, 2017**

CHRIST'S COVENANT CHURCH, INC.  
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## **PREAMBLE**

Since God has called us to assemble and organize as His church, we submit ourselves to the sacred Scriptures and the leadership of the church according to these *Bylaws*.

### **ARTICLE I** **Location of Offices**

The name of this Corporation is *Christ's Covenant Church, Inc.* It is an Indiana nonprofit Corporation with its principal offices in Winona Lake, IN, hereinafter referred to as "the Church." The Church shall continuously maintain a registered office and registered agent within the state of Indiana.

The principal office of the Church shall be located at such place as shall be determined by the Board of Elders. The Church may also have offices at such other places as the Board of Elders may from time to time determine and the business of the Church may require.

### **ARTICLE II** **Purpose**

The Church is organized and shall be operated as a nonprofit Corporation organized for exclusively religious, educational, and charitable purposes common to a local church ministry as defined by Scripture, and outlined in the Church's *Articles of Incorporation*. Our commission is summarized as follows: "*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 the 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). Therefore, the purpose of *Christ's Covenant Church* is:

- (1) To worship God the Father through the Lord Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit as a body of believers.
- (2) To gather together regularly to proclaim, promote and apply the gospel of Christ as revealed in the entirety of the Scriptures; to edify and exhort the people of Christ by prayer, praise, and the presenting and expounding of the Scriptures.
- (3) To exercise the functions which God has ordained in His Word for the edification and government of His people, for the furtherance of the faith and for the evangelization of the world.

No part of the net earnings of the Corporation shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributed to its members, elders, trustees, directors, officers or other private persons, except that the corporation shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of section 501(c)(3) purposes. No substantial part of the activities of the Corporation shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the Corporation shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf or in opposition to any candidate for public office. Notwithstanding any other provision of these Articles, the Corporation shall not carry on any other activity not permitted to be carried on (a) by a corporation exempt from Federal income tax under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code (or the corresponding section of any future Federal tax code) or (b) by a corporation,

contributions to which are deductible under section 170(c)(2) of the Internal Revenue Code (or corresponding section of any future Federal tax code).

### **ARTICLE III**

#### **Statements of Faith, Biblical Morality, and Christian Liberty**

##### **Section 1. *Statement of Faith***

The *Statement of Faith* affirms the Church's commitment to sound biblical doctrine and expresses the core beliefs to which it is committed. Christianity involves essential truths which are taught in Scripture, and which are meant to embody our faith and guide our practice. These truths—which reveal the nature, character, work and promises of God in the gospel—form the foundation of our faith and the center of our fellowship.

The following is a good summary of the beliefs we hold in common as a Church:

(a) *The Scriptures*

We accept the Bible, including the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament, as the written Word of God. The Bible is the only essential and infallible record of God's self-disclosure to mankind. It leads us to salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. Being given by God, the Scriptures are both fully and verbally inspired by God. Therefore, as originally given, the Bible is free of error in all it teaches. Each book is to be interpreted according to its context and purpose and in reverent obedience to the Lord who speaks through it in living power. All believers are exhorted to study the Scriptures and diligently apply them to their lives. The Scriptures are the authoritative and normative rule and guide of all Christian life, practice, and doctrine. They are totally sufficient and must not be added to, superseded, or changed by later tradition, extra-biblical revelation, or worldly wisdom. Every doctrinal formulation, whether of creed, confession, or theology, must be put to the test of the full counsel of God in Holy Scripture. (Deuteronomy 6:1-9; 18:15-22; Psalm 19, 119; Matthew 5:17-18; Luke 24:25-27, 24:44-49; John 5:39; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 2:14-16; 2 Corinthians 3:12-18; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; James 1:19-21; 1 Peter 1:10-12; 2 Peter 1:3, 1:19-21, 3:15-16; Revelation 22:18-19)

(b) *God is triune*

There is one God: infinite, eternal, almighty, and perfect in holiness, truth, and love. In the unity of the godhead there are three persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, co-existent, co-equal, co-eternal. The Father is not the Son and the Son is not the Holy Spirit, yet each is truly Deity. One God—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—is the foundation of Christian faith and life. (Genesis 1:2, 26; 3:22; 11:7; Psalm 2; 110:1; Isaiah 6:8; 45:5-6; 63:10; Matthew 28:18-20; John 1:1-18; 3:16-21; 14:26; 17:24; Acts 1:1-11; Romans 8:27-39; 1 Corinthians 12:4-6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Ephesians 1:3-14; 4:4-6; Colossians 1:11-20; Hebrews 7:25; 1 Peter 1:2; 1 John 2:1; Jude 20-21; Revelation 5)

(c) *God the Father*

God the Father is the Creator of heaven and earth. By his Word and for his glory, he freely and supernaturally created the world from nothing. Through the same Word he daily sustains all his creatures. He rules over all and is the only Sovereign. His plans and purposes cannot be thwarted. He is faithful to every promise, works all things together for good to those who love him, and in his unfathomable grace gave his Son, Jesus Christ, for mankind's redemption. He made man for fellowship with himself, and intended that all creation should live to the praise of his glory. (Exodus 4:22-23; Isaiah 45:5-6; 46:10; Hosea 1:11; Matthew 3:13-17; 6:9-10; 17:1-13; John 6:44; 17:1-26; 1 Corinthians 15:28; Ephesians 1:3-14; 3:14-15; Colossians 1:12; James 1:13; 1 Peter 1:2)

(d) *Jesus Christ*

Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, was the eternal Word made flesh, supernaturally conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary. He was perfect in nature, teaching, and obedience. He is fully God and fully man. He was always with God and is God. Through him all things came into being and were created. He was before all things and in him all things hold together by the word of his power. He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation, and in him dwells the fullness of the godhead bodily. He is the only Savior for the sins of the world, having shed his blood and died a vicarious death on Calvary's cross. By his death in our place, he revealed the divine love and upheld divine justice, removing our guilt and reconciling us to God. Having redeemed us from sin, the third day he rose bodily from the grave, victorious over death and the powers of darkness, and for a period of 40 days appeared to more than 500 witnesses, performing many convincing proofs of his resurrection. He ascended into heaven where, at God's right hand, he intercedes for his people and rules as Lord over all. He is the Head of his body, the Church, and should be adored, loved, served, and obeyed by all. (Genesis 3:15; 22:1-18; Psalm 2; Isaiah 11:1-2; 52:13-53:12; Mark 10:45; Luke 4:1-2; John 1:1-18; 3:16-21; 6:44; 14:25-26; 15:26; 17:1-26; Acts 1:1-11; 1Corinthians 15; Ephesians 1:3-14, 20-23; Philippians 2:1-11; Colossians 1:15-23; Hebrews 1:1-14; 4:14-5:10; 9:11-10:18; 1Peter 1:18-21; Revelation 1:9-20; 5:1-14; 7:9-17; 19:1-21; 20:11-22:21)

(e) *The Holy Spirit*

The Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. Through the proclamation of the gospel he persuades men to repent of their sins and confess Jesus as Lord. By the same Spirit a person is led to trust in divine mercy. The Holy Spirit unites believers to Jesus Christ in faith, brings about the new birth, and dwells within the regenerate. The Holy Spirit has come to glorify the Son, who in turn came to glorify the Father. He will lead the Church into a right understanding and rich application of the truth of God's Word. He is to be respected, honored, and worshiped as God the Third Person of the Trinity. (Genesis 1:2; Isaiah 11:1-2; Ezekiel 36:26-27; 37:1-14; Joel 2; Matthew 3:16-17; 4:1; Luke 24:46-49; John 3: 1-15; 14:24-26; 15:26; 16:12-14; Acts 1:1-11; 10:38; Romans 8:1-39; 1Corinthians 12-14; Galatians 5: 16-25; Ephesians 1:3-14; 3:14-21; 5:18; 1Peter 1:10-12; 2Peter 1:20-21; 1John 4:1-3)

(f) *Man*

God made man—male and female—in his own image, as the crown of creation, that man might have fellowship with him. Tempted by Satan, man rebelled against God. Being estranged from his Maker, yet responsible to him, he became subject to divine wrath, inwardly depraved and, apart from a special work of grace, utterly incapable of returning to God. This depravity is radical and pervasive. It extends to his mind, will, and affections. Unregenerate man lives under the dominion of sin and Satan. He is at enmity with God, hostile toward God, and hateful of God. Fallen, sinful people, whatever their character or attainments, are lost and without hope apart from salvation in Christ. (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:6-7, 16-24; 6:5; Exodus 20:1-21; Judges 21:25; Psalm 51:1-4; 143:2; Isaiah 43:7; Isaiah 64:6; John 3:1-18; Romans 1:18-23; 3:9-20; 5:18-19; 6:16-23; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 2:1-10; Colossians 3:1-11; James 1:13-15; 3:1-12; 4:1-12; 1John 1:8-10; Revelation 20:11-15)

(g) *The gospel*

Jesus Christ is the gospel. The good news is revealed in his birth, life, death, resurrection, and ascension. Christ's crucifixion is the heart of the gospel, his resurrection is the power of the gospel, and his ascension is the glory of the gospel. Christ's death is a substitutionary and propitiatory sacrifice to God for our sins. It satisfies the demands of God's holy justice and appeases his holy wrath. It also demonstrates his mysterious love and reveals his amazing grace.

Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man. There is no other name by which men must be saved. At the heart of all sound doctrine is the cross of Jesus Christ and the infinite privilege that redeemed sinners have of glorifying God because of what he has accomplished. Therefore, we want all that takes place in our hearts, churches, and ministries to proceed from and be related to the cross. (Genesis 3:15; Deuteronomy 30:1-10; Zephaniah 3:17-18; Luke 23-24; John 3:16-21; 5:19-46; 10:1-18; 14:6; 20:30-31; Romans 1:16-18; 3:21-26; 5:1-21; 6:1-23; 8:1-39; 9:1-29; 10:9-10; 1Corinthians 15:1-28, 50-58; 2Corinthians 3:12-5:21; Galatians 3:13; Ephesians 1:3-14; 2:1-10; Philippians 2:5-11; 1Timothy 1:12-17; 2:5; 3:14-16; 2Timothy 1:3-18; Hebrews 9; Jude 24-25; Revelation 19-22)

(h) *Man's response to the gospel*

Man's response to the gospel is rooted and grounded in the free and unconditional election of God for his own pleasure and glory. It is also true that the message of the gospel is only effectual to those who genuinely repent of their sins and, by God's grace, put saving faith in Christ. This gospel of grace is to be sincerely preached to all men in all nations. Biblical repentance is characterized by a changed life, and saving faith is evidenced by kingdom service or works. While neither repentance nor works save, unless a person is willing to deny himself, pick up his cross, and follow Christ, he cannot become his disciple. (Deuteronomy 30:1-10; Isaiah 55:6-7; Matthew 11:28-29; Luke 9:23-27; 13:1-5; 24:46-47; Mark 1:15; John 3:16-21; 5:19-46; 10:1-18; 15:17; Acts 2:37-38; 3:19; 5:31; 17:30; 20:21; Romans 2:4; 3:21-26; 5:1-21; 6:1-23; 8:1-39; 10:9-10; 2Corinthians 7:10; Galatians 2:20; 5:16-25; Colossians 3:1-17; Hebrews 6:1; 1John 1:1-10; 2:7-15; 3:11-4:6; 5:1-21; Revelation 3:19; 5:6-14; 19:1-10)

(i) *Man's inheritance through the gospel*

Salvation, the free gift of God, is provided by grace alone, through faith alone, because of Christ alone, for the glory of God alone. Anyone turning from sin in repentance and looking to Christ and his substitutionary death receives the gift of eternal life and is declared righteous by God as a free gift. The righteousness of Christ is imputed to him. He is justified and fully accepted by God. Through Christ's atonement for sin an individual is reconciled to God as Father and becomes his child. The believer is forgiven the debt of his sin and, via the miracle of regeneration, liberated from the law of sin and death into the freedom of God's Spirit. (Matthew 25:31-46; John 3:16-21; 5:39-40; 11:17-27; 14:1-31; 20:30-31; Romans 3:21-26; 5:1-11; 8:1-39; 1Corinthians 15; 2Corinthians 5:11-21; Galatians 4:1-7; 5:1-25; Ephesians 1:3-23; 2:1-10; Colossians 1:3-14; 2:6-15; 3:18-24; Philippians 3:12-4:1; 1Thessalonians 1:2-10; Hebrews 4:11-5:10; 10:19-25; 1Peter 1:3-12; 1John 2:28-3:24)

(j) *Sanctification*

The Holy Spirit is the active agent in our sanctification and seeks to produce his fruit in us as our minds are renewed and we are conformed to the image of Christ. Though indwelling sin remains a reality, as we are led by the Spirit we grow in the knowledge of the Lord, freely keeping his commandments and endeavoring to so live in the world that all people may see our good works and glorify our Father who is in heaven. All believers are exhorted to persevere in the faith, knowing they will have to give an account to God for their every thought, word, and deed. The spiritual disciplines, especially Bible study, prayer, worship and confession, are a vital means of grace in this regard. Nevertheless, the believer's ultimate confidence to persevere is based in the sure promise of God to preserve his people until the end, which is most certain. (John 15:1-17; 17:17; Romans 6:1-14; 12:1-2; 1Corinthians 2:1-16; 13:1-13; 15:50-58; 2Corinthians 3:12-4:17; 5:11-21; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 3:14-21; 4:15-24; 5:1-33; Philippians 1:3-11; 1:27-2:18; 3:12-4:1; Colossians 1:3-14; 1:24-2:5; 3:1-17; 1Thessalonians 1:2-10; 4:1-12; 2Thessalonians 2:13-17; Titus 2:11-14; 3:1-11;

Hebrews 12:1-11; 13:20-21; James 1:2-4; 4:1-12; 5:7-11; 1Peter 1:22-25; 2Peter 1:3-15; 1John 3:2-3; Jude 24-25; Revelation 21:1-8)

(k) *Empowered by the Spirit*

In addition to effecting regeneration and sanctification, the Holy Spirit also empowers believers for Christian witness and service. While all genuine believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at conversion, the New Testament indicates the importance of an ongoing, empowering work of the Spirit subsequent to conversion as well. Being indwelt by the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit are theologically distinct experiences. The Holy Spirit desires to fill each believer continually with increased power for Christian life and witness, and imparts his supernatural gifts for the edification of the Body and for various works of ministry in the world. All the gifts of the Holy Spirit at work in the church of the first century are available today, are vital for the mission of the church, and are to be earnestly desired and practiced. (Ezekiel 36:26-27; 37:1-14; Joel 2:28-32; Luke 24:49; John 3:1-15; 6:44, 63; 14:15-31; 16:4-15; Acts 1:1-8; 2:1-47; 21:1-11; Romans 12:6-8; 1Corinthians 12-14; 2Corinthians 3:12-4:17; Ephesians 1:13-14; 2:20-22; 3:14-21; 6:10-20; 1Thessalonians 5:19-21; 1Timothy 4:14; 2Timothy 1:3-18; 1Peter 1:2; 2:1-12; 4:1-11; 1John 4:1-6; Jude 17-25)

(l) *The Church*

God by his Word and Spirit creates the Church, calling sinful men out of the whole human race into the fellowship of Christ's Body. By the same Word and Spirit, he guides and preserves that new redeemed humanity. The Church is not a religious institution or denomination. Rather, the Church universal is made up of those who have become genuine followers of Jesus Christ and have personally appropriated the gospel. The Church exists to worship and glorify God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It also exists to serve him by faithfully doing his will in the earth. This involves a commitment to see the gospel preached and churches planted in all the world for a testimony. The ultimate mission of the Church is the making of disciples through the preaching of the gospel. When God transforms human nature, this then becomes the chief means of society's transformation. Upon conversion, newly redeemed men and women are added to a local church, in which they devote themselves to teaching, fellowship, the Lord's Supper, and prayer.

All members of the Church universal are to be a vital and committed part of a local church. In this context they are called to walk out the New Covenant as the people of God, and demonstrate the reality of the kingdom of God. The ascended Christ has given gift ministries to the church (including apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers) for the equipping of Christ's body that it might mature and grow. Through the gift ministries, all members of the Church are to be nurtured and equipped for the work of ministry. Women play a vital role in the life of the church, but in keeping with God's created design they are not permitted "to teach or to exercise authority over a man" (1 Timothy 2:12 ESV). Leadership in the church is male. In the context of the local church, God's people receive pastoral care and leadership and the opportunity to employ their God-given gifts in his service in relation to one another and to the world. (Deuteronomy 4:10; Matthew 18:15-20; 28:18-20; John 10:16; 17:21; Romans 16:5; Acts 2:1-13; 2:42-47; 20:28; 1Corinthians 1:2, 10; 12:28; 16:19; 2Corinthians 1:1; 6:14-17; Ephesians 1:12, 22-23; 2:14-22; 3:6; 4:12-16; 5:16-32; Philippians 1:27-2:18; Colossians 1:28; 2:19; 3:16; 4:2-6; 1Timothy 3:15; 2Timothy 2:19; Hebrews 3:3-6, 12-14; 10:19-25; 11:4-32; 12:23; 1Peter 2:4-8; 3:15)

(m) *Ordinances of the Church*

Baptism: Water baptism is intended only for the individual who has received the saving benefits of Christ's atoning work and become his disciple. Therefore, in obedience to Christ's command and as a testimony to God, the Church, oneself, and the world, a believer should be immersed in

water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Water baptism is a visual demonstration of a person's union with Christ in the likeness of his death and resurrection. It signifies that his former way of life has been put to death, and vividly depicts a person's release from the mastery of sin.

**The Lord's Supper:** The Lord's Supper is to be observed only by those who have become genuine followers of Christ. This ordinance symbolizes the breaking of Christ's body and the shedding of his blood on our behalf, and is to be observed repeatedly throughout the Christian life as a sign of continued participation in the atoning benefits of Christ's death. As we partake of the Lord's Supper with an attitude of faith and self-examination, we remember and proclaim the death of Christ, receive spiritual nourishment for our souls, and signify our unity with other members of Christ's body. (Exodus 24:9-11; Deuteronomy 14:23, 26; Matthew 5:23-24; 26:26-29; 28:18-20; Mark 1:5, 10; 16:16; Luke 22:20; John 6:41, 53-57; Acts 2:41; 8:12, 36; 10:47-48; 22:16; Romans 6:1-11; 1Corinthians 10:17; 11:20-30; 14:26; Galatians 3:27; Colossians 2:11-12; Titus 3:5; Hebrews 9:10; 1Peter 3:21; Revelation 19:9)

(n) *The Consummation*

The Consummation of all things includes the visible, personal and glorious return of Jesus Christ, the resurrection of the dead and the translation of those alive in Christ, the judgment of the just and the unjust, and the fulfillment of Christ's kingdom in the new heavens and the new earth. In the Consummation, Satan with his hosts and all those outside Christ are finally separated from the benevolent presence of God, enduring eternal punishment, but the righteous, in glorious bodies, shall live and reign with him forever. Married to Christ as his Bride, the Church will be in the presence of God forever, serving him and giving him unending praise and glory. Then shall the eager expectation of creation be fulfilled and the whole earth shall proclaim the glory of God who makes all things new. (Ecclesiastes 12:14; Psalm 16:11; 27:4; 73:25-26; Isaiah 43:25; 65:17; 66:22; Matthew 24:3-14, 29-51; 25:21-36; Mark 9:43-48; 13:10, 32-33; Luke 12:2-3; 12:40; 21:25-27; John 5:24-27; 14:2-3; Acts 1:11; 7:55-56; 10:42; Romans 2:5-7; 8:19-21; 11:25-26; 14:10-12; 1Corinthians 3:12-15; 4:5; 15:1-58; 16:22; Philippians 3:12-20; Colossians 3:25; 1Thessalonians 4:16; 5:2; 2Thessalonians 2:1-10; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 1:11-12; 8:12; 9:28; 12:26-27; James 5:8; 1Peter 1:17; 2Peter 3:10-13; 1John 3:2-3; 5:19; Revelation 1:7; 11:18; 19:1-2; 20:1-15; 21:1-22:20)

## **Section 2. Statement of Biblical Morality**

Individual Christians—and the Church as a whole—are called to “not be conformed to this world but be transformed by the renewing of our mind” (Romans 12:1-2). Even when it comes to issues that are controversial in our culture (e.g. sanctity of life, divorce, sexuality, marriage, etc.), Christians are to live their lives—both personally and corporately—in a way that aligns with biblical teaching and standards of morality. It is essential that the church speak to the changing legal and moral context of our society with clear conviction and steady voice. Toward that end, we affirm the following:

- (a) *Sexuality and Marriage:* In light of current cultural erosion of sexual morality, it is essential that the church stand firm on the Bible's teachings about sexual identity and purity. The holy institution of marriage is to be between one man and one woman for life, as established in God's creation of man and woman in His image, and in the relationship between Christ and His Church. By “man” and “woman,” we are referring to an individual's God-given gender as male or female based on his/her genetic and biological make-up at birth. Sexual chastity before, and lifelong fidelity in, a heterosexual marriage embody an abiding divine law which is to guide the faith and life of every Christian and the teachings of this church. Sexual chastity includes abstinence from pornography, adultery, homosexuality, and pre-marital sex; indeed any sexual activity outside of a one man and one woman covenanted marriage relationship. While sexual sin is uniquely serious

before God, we affirm the love of God for all who are guilty of sexual sin in any of its forms, and offer the gospel and grace of God to all who will repent of such sins and turn in faith to Christ for their forgiveness and deliverance. (Genesis 1:26-28, 2:18-25; Matthew 5:27-30, 19:3-9; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20; Ephesians 5:22-33)

- (b) *Sanctity of Life*: The Scriptures teach that human life, which is made in the image of God, begins at conception. This infuses sanctity into all human life from conception to death. This sacredness must afford to the unborn, and to the weak in body or mind of any age, all the rights and protections granted to all other human beings. It is the duty of every Christian to speak for and defend such rights in every way he or she is able. Consistent with the value of human life, which is made in God's image, all people, including those guilty of capital crimes, should be treated with dignity. (Genesis 1:26-27, 9:6; Psalm 72:1-4, 139:13-16; Jeremiah 1:4-5; James 1:27)

### **Section 3.** *Statement of Christian Liberty*

If God has not condemned or forbidden a practice in His Word, a Christian may be at liberty to participate in it. The exercise of Christian liberty, however, must at all times be governed by an earnest desire to walk in the fear of God and glorify Him in all things (1 Peter 1:17, 1 Corinthians 10:31), a loving regard for the conscience of the weaker Christians (1 Corinthians 8:9, Romans 15:1-3), a compassion for the lost (1 Corinthians 9:19-22), and a zealous regard for the health of one's own soul (Romans 13:14, 1 Peter 2:16).

## **ARTICLE IV** **Association of Churches**

### **Section 1.** *Affiliation*

*Christ's Covenant Church* recognizes that local church embodiment is part of the global Church and, as such, values relationships among local churches. Further, *Christ's Covenant Church* affirms the value of healthy relationships with an association of churches with shared theological beliefs, a common sense of mission, and mutual accountability--for the purpose of fellowship, equipping, counsel, accountability, and missional activities. *Christ's Covenant Church* is currently associated with a group of churches known as Sovereign Grace Churches. This association in no way compromises the Church's integrity as an authentic church in and of itself, nor does it remove its right and responsibility of self-governance.

### **Section 2.** *Joining an Association*

Because of the unique and important relationship of a church to an association of churches, deciding to join an association of churches should be done carefully and with conscientious attention to the observations, concerns, and input of the flock. The process for formal association with a group of churches shall include: (1) due consideration of the association's theological beliefs and doctrine; (2) thorough evaluation of the association's understanding and expression of the purpose and mission of the universal Church; (3) due consideration of the character and competency of the association; (4) public presentation of the association to the congregation followed by a period of time, during which any congregational concerns, questions and/or commendations regarding the association may be received; (5) full processing of all congregational input regarding the association; (6) formal decision by a vote of the full Board of Elders by a (75%) supermajority at a regular, or duly called, special meeting; (7) Eldership presentation of the decision to the congregation at a regular or special called meeting.

### **Section 3. *Withdrawal from an Association***

Separation of the Church from an association of churches should not be taken lightly or unadvisedly--but soberly, carefully, and only in light of strong reasons of conscience or compatibility, and even then, only after earnest efforts have been made to preserve unity in the Spirit. There may arise a time in which the church, for reason of a change of doctrine or other unforeseen reasons, can no longer in good faith continue to be part of an association to which it has been joined. Prior to any formal decision to withdraw from an association, the Elders should present their concerns and current thinking about the association to the congregation, inviting them to provide feedback that could be helpful in determining the nature of the associational relationship moving forward. Should the Board of Elders determine that the church must withdraw from an association, it shall do so in full compliance with the guidelines stipulated by that association, as agreed upon by the Elders at the time of joining said association. The Elders may approve such separation by a 75% supermajority decision of the full Board of Elders at any regular Board meeting, or at a special meeting convened for that purpose. The Eldership shall then notify the congregation of the withdrawal at a regular or special called meeting.

## **ARTICLE V Corporate Membership**

### **Section 1. *Corporate Members***

The Corporation shall have no members who exercise the rights and powers of members of a corporation under the laws of Indiana. However, the Corporation as a local church has church members determined by ecclesiastical qualifications, who have the rights and obligations of members of the local congregation known as *Christ's Covenant Church*, but church membership as such conveys no standing, responsibility, or authority for governance of the Corporation. Any action which would otherwise require approval by a majority of all corporate members shall require approval only of the Board of Elders. All rights which would otherwise be vested in the corporate members shall be vested in the Board of Elders.

### **Section 2. *Members of the Fellowship***

Nothing contained in Section 1 of this Article shall be construed to limit the right of the Corporation to refer to persons associated with the Corporation as "members" even though such persons are not corporate members, and no such reference in or outside of these *Bylaws* shall constitute anyone being a corporate member, within the meaning of Indiana Nonprofit Corporation Law.

## **ARTICLE VI Church Membership**

### **Section 1. *Purpose of the Fellowship***

The congregation of Christian believers who have applied for membership and have been duly accepted shall constitute a spiritual body, united for the spiritual purposes set forth in the *Articles of Incorporation* and in these *Bylaws*.

### **Section 2. *Membership***

Membership in *Christ's Covenant Church* shall be open to anyone who meets the following qualifications. A prospective member must: (1) confess the Lord Jesus Christ as his/her Savior; (2) have been baptized after exercising faith in Christ; (3) demonstrate the fruits of repentance from sin and submission to the Lordship of Jesus Christ; (4) believe that the Holy Bible is the Word of God and accept it as the sole rule of faith and practice; (5) commit to participate actively in the fellowship of the Church; (6) complete the membership

admission process outlined in Sections 3-5 of this Article; (7) submit to the authority of the Board of Elders and the discipline of the Church.

Membership in the Church shall not vest in any member any proprietary rights in the Corporation, but shall entitle the member to participate in whatever matters that the Board of Elders chooses to submit to the Church's membership for their voice or affirmation. Such participation may include congregational input of opinions and perspective, affirmation by informal or formal mechanisms, or non-binding votes on matters offered to the congregation for such action by the Elders. Members of the Church also have the freedom to bring concerns and feedback to the elders even when such communication is not formally requested or solicited.

Those who expect to be in this area temporarily and wish to maintain membership in their home church, but wish to join our fellowship, may apply for membership under the same conditions, and have all the rights and privileges, as other members. Similarly, membership may be retained for those who are members of our fellowship but are out of the area for a season (for reasons such as collegiate studies, military duty, or missionary service).

### **Section 3.** *Applications for Membership*

All requests for membership shall be made by completion of a *Membership Application*, which is to be submitted to an elder. This application, which includes the Church's *Statement of Faith* and *Membership Agreement*, will be given to individuals upon the completion of the Church's membership course, along with a copy of these *Bylaws*.

At least one elder, or someone delegated by an elder, shall meet with the applicant following receipt of the application. At this meeting, the applicant shall testify to the elder (or delegate) of his/her faith in Christ, and discuss the contents of his/her membership application. Any questions about, or disagreements with, the Church's *Statement of Faith*, *Bylaws*, or *Membership Agreement* must have been indicated on the membership application and will be discussed at this meeting. To qualify for Church membership, each applicant must have read the *Statement of Faith*, must agree to respect the church's doctrinal positions contained therein, and must also agree to not communicate any of his/her disagreements with those positions in a divisive manner.

If the applicant is, or has been, a member of another church, special effort will be made to determine the person's standing in that church and his/her reasons for leaving. At the discretion of the Elders, an inquiry regarding the person's standing may be made to that church before his/her acceptance as a member in this church is determined.

After this meeting and these potential inquiries, the elder, or delegate of the Elders, will share his findings and recommendation with the Board of Elders.

The Elders will periodically provide the congregation with the names of prospective church members who are under consideration, providing them with a period of at least two weeks to provide the Elders with questions, concerns, or commendations about the prospective members as it pertains to the potential of them becoming members of the church.

### **Section 4.** *Denial of Membership*

If, upon review of an application for membership, after meeting with a prospective member, or after evaluating feedback of the congregation, the Elders determine that the applicant (1) does not confess Jesus Christ as his/her Lord and Savior, (2) lacks evidence of a godly lifestyle, or (3) is unwilling to abide by the governing documents and theological convictions of the Church without dissension or divisiveness,

membership shall be denied. The decision made by the Board shall be final and there shall be no appeal to any court from that decision. Individuals that have been denied membership may reapply after 6 months.

#### **Section 5.** *Approval and Admission of Applicants*

Approval of members, after an evaluation of the findings of the one who conducted the membership interview and processing of any congregational input, shall be made by a simple majority of the Board of Elders present at a regular or specially called meeting. Upon such approval, the applicant's name shall be recorded in the Church's membership roll. Applicants admitted to membership shall, if possible, present themselves at a worship service designated by the Board of Elders, at which service such applicants shall publicly affirm their membership commitment and be publicly acknowledged as church members.

#### **Section 6.** *Responsibilities of Members*

Members shall seek to exercise their spiritual gifts for the mutual benefit of all the church body and shall submit to the loving oversight of the Elders. As able, the members of the Church are expected to faithfully attend the Church's weekly Sunday worship events, regularly participate in the Church's life group ministry, meaningfully serve in the life of the Church, and financially partner in the church's corporate mission. These responsibilities are more thoroughly detailed in the following *Membership Agreement* that members sign upon their entrance into membership.

(a) *Membership Agreement*

*The basis of our joining together as members of Christ's Covenant Church is our common salvation and union with God the Father that was accomplished by the work of Jesus and applied by the Holy Spirit. Entering into this agreement does not imply that you will be expected to, or able to, keep its expectations perfectly. Rather, it means that the inclination of your heart is to keep its expectations to the best of your ability.*

As a member of Christ's Covenant Church, by the help and empowerment of the Holy Spirit, I will joyfully join together with the other members of this church and make the following affirmations and commitments:

- I affirm that I have repented of my sins, and by faith, have trusted in the work of Christ alone for my salvation. In joyful obedience to Him, I have also publicly declared my allegiance to Him in believers' baptism.
- I commit to place myself under the care and authority of the Elders of this church and to support the church's Statement of Faith.
- I commit to active participation and service in this local body by attending called gatherings and engaging in meaningful biblical community, for my own sanctification and the edification of others in this body.
- As a means of grace in my sanctification, I commit to pursue godly disciplines of the study and application of Scripture; prayer; the proclamation of the gospel; and the regular giving of my time, gifts, and finances.
- I commit to actively care for my fellow church members. When an offense occurs between me and another believer, I commit to lovingly admonish anyone whose practice of sin requires it and to pursue reconciliation in accordance with the procedures described in the church's bylaws.
- I affirm that I understand the church discipline policies of this church as set forth in the church's bylaws. I commit to be bound by the policies and procedures described therein, should the need ever arise.

- I commit to honor Christ in my home, promote marriage as a reflection of Christ's relationship with His church and bring up any children God blesses me with in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.
- Should God move me from this place, I commit to unite with a gospel-centered church where I can continue to carry out the spirit of this agreement and follow the teaching of God's Word.

**Section 7. *Membership Clarification Process and Termination***

Periodically, the Board of Elders shall review and keep current the membership roll of the Church by pursuing inactive members and seeking to clarify their relationship to the Church. Through personal pastoral care they shall determine who those members are who are not participating in the worship and care structures of the Church and shall make reasonable efforts to contact them, discern their reasons for inactivity, and draw them back in to the Church's life. If such inactive members are unresponsive to this pastoral care, they shall be removed from the membership roll of the Church.

Termination of membership may occur for any of the following reasons: (1) voluntary resignation of a member due to relocation or a membership transfer to another church; (2) the death of a member; (3) an act of Church discipline, carried out by a majority decision of the Board of Elders; or (4) the non-attendance of a member for a period of six (6) months or longer – unless he/she falls under the parameters of Section 3 of this article which allow him/her to retain membership while not in the area.

In the event of a request for transfer of membership to another church, the Board of Elders retain the authority to refuse such transfer for the purpose of proceeding with a process of church discipline.

**Section 8. *Restrictions of Members & Non-Members***

The Elders have full discretion to restrict the particular involvement of those who participate in this church, as deemed appropriate or necessary for the spiritual well-being and protection of the church body.

**Section 9. *Removal from Church Grounds***

Apart from the process of church discipline, anyone (church member, non-member regular attendee, or any other individual) may be notified that he/she is not allowed to be present on church premises. This prohibition may be for whatever amount of time is deemed necessary for the safety and well-being of those within the church. Such required absence may, but is not required to, be part of a formal disciplinary process. Any active dismissal or barring from church property may be decided upon and enforced at the discretion of the Board of Elders.

**Section 10. *Church Member Meetings***

The Board of Elders shall convene at least one meeting of the members of the church per year at such intervals as are deemed wise and edifying, to serve the unity and solidarity of the congregation. At such meetings members shall be informed of any current thinking, vision, discussion, adjudication, budgetary and disciplinary matters, etc., as may be under consideration by the Board or recently decided upon. Other meetings of the church's members may be called at any time as determined by a majority of the elders present at a regular or special meeting of the Board of Elders.

**Section 11. *Notice of Meetings***

Reasonable efforts shall be made to give church members sufficient notice of member meetings. Ideally such notice will take place at least two weeks in advance, but unusual circumstances may dictate a need to have a meeting more expediently.

## ARTICLE VII

### Elders

Jesus Christ alone is the Head of His church (Colossians 1:18). He has ordained that individual churches should be governed through office bearers whom He appoints and who are endowed by His Spirit with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work. Those who have been called of God to rule and teach in the church are called elders, pastors, or overseers. These are three interchangeable names designating one and the same office in a New Testament church (Acts 20:17,28; Ephesians 4:11,12; Titus 1:5, 7). The role of the elder in the local church is to carry out the ministry of word and prayer, shepherding, and leadership for the growth and edification of the body. The Elders shall organize themselves as is most fitting and useful for the discharge of their duties. Though the functional responsibilities of different elders may vary, and though different terms may be used to describe certain elders (“lay,” “lead,” etc.), each elder holds the same essential office and bears the same overarching responsibilities. Each elder’s role, gifting, labors, and character shall be periodically reviewed as appropriate and necessary for effectual ministry.

#### **Section 1. Responsibilities and Rights**

Subject to the limitations of the *Articles* and these *Bylaws* and of pertinent restrictions of the Indiana Nonprofit Corporation Law, all the activities and affairs of the Corporation shall be exercised by or under the direction of the Board of Elders. Without prejudice to such general responsibilities and rights, but subject to these same limitations, it is hereby expressly declared that the Board collective shall have the following responsibilities and rights in addition to the others enumerated by these *Bylaws*:

- (a) To select and remove any officer (see Article VIII, Section 1), agent, pastor, or employee of the Corporation; prescribe such duties for them consistent with the Scriptures, applicable law, the *Articles of Incorporation*, and these *Bylaws* (and any amendment or restatement thereof); and fix the terms of their offices and their compensation (see Article VII, Section 20).
- (b) To make such disbursements from the funds and properties of the Corporation as required to fulfill the purposes of this Corporation as set out in the *Articles of Incorporation*, thereof and generally to conduct, manage, and control the activities and affairs of the Corporation and to make such rules and regulations consistent with the Scriptures, applicable law, and/or the *Articles of Incorporation*, and these *Bylaws* (and any amendment or restatement thereof), as they may deem best.
- (c) To adopt, make and use a corporate seal, and to alter the form of such seal from time to time as they may deem best, or use an alternate form to the extent permitted by law.
- (d) To establish policies and practices for the church consistent with the purposes of this Corporation.
- (e) To perform legal and business transactions that are needed to carry out the mission of the Church and these *Bylaws*.
- (f) To oversee the ordinances of baptism and communion.
- (g) To establish the official doctrinal positions of the corporate life of the church.
- (h) To exercise all other powers granted by the *Articles of Incorporation* and the Indiana Nonprofit Corporation Law.

**Section 2. Number of Elders**

The Board of Directors shall be the Board of Elders and shall consist of a minimum of three persons.

**Section 3. Nomination and Selection**

Elders must be active members in good standing with the Church, and they must possess the qualifications of an elder as set forth in the relevant teachings of the Scriptures and outlined in this document. The existing Board of Elders will make all subsequent appointments of elders by a 75% supermajority decision of the full Board of Elders at any regular Board meeting, or at a special meeting convened for that purpose. At any time, the Board of Elders is empowered to select additional elders in compliance with processes outlined in these *Bylaws*.

The selection process for an elder shall include: (1) due consideration of the candidate's character, conviction and competency; (2) adequate theological and pastoral training sufficient to carry out the pastoral role to which the man will be called; (3) public presentation of the candidate to the congregation for a minimum of six [6] weeks, during which any congregational concerns, questions and/or commendations regarding the candidate may be received; (4) full processing of all congregational input regarding the candidate; (5) formal decision by the Board of Elders; (6) public ordination or installation of the man into eldership in a regular or special service designated for that purpose.

**Section 4. Prevention of Nepotism**

In matters pertaining to the nomination, addition, discipline, and removal of elders, any members of the Board who have familial relationship with the elder candidate shall recuse themselves from voting on these matters, so as to avoid any conflict of interest. The voting on these matters should happen as specified in other sections of these bylaws, according to the required percentage(s) less the Board member being recused.

**Section 5. Terms and Tenure of Office**

The term of office of the corporation, pursuant to Indiana Nonprofit Corporation Law, shall be five (5) years, or fewer if determined by the Board of Elders. Consecutive terms shall be renewable with 75% vote of the full board (less the elder being considered). Elders shall be considered to be qualified for ordination to service for life, except that:

- (a) They request removal from an active role in their office in writing to the President of the Board or Secretary of the Board,
- (b) They be found to be spiritually unqualified for office through evaluation consistent with these *Bylaws*, or,
- (c) They be found to be physically or mentally incapacitated.

The Board of Elders reserve the right to dismiss an elder upon giving him one month's written notice of the Board's intention to dismiss. In addition, an elder on staff must give one month's notice if he intends to resign. The time limit of an elder's resignation may be reduced if the Elders determine otherwise (see Article X, Section 1).

**Section 6. Character Requirements for Ordination**

As per the requirement of Section 3, each member of the Board of Elders must be an active member of this church and possess the character described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9, and other relevant Scriptures. He shall be:

- (a) Blameless as a steward of God; above reproach (1 Corinthians 4:1, 2; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6-7)
- (b) The husband of one wife; a one-woman man (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6)

- (c) Not a drunkard or addict, temperate, sober, vigilant (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7)
- (d) Sober-minded, prudent (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)
- (e) Of good behavior; orderly, respectable (1 Timothy 3:2)
- (f) Given to hospitality (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:8)
- (g) Apt to teach; able to teach; he can exhort believers and refute false teaching (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9)
- (h) Not given to wine (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)
- (i) Not violent; not pugnacious (1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7)
- (j) Patient, moderate, forbearing, gentle (1 Timothy 3:3)
- (k) Not quarrelsome; not easily angered or quick-tempered (1 Timothy 3:3; Titus 1:7)
- (l) Not covetous; not a lover of money; not greedy of gain (1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7)
- (m) Rules his own house well; his children are faithful, not accused of rebellion to God (1 Timothy 3:4; Titus 1:7)
- (n) Not a novice; not a new convert (1 Timothy 3:6)
- (o) Has a good report or reputation with outsiders (1 Timothy 3:7)
- (p) Not self-willed (Titus 1:7)
- (q) A lover of good (Titus 1:8)
- (r) Just, fair (Titus 1:8)
- (s) Holy, disciplined (Titus 1:8)
- (t) Self-controlled (Titus 1:8)

### **Section 7. Vacancies**

A vacancy of the Board will occur when an elder resigns his office effective upon giving written notice to the President of the Board or the Secretary of the Board, unless the notice specifies a later time for the effectiveness of such resignation. If the resignation is to take effect at some future time, a successor may be selected before that time. A vacancy or vacancies in the Board shall be deemed to exist in case of the death, resignation, or removal of any elder, or if a need for additional elders is determined to exist. If an elder resignation reduces the total number of elders below the required minimum, then such reduction shall not be permitted until a replacement is added to the Board, except in extreme circumstances involving grievous, scandalous, or divisive sin that requires immediate discipline and removal of an elder from the Board. In such a case, replacement of the departing elder should be made with great urgency, prudence, and faithfulness according to the procedures required in these bylaws.

### **Section 8. Handling of Accusations Against an Elder**

What follows are important principles and processes for the handling of accusations against an elder of Christ's Covenant Church. There may be additional steps, or parties, involved as part of our association's procedures related to the handling of accusations made against elders within its churches.

All accusations against an elder must be adjudicated via due process. Credible accusations, accepted as such at the discretion of the Elders on the basis of testimony received by witnesses in compliance with biblically defined guidelines, shall be tried before a panel consisting of the Board of Elders and any other members of the congregation which the Board deems of sufficient spiritual maturity to participate. Both witnesses and the accused shall be heard fully (Proverbs 18:13), and cross-examination of witnesses and the accused shall be pursued (Deuteronomy 19:18; Proverbs 18:17). Full adjudication of the matter shall be completed in accord with procedures more fully outlined in Scripture and these *Bylaws*.

#### (a) *Disqualification and Removal of Elders*

Any elder may be removed from office at any regular or special meeting of the Board if he is found to be physically or mentally incapacitated, or spiritually unqualified (according to the

Scriptures, including 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 as well as other texts describing mature Christian character; e.g. -Galatians 5:18-24; 1 Corinthians 13), after thorough corroborating investigation by the Elders (or a duly appointed Committee of the Board, per these *Bylaws*, at the sole discretion of the Board), in accord with the procedures prescribed by pertinent Scripture, including Matthew 18:15-18 and 1 Timothy 5:19.

When an elder is removed because of sin that is deemed sufficient to disqualify him from shepherding, and if he refuses to repent from that sin, the removal shall be accompanied by a public reproof, and notice shall be made to the ministry team leaders, and then to the congregation at a members' meeting (1 Timothy 5:20).

Removal of an elder may also occur for non-disciplinary reasons. Evaluation regarding the performance of a man in his office or the elimination of a role at the discretion of the Board may necessitate removal as well. In such instances great care should be exercised to decide such matters: (1) only upon careful review and discussion, (2) by a 75% supermajority of the full Board of Elders (less the elder being removed), (3) with due consideration of the man's needs, family, and calling, as well as the church's needs. Pastoral care should be given to clarify to the congregation the reasons for the decision, so as to avoid any appearance of discipline that might reflect negatively upon the man or his reputation.

Whenever a man is removed from office for any reason, such actions should be taken with all care and gentleness, giving due regard to family, financial, and other considerations. In such cases the man removed shall be informed of the possibilities of future restoration; and if such restoration is deemed possible, the process involved.

(b) *The Process of Evaluating Charges against an Elder*

The Board of Elders will be the recognized authority to hear accusation(s) against an elder (1 Timothy 5:19-21). Some accusations may be dismissed as: personal matters that require personal forgiveness and private reconciliation, or which appear to be malicious attempts to undermine an elder's reputation or leadership. Charges may be considered which relate to the elder's office and are significant enough to affect the church. The testimony of more than one witness (as determined by the Elders) is necessary to establish a charge, as a protection against false and unsubstantiated charges; however, given developments in technology there may be cases in which a single, recorded witness may be sufficient grounds for dismissal/disqualification for grievous, detrimental sin. An observed pattern of unrepentant sin in the life of an elder may lead to a public rebuke and removal from office (at the discretion of the Elders). However, in the case of repentance, an elder who is *not* deemed unqualified (or has had charges dismissed) can be restored, without a public rebuke, if the Elders deem that wise. Upon dismissal of any elder from the Board of Elders, the congregation should be informed of his dismissal (with specificity determined by the discretion of the Elders), whether or not that dismissal requires a public rebuke.

Grounds for disqualification and removal from office include any flagrant or scandalous failure to comply with the moral requirements laid out in Scripture or these *Bylaws*. Since no man can be expected to exhibit perfection, the grounds for removal involve patterns of sinful and impenitent behavior, not mere isolated events. However, exceptions include (but are not limited to) disqualifying sins with a single occurrence (e.g., sexual immorality, financial dishonesty, etc). Additionally, any sins that would lead to church discipline (1 Corinthians 5:11; Titus 3:10) can also

be sufficient grounds for removal from office. These include, but are not limited to, financial impropriety, conviction of a criminal activity, and/or sexual immorality.

Charges (of public or private offenses) brought against an elder should be made by credible witnesses (as deemed by the Elders), otherwise, the charges shall be dismissed if the witness lacks credibility (i.e. vengeful, hasty, judgmental, dishonest, or possessing conflicts of interest). The Elders have a responsibility to protect vulnerable witnesses from the potential of intimidation by an erring elder or member. In order to be considered, charges must be brought forward within two years of the alleged offense (except in cases of extenuating circumstances at the discretion of the Elders, or in situations involving sexual misconduct or criminal behavior). Charges should represent a serious breach of sound doctrine (as defined by the *Statement of Faith*) or character qualifications (as outlined in Scripture and these *Bylaws*). Statements of hearsay, without credible witnesses, shall be dismissed.

A credible charge should be presented to the alleged offending elder (“the defendant”) by the Elders. Charges by the witness(es) (“the plaintiff”) should include, in writing: a description of the offense, relevant Scriptures, relevant church documents (*Statement of Faith, Bylaws, etc*), any efforts the plaintiff has made to bring the offense/deficiency to the awareness of the defendant and the corresponding elder response, as well as why such charges carry sufficient weight for investigation. This information (i.e., the charges) may be obtained by the Elders through interviewing the witnesses and recording their testimony, or receiving such testimony in written submission directly from the witnesses. Investigation of the offense should include a preliminary hearing in which the Elders seek an initial response from the defendant so that they can hear his perspective, and subsequently determine whether the charge calls for trial, dismissal, personal reconciliation, or another process. If the charges lack sufficient grounds, then they shall be dismissed. But, if there are sufficient grounds to hold a “trial”, then the Elders will determine a clear process and communicate that process to all pertinent parties involved (the defendant, plaintiff, and other elders or members on the adjudication panel). The Board of Elders, or the designated panel (serving as agents of the Board), will determine the level of confidentiality, credible forms of evidence, the nature and process of the hearing, as well as the final decision and process of communication.

The person(s) bringing a charge against an elder should follow the steps in Matthew 18 (outlined under Article XI, Section 3), in order to resolve the matter privately, before taking the issue to the Elders. The issue should not be made public prematurely, but resolved through appropriate channels, as designated in Matthew 18, which outlines the escalation of involvement. The accused elder ought to have a right to face his accuser (unless the Elders deem otherwise) and call witnesses to testify on his behalf, but the wife of an accused elder should not be required to testify against her husband. Due process should be followed and a presumption of innocence should be granted until the Board of Elders renders judgment. Yet even though a presumption of innocence shall be granted, the Elders have the right to suspend an elder who is under investigation from his responsibilities as an elder while he is being tried, if they deem such a suspension to be appropriate or necessary.

### **Section 9. Decisions of the Board of Elders**

Decisions of the Board of Elders shall be made only in consequence of humble adequate discussion, and fervent prayerful consideration, in a spirit of grace. Unanimity shall always be pursued, but when such unanimity cannot be reached, decisions shall be made by a 66% supermajority of the Board members present at a regular, or duly called, special meeting.

In such cases each Board member shall commit to move forward in solidarity behind the decision. When full unanimity cannot be reached, each Board member shall determine whether he (1) sufficiently agrees and can render complete support to the decision, or (2) disagrees, but nonetheless can support fully the decision in solidarity with the Board, or, because of the strength of his conviction, (3) must resign his office as elder in such a way as to ensure elder unity and minimize congregational division.

In cases such as this, when there is disagreement among the members of the Board, all elders (whether in the majority or minority), as well as any others who have knowledge of the decision-making process, shall, for the sake of pastoral solidarity and church unity, pledge confidentiality regarding his own or others' positions in the decision made—unless the Board determines that sharing about a particular decision is acceptable. This pledge of confidentiality is not to forbid the elders, whether collectively or individually, from disclosing to members of the congregation the fact that there was some level of disagreement. Depending on the circumstances, sharing that there was dissent may be appropriate and even edifying to share. This pledge of confidentiality, rather, is a commitment to not disclose which individuals among the Board were on certain sides of issues, so that there will be less temptation toward the development of factions within the congregation and within the Board members themselves. Should any Board member deliberately and repeatedly fail to uphold this pledge, he shall be subject to review by the Board, and to whatever correction or discipline is deemed appropriate by the Board. Should an elder be compelled to resign as a matter of conscience, he shall do so in a manner conducive to Christian love, protective of Church unity and in accordance with these *Bylaws*.

**Section 10. *First Among Equals (Lead Pastor)***

In the exercise of plurality of Elders, the Board will operate under the concept of *first among equals*; a recognition that there will be one man among the many whose gifted influence exercises a greater leadership role than that of the others. Ultimately it is the responsibility of the Board of Elders to identify and commission each of its members to fulfill tasks and responsibilities as they see fit, including the role of Lead Pastor. However, because of the unique and important role in which he serves with respect to the congregation, choosing him should be done carefully and with conscientious attention to the observations, concerns, and input of the flock.

The Lead Pastor is responsible to lead the pastoral team in ministering the Word of God to the people of God, to develop the Elders into a cohesive leadership team, to provide pastoral care for the Elders, to facilitate decision-making by serving as President of the Board of Elders and to act as spokesman for the Elders. In addition, he shall thereby be authorized to decide upon certain matters not requiring Board action, within the bounds of authority delegated to him by the *Board*.

The Lead Pastor shall continue in his role until such a time either that he is disqualified from the role, is better suited for another role, or that another man is more strategically gifted for the role, according to the careful and deliberate decision of the Eldership.

**Section 11. *Place of Meetings***

Notwithstanding anything to the contrary provided in these *Bylaws*, any meeting of the Board of Elders of the Corporation (whether regularly scheduled or specially called) may be held at any place in or outside the State of Indiana.

**Section 12. *Regular Meetings***

Regular meetings of the Board shall be held without call or notice on no less than a monthly basis, unless otherwise modified by the Board.

**Section 13. *Special Meetings***

Special meetings of the Board of Elders may be called at any time by order of the President, Secretary, or by a quorum of the members of the Board of Elders.

**Section 14. *Notice of Special Meetings***

Written or electronic notice every Special Meeting of the Board shall be given to each Board member at least two days (forty-eight hours) before the day named for the meeting. Neither the business to be transacted at, nor the purpose of, any regular or special meeting of the board or other body need be specified in the notice of the meeting.

A majority of the elders present, provided that a quorum is still present, may adjourn any meeting of the Board of Elders to another time and place. Notice of the time and place of holding an adjourned meeting need not be given to absent elders if the time and place is fixed at the meeting adjourned, except if the meeting is adjourned for more than forty-eight (48) hours, for which notice of any adjournment to another time or place shall be given prior to the time of the resumed adjourned meeting to the Elders who were not present at the time of the adjournment.

**Section 15. *Quorum***

Except as otherwise provided herein, a 70% majority of the elders currently serving shall constitute a quorum. Whenever the matter to be considered concerns the calling or dismissing of a pastor or the buying or selling of real estate, all members of the Board must be present for the vote or must participate via conferencing technology, unless medically unable.

**Section 16. *Participation in Meetings via Conference Technology***

Members of the Board may participate in a meeting through use of conference telephone or similar communications equipment, so long as all members participating in such meeting can hear one another.

**Section 17. *Action without Meeting***

Any action required or permitted to be taken by the Board may be taken without a meeting by unanimous consent of the Board. Such decisions shall constitute a vote of the Board and shall be subsequently documented by written consent describing the action taken, signed by each elder, and included in the minutes or filed with the corporate records. Action taken under this section is effective when the last elder signs the consent, unless the consent specifies a prior or subsequent effective date. A consent signed under this section has the effect of a meeting vote and may be described as such in any document.

**Section 18. *Rights of Inspection***

In order to carry out his fiduciary duty to the Corporation in good faith, in a manner he reasonably believes to be in the best interests of the corporation and with such care, including reasonable inquiry, skill and diligence, as a person of ordinary prudence would use under similar circumstances, in performing his duties, each elder shall be entitled to have the absolute right at any reasonable time to inspect and copy, and rely in good faith on all books, records, and documents of every kind and to inspect the physical properties of the Corporation of which such person is an elder, for a purpose reasonably related to such person's interest as an elder.

**Section 19. *Councils, Committees, and Advisory Boards***

To promote efficiency in handling certain matters, the Board of Elders may appoint one or more persons from among its own number to serve as special and/or standing committees, councils, or advisory boards, such as the Board may determine are necessary, which shall have such powers and duties as shall from time-to-time be prescribed by the Board. Individuals who are not elders may also be allowed to serve on such committees; albeit, all members of such committees shall serve at the pleasure of the Board, and shall not have the power to act on behalf of the Board, unless specifically designated as an agent of the Board.

Committees of the Board may be appointed by resolution passed by a majority of the whole Board. Each council or committee of the Board shall serve at the pleasure of the Board and shall exist for the period specified by the Board. Committees shall be composed of one or more members of the Board of Elders, except that the Elders may establish an Advisory Committee whose members need not consist of any elders. All committees shall have such powers of the Board as may be expressly delegated to it by resolution of the Board of Elders, except with respect to:

- (a) The creation or filling of vacancies in the Board of Elders.
- (b) The adoption, amendment or repeal of the *Bylaws*.
- (c) The amendment or repeal of any resolution of the Board that by its terms is amendable or repealable only by the Board.
- (d) Action on matters committed by the *Bylaws* or a resolution of the Board of Elders exclusively to another committee of the Board.

The Board may designate one or more elder(s) as alternate members of any committee, who may replace any absent or disqualified member at any meeting of the committee. In the absence or disqualification of a member of a committee, the member or members thereof present at any meeting and not disqualified from voting, whether or not he or they constitute a quorum, may unanimously appoint another elder to act at the meeting in the place of any absent or disqualified member.

The delegation of authority to any committee shall not operate to relieve the Board of Elders or any member of the Board from any responsibility imposed by law or Scripture. Rules governing procedures for meetings of any committee of the Board shall be established by the Board of Elders, or in the absence thereof, by the committee itself. All actions by any Board Committee shall be reported to the Board of Elders at the meeting next succeeding such action. The general functions of councils and committees are:

- (a) To bring considered recommendations to the Board concerning ministries.
- (b) To provide a wider base of counsel to the Elders having the oversight of specific ministries.
- (c) To complete such duties and exercise such powers as delegated to them by the Board.

#### **Section 20. Fees and Compensation**

Elders (as such) shall not receive any stated or fixed salary for their services. However, nothing herein contained shall be construed to preclude any elders from serving the Corporation in any other capacity and receiving compensation. Any person receiving compensation directly or indirectly from *Christ's Covenant Church* shall not be in a position to determine the nature or amount of said compensation.

Elders of the Church may receive remuneration for their labors in accordance with policies for compensation as prescribed herein.

- (a) *Finance Committee*

Under the authority of the Elders, a Finance Committee shall be established by the Deacons and be comprised of a minimum of four (4) competent, non-elder, individuals who are members of *Christ's Covenant Church* and whose lives conform to biblical standards of moral and ethical excellence. Members of the committee may be deacons, but they are not required to be. One member of such committee may be a non-elder staff member. This committee may be asked to assist in other financial matters, but they will at minimum be responsible for determining the

salaries and benefits for all employees of the church. The salaries and benefits that the committee determines will be incorporated into the overall budget that is proposed by the Deacons to the Elders for final approval. While the Elders will approve the overall budget, the salaries and benefits portion will have been pre-determined and will be non-negotiable. Should there be a staff member that is serving as a member of the Finance Committee, he/she shall be excluded from a final vote of the committee in regards to his/her own salary.

## **ARTICLE VIII**

### **Officers**

#### **Section 1. Officers**

The officers of the Corporation shall be a President, Secretary, and Treasurer. All Officers shall be appointed by the Board of Elders from amongst the elders. The Corporation may also have, at the discretion of the Board of Elders, other officers as may be appointed in accordance with the provisions of Section 2 of this article.

#### **Section 2. Subordinate Officers**

The Board of Elders may appoint, and may empower the President to appoint, such other officers as the business of the Corporation may require, each of whom shall hold office for such period, have such authority, and perform such duties as are provided in the *Bylaws* or as the Board of Elders may from time to time determine. In addition, the Board of Elders may appoint an Assistant Secretary and/or Assistant Treasurer, who do not need to be elders, but must be in good standing as members of the church.

#### **Section 3. Election**

The officers of the Corporation, except such officers as may be appointed in accordance with the provisions of Section 2 or Section 5 of this Article, shall be renewed as stipulated by the law, and shall serve at the pleasure of the Board of Elders. Each officer shall hold his office for a term of two (2) years or until he shall resign, be removed, become otherwise disqualified or unable to serve, or until a successor shall be deemed necessary, elected and qualified, at the discretion of the Board, with the exception of Lead Pastor who shall serve as President of the Board of Elders for the entirety of his role as Lead Pastor. Such action by the Board may be taken by a simple majority vote of all its members. Officers may be elected to unlimited successive terms.

#### **Section 4. Removal and Resignation**

Any officer may be removed upon disqualification and removal as an elder per these *Bylaws*. Any officer may resign at any time upon written notice to the Corporation. The resignation shall be effective upon receipt thereof by the Corporation by giving written notice to the Board of Elders, or to the President, or to the Secretary of the Corporation, or at such subsequent time as may be specified in the notice of resignation.

#### **Section 5. Vacancies**

A vacancy in any office because of death, resignation, removal, disqualification, or any other cause shall be filled in the manner prescribed in these *Bylaws* for regular election or appointment to such office, provided that such vacancies shall be filled as they occur and not on an annual basis.

#### **Section 6. Inability to Act**

In the case of absence or inability to act of any officer of the Corporation and of any person herein authorized to act in his place, the Board of Elders may from time to time delegate the powers or duties of such an officer to any other officer or other person whom the Board may select.

### **Section 7. The President**

The President is the chief executive officer of the Corporation and shall, subject to the authorization of the Board of Elders, have general supervision, direction, and control of the activities and officers of the Corporation. He, or another elder chosen by the Board, shall preside at all meetings of the Board of Elders, which are to be conducted according to scriptural principles such as those set forth in Philippians 2:2-8. Unless otherwise stipulated by the Board, he shall be an *ex officio* member of all the standing committees, if any, and shall have powers and duties as may be prescribed by the Board of Elders or the *Bylaws*. Subject to the direction of the Board of Elders, the President shall in general supervise and control the business and affairs of the Corporation and shall perform all duties incident to the office of President and such other duties as may be assigned from time to time by the Board of Directors. The President may sign with the Secretary or any other proper officer of the Corporation as duly authorized by the Board of Directors, any deeds, contracts, or other instruments which the Board of Directors has authorized to be executed.

### **Section 8. Secretary**

The Secretary, Assistant Secretary, or other non-officer designee of the Board, shall attend all meetings of the Board and shall record all votes and the minutes of all proceedings in a book to be kept for that purpose, and shall perform like duties for the standing committees when required. A simple version of the minutes of every meeting of the Board shall be available to church members upon request. The Secretary, or Assistant Secretary, shall give, or cause to be given, such notice as is required of all meetings of the Board of Directors and shall perform such other duties as may be prescribed by law, the Corporation's *Articles of Incorporation*, these *Bylaws*, or the Board of Elders.

The Secretary shall keep, or cause to be kept, at the principal office a copy of the Corporation's *Articles* and *Bylaws*, as amended to date.

The Secretary shall keep, or cause to be kept, the seal of the Corporation in safe custody and, when authorized by the Board, affix the same to any instrument requiring it, and when so affixed it shall be attested by the signature of the Secretary.

The Secretary shall keep, or cause to be kept at the principal office of the Corporation, a church membership register, or a duplicated membership register, showing the names of the members and their addresses.

The Secretary, or Assistant Secretary, shall have such other powers and perform such other duties as prescribed by the Board.

### **Section 9. Treasurer**

The Treasurer, and Assistant Treasurer as appointed, shall ensure the stewardship of the physical and financial resources of the Church, taking precaution "*that no one should blame us about this generous gift that is being administered by us, for we aim at what is honorable not only in the Lord's sight but also in the sight of man*" (2 Corinthians 8:20-21). The Treasurer shall select "*men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom*" (Acts 6:3) to implement and accomplish this responsibility.

The Treasurer, and Assistant Treasurer as deputized, shall ensure that all financial activities and transactions are consistent with these *Bylaws* and all other Church policies and procedures, as well as with applicable provisions of the Indiana Nonprofit Corporation Law and the Internal Revenue Code. The Treasurer shall keep and maintain, or cause to be kept and maintained, adequate and correct accounts of the properties and business transactions of the Corporation in accordance with Article XV of these *Bylaws*.

The Treasurer shall deposit, or cause to be deposited, all monies and other valuables in the name and to the credit of the Corporation with such depositories as may be designated by the Board of Elders. He shall

disburse, or cause to be disbursed, the funds of the Corporation as may be ordered by the Board of Elders, taking paper vouchers for such disbursements. He shall have such other powers and perform such other duties as may be prescribed by the Board of Elders. He shall make, or cause to be made, the financial reports at each regular Board meeting and at the annual meeting of members.

**Section 10. Assistant Treasurer and Assistant Secretary**

While not required, if appointed, the Assistant Treasurer and Assistant Secretary shall perform such duties as shall be assigned to them by the Treasurer or the Secretary, respectively. However, such assignment or delegation shall not relieve the principal officer of the responsibilities and liabilities of his office. In addition, the Assistant Treasurer and Assistant Secretary shall, in general, perform such duties as may be assigned to them by the President or the Board of Elders.

## **ARTICLE IX**

### **Deacons**

**Section 1. Roles and Responsibilities**

The office of deacon exists to complement the spiritual care provided by the Church's elders with practical care for the material and physical needs of the church in support of its mission. The deacons are responsible for the ministry of mercy and the business and material affairs of the church, which are to be administered with spiritual grace and under the direction of the Board of Elders. The Diaconate shall assist the Board of Elders in whatever ways the Board shall deem appropriate for the well-being of the Church so as to enable the Board to maintain its commitment to the ministry of the Word and prayer (Acts 6:1-6).

**Section 2. Qualifications**

The deacons shall consist of members possessing the qualifications described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. A deacon shall be dignified, but shall not be double-tongued, addicted to much wine, or greedy for dishonest gain. He must hold to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience; and he must be tested and found to be blameless.

**Section 3. Nomination and Selection**

The recognition of deacons is the responsibility of the local church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Lord's appointment is recognized both by the inward conviction of the individual involved and by the approval of the church after observing the possession of those gifts and graces required by Scripture for that role in the church. Deacons shall be selected in accordance with the following steps:

- (a) The Board of Elders shall create a list of potential candidates for the office of deacon. Candidates may be drawn from a list of people gathered by elder nomination and/or congregational recommendation.
- (b) Prior to presenting a candidate for diaconal ministry, an elder (or designated committee) shall talk with the potential diaconal candidate, along with the family and people within the candidate's relational (e.g. work, community, family) and ministry spheres within the Church, to assess both the character (1 Timothy 3:8-13) and family (if married) of the candidate, and to explore the specific area(s) of service in which the candidate might serve.
- (c) Suitable candidates shall then be nominated to the Board of Elders for consideration and evaluation. The nomination shall include a character assessment and a recommendation as to where the deacon would best serve the church.

- (d) The members of the church will be informed of qualified candidates, along with their proposed sphere of service, and asked for any concerns, questions, or commendations the congregation may have with regard to the candidate(s), with such a congregational review lasting a minimum of four (4) weeks.
- (e) Should no credible concerns of a disqualifying nature be presented, the elders shall give final approval with a 75% majority vote of the full Board of Elders, and arrangements shall be made for the public installation of the deacon.
- (f) The installation shall occur at a Sunday morning worship event and shall include the laying on of hands (Acts 6:6) so as to make public display of the candidate's commissioning to the office.

**Section 4. Deacon Terms**

A deacon shall serve for a renewable term of two (2) years. Renewal of diaconal service may be employed following evaluation of the deacon's relationships and performance, provided that no changes in character, conviction or competency are found to indicate disqualification.

**Section 5. Removal from Office**

Should a deacon need to end his tenure early, he shall submit such reasons in writing to the Board of Elders.

A deacon may be considered for removal from office by the Board of Elders if he falls into heresy or some sin by which he no longer meets the qualifications for his office, or is otherwise unable to fulfill his obligations. In such case, a deacon may be brought up for reevaluation at the request of one of the elders.

**ARTICLE X**  
**Ordination, Licensing, and Commissioning**

**Section 1. Ordination**

Ordination refers to the recognition by the Board of Elders that a man is called to the ministry, prepared to shepherd, and qualified to serve. Prior to ordination, each elder candidate shall be evaluated in areas of character, conviction, and competence, in order to confirm his calling and fitness for spiritual leadership within the role of elder/pastor. Ordination shall be conferred for life, and is transferable, so long as the man continues to manifest the qualifications of the office. In situations where the elder is deemed to no longer meet the qualifications, the Board of Elders maintains the authority to revoke his ordination. Revocation is understood to mean that the man shall no longer hold the office or exercise any of the roles or responsibilities of an ordained man, and shall be prohibited from doing so until such a time as his ordination may be restored.

In the event of grievous sin by an elder, immediate dismissal or suspension of duties, with or without pay, may be determined by a vote of 75% supermajority of the full Board of Elders less the elder being reviewed. Also, in the event of an ongoing investigation or trial of an elder who has had formal charges brought against him, the Board of Elders may choose to immediately suspend his duties as an elder. Such a suspension would not indicate an assumption on the part of the Elders of his guilt, but may be deemed appropriate none the less.

There may be situations in which suspension is not in order, but where special pastoral guidance is needed to shape a man's responsibilities, schedule, and public ministry for the sake of his own care and the interests of the church. In such cases, the man shall not have his ordination suspended or revoked but shall be limited in his role in ways that shall serve the best interest of the man and/or his family and/or the church.

A temporary leave from responsibilities for an elder in good standing may be granted when he: (1) is called to serve another church on a short-term basis, (2) is helping to plant a church on a short-term basis, (3) is on a

sabbatical, or (4) is otherwise incapacitated. In such cases, he will be excused from Board decision-making processes and not be counted in number.

### **Section 2.** *Licensing*

Since the State of Indiana does not require ministers of the gospel to be licensed, ordination of members of *Christ's Covenant Church* by the Board of Elders is sufficient to carry out the ecclesiastical or sacerdotal duties and functions of the church.

### **Section 3.** *Commissioning*

The Board of Elders has the right to commission men and/or women to ministry in contexts or roles in which ordination would be unnecessary or inappropriate. Those commissioned by the Board of Elders should be viewed as having the authority to minister, in accordance with their commission, as long as their commission remains in effect and they meet the qualifications by which they were commissioned to ministry.

## **ARTICLE XI**

### **Church Discipline**

The Church is called to provide restorative discipline for all its members. Discipline is one of the primary means by which God corrects and restores His children—for their growth in godliness and spiritual fruitfulness. Additionally, corrective discipline is the way in which God maintains the unity, purity, integrity, and reputation of His Church.

### **Section 1.** *The Purpose of Church Discipline*

The threefold purpose of church discipline is: (1) to glorify God by maintaining the purity of 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 offending believer by calling him/her to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct (Galatians 6:1).

Church discipline is never to be done in a harsh, vengeful, or self-righteous manner but in humility and love, with the goal of restoring the offender to a closer walk with Christ, protecting others from the destructive effects of sin, and showing respect for the honor and glory of God.

For these reasons, the Board of Elders has a responsibility to provide formative (i.e., instruction) and corrective (warning, counsel, rebuke, and excommunication) discipline for the pursuit of God's glory and the good of those under their care.

### **Section 2.** *Who is Subject to Church Discipline?*

Members of *Christ's Covenant Church* (and all other professing Christians who participate in regular fellowship with this church) who deviate in doctrine or engage in lifestyle or behavior that violates Scripture, as interpreted by the Board of Elders, will be subject to church discipline, including the possibility of dismissal (public excommunication), according to the biblical pattern set forth in Matthew 18:15-18.

The specific causes, conditions, congregational and pastoral processes, and possible outcomes of restorative church discipline are delineated in these *Bylaws*. Clear and explicit teaching regarding restorative discipline in the church will be included in the church's membership course, and be mentioned in the church's *Membership Agreement*, to ensure that all members of the congregation are aware of their commitment to participate in and submit to the Board of Elders in this means of grace.

### **Section 3.** *The Process of Church Discipline*

According to Matthew 18:15-18, there is a biblical process for conducting church discipline. This process

involves several steps, which should precede dismissal, except in extreme cases that require circumventing the typical process (cf. 1 Corinthians 5), as deemed necessary by the Board of Elders.

- (1) It shall be the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of the erring individual's heresy or misconduct to warn and correct the erring individual in private, seeking his/her repentance and restoration.
- (2) If the erring person does not heed the warning, then a second appeal should be made in which the individual who delivered the first warning goes again to the erring individual, seeking his/her repentance, but accompanied by one or two more individuals who shall confirm that the sin has occurred or is continuing to occur, and/or that the erring individual has been appropriately confronted and still refuses to repent. These first and second warnings may occur without a specified time interval.
- (3) If the erring person still refuses to heed this warning, then the matter will be brought to the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders will conduct an investigation into the matter (according to Matthew 18 & 1 Timothy 5:19) to determine whether or not there is enough corroborating evidence that the erring individual has sinned or is continuing to sin, that he/she has been appropriately confronted, and that he/she refuses to repent. At this point, the Board of Elders will inform the church membership of the situation, and call for their participation in prayer and appeal to the individual for repentance and restoration. The amount of time for such congregational appeal shall be decided at the sole discretion of the Elders. If the erring individual repents, after experiencing such collective appeal, then the Elders will inform the congregation and work toward his/her restoration and reconciliation.
- (4) If the erring person refuses to heed the collective appeals of the Elders and congregation, then he/she will be publicly dismissed from fellowship and/or membership. Public removal and excommunication of the individual will be done in the hope that God might lead him/her to repentance and restoration. If the erring individual, after such dismissal, heeds the warning and demonstrates true repentance, and requests reinstatement by the Board of Elders, then, at the discretion of the Board of Elders, he/she will be publicly restored to the rights, duties, privileges, and responsibilities of the fellowship/membership.

Ultimately, the process of discipline does not conclude with excommunication but should always leave room for repentance and restoration. While the responsibility to receive, excommunicate and restore church members belongs to the church as a whole (Matthew 18:18-20), it is specifically given to the church's governing officers to exercise leadership of all matters pertaining to the congregation (Matthew 16:18-19; John 20:23; 1 Corinthians 4:14-5:13; 2 Corinthians 13:1-4). The elders are authorized to hear such charges and render a verdict, which they pronounce on behalf of the whole church and in its presence, in the name and power of Jesus Christ, as a corporate appeal for the sinner to repent (Matthew 18; 1 Corinthians 4-5).

#### **Section 4.** *Expedition of the Discipline Process*

The elders may, under their discretion, proceed directly to the third stage of discipline (i.e., bringing the matter before the congregation to inform the congregation and exhort them to call the erring individual to repentance), or to the fourth stage of discipline (i.e., the dismissal from fellowship or membership of the church) when: (1) the transgression and refusal to repent have been public (i.e., openly and to the offense of the whole Church - 1 Corinthians 5:1-15); (2) the individual has taught or otherwise communicated doctrine in a way that is considered false, erroneous, or destructive by the Board of Elders, and who upon reproof chooses to disregard the Elders (Romans 16:17); and (3) the individual has been warned twice to cease from divisive and factious behavior, yet has chosen to disregard the warning (Titus 3:10-11).

### **Section 5. Concerning Resignations and Appeals**

While the Board of Elders can not legally prevent a member of the Church from resigning his/her membership, voluntary resignation of a member who is involved in a process of church discipline will not prevent the Board of Elders from carrying out the full disciplinary process outlined above (including possibly confronting the individual, informing the congregation of his/her actions, and enforcing excommunication).

The Board of Elders has the authority to refuse the transfer of a member's membership to another church, if a process of church discipline is underway regarding that member, even if that process is in its earliest stages and may not yet have necessitated public comment or action.

The members of this church agree that there will be no appeal or action to any court because of the dismissal or because of public statements to the congregation.

### **Section 6. Discipline or Removal of an Elder**

All accusations against an elder must be explored and arbitrated via due process. In accord with biblical command, accusations may not be received except on the basis of testimony received by two or more witnesses as required in 1 Timothy 5:19, 20.

See Article VII, Section 8 for greater elaboration on accusations brought against an elder, as well as the process for investigation, disqualification, and dismissal of an elder.

### **Section 7. Appealing Excommunication**

Should a member of the church who has been excommunicated believe that the process of discipline or the decision to excommunicate were unbiblical, he/she may make appeal through the appropriate prescribed channels through our association of churches to a body of elders outside of Christ's Covenant Church.

### **Section 8. The Process of Reconciliation and/or Restoration**

There are five necessary steps in the process of a person who has been excommunicated being reconciled to the church if such reconciliation is to take place. They are: *conviction, confession, repentance, restitution, and reconciliation/restoration.*

- (1) The individual dismissed from fellowship/membership should be the one to initiate the reconciliation process as he or she comes under the conviction of the Holy Spirit.
- (2) Subsequently, the individual should approach the Board of Elders and confess his/her sin and desire to be reconciled with, and restored to fellowship or membership with, the church.
- (3) At this point, the Board of Elders will evaluate the authenticity and sincerity of his/her repentance, and will determine whether or not the evidence is sufficient enough to confirm a posture and pursuit of true repentance. True confession and repentance involves an acknowledgement of the offense, genuine remorse, godly sorrow, appropriate restitution and renewal of character.
- (4) The individual should seek to make direct or indirect restitution, as appropriate and possible, to rectify the damage his/her sin has caused to others. This may require the individual to publicly and/or privately address members of the congregation in order to seek forgiveness (at the recommendation and requirement of the Elders).
- (5) At the sole discretion of the Elders, assuming the previous steps have been satisfactorily fulfilled, the individual may be formally reconciled and forgiven by the Elders and the congregation, and as desired, restored back into fellowship or membership. This may require a public statement being

made to inform the congregation of the reconciliation process and/or its resolution, so that the repentant person might be graciously received back into fellowship.

## **ARTICLE XII**

### **Settlement of Disputes**

#### **Section 1.** *Concerning Disputes, Conflict, Mediation, Arbitration, & Reconciliation*

Disputes between members of the church which cannot be resolved privately shall be mediated or arbitrated under the oversight of the Board of Elders, in accordance with biblical principles of conflict mediation, arbitration and reconciliation. The Board of Elders will follow the reconciliation process summarized below.

Every attempt should be made to resolve conflicts through these means, except in such matters as involve criminal implications. In such cases, legal process may be mandated by Indiana law and will be required by the Elders. If no legal process is mandated, church members will be expected to ask the church for mediation in all personal disputes (including alleged breaches of contract, sale of real or personal property, and/or loss of employment or employment discrimination), unless the Board of Elders determines that other recourse is permissible and advisable.

(a) *Personal, Private Resolution*

In the context of the local church, disputes or conflicts may arise in which biblical mediation is necessary between two or more conflicting parties. Ideally, believers will be able to resolve their conflict personally and privately—appealing to pastoral counsel, if necessary. More than one attempt at private resolution may be necessary. However, in cases where private attempts at resolution result in an impasse, we believe that God would want the conflicting parties to turn to their local church for guidance (Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15).

(b) *Mediation*

If private resolution is ineffective, then the next phase would be to seek mediation. In mediation, a mediator(s) would be chosen to facilitate constructive conversation and gracious settlement of personal differences or offenses. Under the oversight of the Board of Elders, a trusted mediator may be selected from among (or outside of) the Board. The mediator retains the right to share with the Board of Elders anything pertinent to their care of the conflicting individuals. In mediation, the conflicting parties are the ones who ultimately decide the solution/settlement of the issue.

(c) *Arbitration*

If the mediation process is unsuccessful, the conflicting parties should pursue arbitration. In arbitration, the conflicting parties give up the power to decide their own solution and have agreed to be bound by whatever decision the arbitrators reach. The arbitrators, from among the Board of Elders (or an individual or team designated by them), will hear the perspectives of each side and render a written decision that is equitable and fair. As a symbol of the conflicting parties' commitment to resolution, they will sign the arbitration agreement, which will contain a legally binding, good faith resolution that they have mutually committed to upholding.

#### **Section 2.** *Process of Resolving Congregational Concern Regarding the Eldership*

In the event there is significant concern with the practice and direction of the Eldership, members of the congregation can express these concerns to a member of the diaconate. The deacon member will then bring

the concern to the entire diaconate for further investigation and evaluation. Should the deacons determine it necessary, they may call a special meeting of the church members. The purpose of the special meeting would be to seek resolution and unity between the eldership and the congregation. If this cannot be attained, and the deacons find significant concern remaining among the congregation (as determined by dissenting votes of at least 66% of the total membership), they may begin an outside adjudication process to determine what is best for the church as accords with sound doctrine expressed in our bylaws and statement of faith.

## **ARTICLE XIII**

### **Other Provisions**

#### **Section 1.** *Endorsement of Documents, Contracts*

The Board of Elders, except as in the *Bylaws* otherwise provided, may authorize any officer or officers, agent or agents, to enter into any contract or execute any instrument in the name of and on behalf of the Corporation. Such authority may be general or confined to specific instances. Unless so authorized by the Board of Elders, no officer, agent or employee shall have any power or authority to bind the Corporation by any contract or agreement, or to pledge its credit, or to render it liable for any purpose or to any amount.

#### **Section 2.** *Construction and Definitions*

Unless the context otherwise requires, the Holy Bible, the First Amendment of the Constitution of the United States, and the general provisions of the Indiana Nonprofit Corporation Law shall govern the construction of these *Bylaws*.

#### **Section 3.** *Amendments*

The most recent versions of the *Articles of Incorporation* and these *Bylaws* may be amended and new and additional *Articles* or *Bylaws* may be made from time to time at any time by the Board of Elders in the exercise of the power granted to the Board of Elders in the *Articles* and these *Bylaws*. Such amendments must be made in accordance with guidelines stipulated in these *Bylaws*, so decided by a 75% supermajority of all the members of the Board of Elders.

#### **Section 4.** *Record of Amendments*

Whenever a restatement and/or amendment of the *Articles* or these *Bylaws* is adopted, the change(s) shall be noted, along with copies of the prior and newly adopted *Articles* or *Bylaws* attached, with the date of the meeting included. If the Elders determine that amendments to these *Bylaws* have a material or other impact on the members of the church, appropriate notice shall be made to those affected.

## **ARTICLE XIV**

### **Receipt, Investment, and Disbursement of Funds**

#### **Section 1.** *Receipt of Funds*

The Corporation shall receive all monies or other properties transferred to it for the purposes for which the Corporation was formed (as shown by the *Articles of Incorporation*). However, nothing contained herein shall require the Board of Elders to accept or receive any money or property of any kind if it shall determine in its discretion that receipt of such money or property is contrary to the expressed purposes of the Corporation as shown by said *Articles*.

**Section 2.** *Investment and Disbursement of Funds*

The Corporation shall hold, manage, and disburse any funds or properties received by it from any source in a manner that is consistent with the expressed purposes of this Corporation.

**ARTICLE XV**

**Corporate Records and Reports**

**Section 1.** *Records*

The Corporation shall maintain adequate and correct accounts, books, and records of its business and properties. All such books, records, and accounts shall be kept at its principal place of business in the State of Indiana as fixed by the Board of Elders from time to time.

**Section 2.** *Fiscal Year of the Corporation*

The fiscal year of the Corporation shall begin on the first day of August and end on the last day of July in each year.