

DRAFT – FOR DISCUSSION PURPOSES ONLY

CONSTITUTION OF COVENANT LIFE CHURCH

Adopted XXXX

*“For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon
his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God,
Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.”
Isaiah 9:6 [ESV]*

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PREAMBLE

We, the people of God who are members of Covenant Life Church, united for the worship of God and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ, adopt this constitution as our principal articles of governance for the glory of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in submission to the Holy Bible as summarized in the Statement of Faith of this church.

ARTICLE I: THE RULE OF JESUS CHRIST

Jesus Christ has purchased the church with his blood, and it is his possession. He alone is the King and Head of the Church. God the Father has raised Jesus from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly places, far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and above every name that is named, not only in this age but also in the age to come. The Father has put all things under his feet and given him as head over all things to the Church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills all in all (Ephesians 1:20-23).

ARTICLE II: NAME

The name of this church is Covenant Life Church (hereinafter referred to as “the church” or “this church”).

ARTICLE III: INCORPORATION

The church is incorporated under the laws of the State of Maryland, so that it may own and maintain property to house and support a place of worship (including suitable real estate and buildings); receive, hold, and disburse gifts, bequests, and funds; license ministers of the gospel for civil purposes; and act as necessary to fulfill its mission.

ARTICLE IV: PURPOSE

This church exists by the grace of God and for the glory of God, which is the church’s ultimate purpose in all its activities. Our mission is to make disciples of Jesus Christ who are built on the Word, empowered by the Spirit, and going into all the world with the gospel of God’s grace. We do this through:

- A. Teaching: Growing together through the teaching and study of God’s Word (2 Timothy 2:15, Acts 17:11, 2 Timothy 4:1,2).
- B. Worship: Gathering in weekly congregational worship meetings, as well as encouraging regular small group, family, and individual worship (Colossians 3:16, Hebrews 10:25).
- C. Prayer: Devoting ourselves to individual, family, and corporate intercession (Ephesians 6:18, 1 Timothy 2:1-4, Mark 11:17, Acts 2:42)
- D. Evangelism: Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through the preaching of God’s Word, personal evangelism, and any other means consistent with the teachings of

Holy Scripture (Romans 10:13-14, 2 Corinthians 5:20-21).

- E. Sacraments: Administering the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 11:23-26, Acts 2:38-39).
- F. Discipleship: Discipling and equipping the saints for ministry (Ephesians 4:11-12, Matthew 28:19-20).
- G. Missions: Encouraging, supporting, and participating in gospel missions and church planting: locally, nationally, and to the ends of the earth (Acts 1:8, Matthew 28:19-20).
- H. Fellowship: Encouraging and facilitating biblical community, prayer, and fellowship among believers (Acts 2:42-47, Hebrews 3:12-13).
- I. Service: Sharing the love of Christ by caring for the practical needs of the poor, the widows, the imprisoned, and the orphans in our midst, our community, and the world (James 1:27, Hebrews 13:3, Galatians 2:10, Isaiah 1:17).

ARTICLE V: STATEMENT OF FAITH

Section 5.01 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. (2 Timothy 3:14-17, 2 Peter 1:19-21, Psalm 19:7-11)

Section 5.02 God is Triune. There is one God: infinite, eternal, almighty, and unchangeable in his being, perfect in holiness, truth, and love. In the unity of the godhead there are three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who are co-existent, co-equal, and co-eternal. The Father is not the Son, and the Son is not the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit is not the Father, yet each is truly Deity. One God – Father, Son, and Holy Spirit – is the foundation of Christian faith and life. (Deuteronomy 6:4, Matthew 28:19)

Section 5.03 God the Father. God the Father is the Creator of heaven and earth (Genesis 1). By his Word and for his glory, he freely and supernaturally created the world out of nothing (John 1:1-3). Through the same Word, he daily sustains all his creatures (Hebrews 1:3). He rules over all and is the only Sovereign (Psalm 47:8, 115:3). His plans and purposes cannot be thwarted (Job 42:2). 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 (Romans 8:28-39). He made man for fellowship with himself and intended that all creation should live to the praise of his glory (Ephesians 1:3-14).

Section 5.04 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 (John 1:1-18, Matthew 1:18-25). He was perfect in nature, teaching, and obedience (Hebrews 4:15). 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 (John 1:1-14). 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 mankind, having shed his blood and died a substitutionary death on Calvary's cross (Colossians 1:15-20). 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 forty days appeared to over five hundred witnesses, performing many convincing proofs of his resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:3-7). He ascended into heaven where, at God's right hand, he intercedes for his people and rules as Lord over all (Hebrews 7:25, Ephesians 1:20-22). He is the head of his body, the church, and should be adored, loved, served, and obeyed by all (Colossians 1:18).

Section 5.05 The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit, the Lord and Giver of life, convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment (Psalm 104:30, John 16:8-11). Through the proclamation of the gospel, he persuades men to repent of their sins and confess Jesus as Lord (1 Corinthians 12:3). 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 (1 Corinthians 12:12-13, John 3:5-8, Romans 8:9-11). The Holy Spirit has come to glorify the Son, who in turn came to glorify the Father (John 16:13-15, 17:4). 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 worshipped as God the Third Person of the Trinity (Acts 5:3-4).

Section 5.06 Man. God made man – male and female – in his own image, as the crown of creation, that man might have fellowship with him (Genesis 1:26-27). God created man with a reasonable and immortal soul, endued with knowledge, righteousness, and true holiness, having the law of God written in his heart and power to fulfill it, yet under a possibility of transgressing. He was happy in his communion with God and had dominion over the creatures. Tempted by Satan, man rebelled against God (Genesis 3). 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 (Ephesians 2:1-3). This depravity is radical and pervasive. It extends to his mind, will, and affections. Unregenerate man lives under the dominion of sin and Satan and is at enmity with God (Romans 8:7). Fallen, sinful man, whatever his character or attainments, is lost and without hope apart from salvation in Christ (Ephesians 2:12).

Section 5.07 The Gospel. Jesus Christ is the gospel. The good news is revealed in his birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and return. 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 (Romans 3:21-26, 5:8). Jesus Christ is the only mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5). There is no other name by which men must be saved (Acts 4:12). At the heart of all sound doctrine are 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 gospel (1 Corinthians 2:2).

Section 5.08 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 (Ephesians 1:4-6, Acts 13:48). It is also true that the message of the gospel is only effectual for 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 (Luke 24:46-7, Acts 16:31). Biblical repentance is characterized by a changed life, and saving faith is evidenced by kingdom service or works (Luke 3:8, James 2:14-17). 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 (Luke 9:23-24).

Section 5.09 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 (Ephesians 2:4-9, 1:14). 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 (John 3:16, 2 Corinthians 5:21). 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 (Romans 3:21-26, 5:1-11). The believer is forgiven the debt of his sin and by the miracle of regeneration is liberated from the law of sin and death into the freedom of God's Spirit (Romans 8:1-3).

Section 5.10 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 (2 Corinthians 3:18, Galatians 5:22-23, Romans 8:29). 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 (Galatians 5:16, Matthew 5:16). 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 (Colossians 1:22-23, Romans 14:10-12). The spiritual disciplines, especially Bible study, prayer, worship, and confession, are a vital means of grace in this regard (Jude 20-21, 1 John 1:9, James 5:16). 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 (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24, Philippians 1:6).

Section 5.11 Empowered by the Spirit. In addition to effecting regeneration and sanctification, the Holy Spirit also empowers believers for Christian witness and service (Acts 1:8). While all genuine believers are indwelt by the Holy Spirit at conversion, the New Testament also indicates the importance of an ongoing, empowering work of the Spirit subsequent to conversion. Being indwelt by the Spirit and being filled with the Spirit are theologically distinct (1 Corinthians 12:13, Ephesians 5:18). 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 (1 Corinthians 12:1-11). 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 (1 Corinthians 13:8-10, 12:31).

Section 5.12 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 (Ephesians 1:13, 4:3-4). By the same Word and Spirit, he guides and preserves that new redeemed humanity (Romans 8:14, Ephesians 5:26). 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 (Ephesians 1:13). 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 (Matthew 28:18-20). When God transforms human nature, this then becomes the chief means of society's transformation (Galatians 5:22-23). 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 (Acts 2:42).

All members of the Church universal are to be a vital and committed part of a local church, employing their god given gifts for ministry and service in relation to one another and the world (Ephesians 4:12, 1 Corinthians 12:12-30).

Pastoral leadership equips the saints for the work of ministry and is male (Ephesians 4:12, 1 Timothy 2:11). Women play a vital role in the life and ministry of the church, but in keeping with God's created design, they are not permitted to teach or to have authority over a man (1 Timothy 2:12).

Section 5.13 Sacraments of the Church. Water baptism is intended only for individuals who have professed faith in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior (Acts 2:38). Therefore, in obedience to Christ's command and as a testimony to God, the Church, himself, and the world, a believer should be immersed in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19). 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 his release from the mastery of sin (Romans 6:1-11).

As with baptism, 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's life as a sign of continued participation in the atoning benefits of Christ's death (Matthew 26:26-29). 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 (1 Corinthians 11:27-28, 11:26, 10:17).

Section 5.14 Marriage. Marriage is ordained by God as a covenantal union between one man and one woman, established at creation and affirmed by the Lord Jesus and his apostles (Genesis 1:26-28, 2:15-25, Matthew 19:4-6, Colossians 3:18-22, Hebrews 13:4).

Marriage is intended to image the union between Christ and the Church. Both men and women are made in the image of God and therefore have equal dignity and worth. It is also true that a husband and a wife have been given different roles within the marriage relationship in order to fulfill God's design. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church, while a wife is to submit herself to the loving leadership of her husband just as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ.

Sexual acts outside of the bounds of marriage, including fornication, adultery, homosexuality, polygamy, and any other sexually immoral practice, is prohibited by God and unprofitable for man. (Genesis 1:26-27, Ephesians 5:22-33, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 11:3-12, 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7)

Section 5.15 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 (Matthew 24:30, 1 Thessalonians 4:13-17, Acts 17:31, 24:15, 1 Corinthians 15:24-28, Revelation 21:1-4). 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 (Revelation 20:10, 20:15, 22:1-5). 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 (Romans 8:18-25).

ARTICLE VI: CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Section 6.01 Qualifications. Membership in this church shall be based upon:

- A. A confession of personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and the testimony of believer's baptism (see Section 5.13).

- B. A commitment to and willingness to submit to the doctrinal outlook of the church, as expressed in the Statement of Faith.
- C. Agreement with and signature of the Membership Agreement.
- D. Completion of membership classes and appropriate application forms and a meeting with a pastor/elder confirming these qualifications.
- E. Upon meeting the qualifications above, and upon approval of the governing board, individuals will be admitted into membership and will be welcomed into to the church.

Section 6.02 Children of Members.

- A. Given the nature of the responsibilities and accountability involved with church membership, members must be at least eighteen (18) years of age or have graduated from high school.
- B. Minor children of members may enjoy all the age-appropriate privileges and responsibilities of membership (except for affirmations at membership meetings) as a part of their parents' family if they live in the same household and under their parents' authority. Upon a child's eighteenth (18th) birthday (or graduation from high school), he or she must individually fulfill all the qualifications for admission to membership of the church. Otherwise, he or she will not be considered a member.
- C. Children of members should be baptized prior to participating in the Lord's Supper.

Section 6.03 Duties and Privileges. Members are expected to conduct themselves in accordance with Article IV and the Membership Agreement. Each member is expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the church, consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God. Only members of this congregation shall be entitled to serve in the ministries of the church; non-members may serve on an ad-hoc basis with the approval of the pastors/elders. Notwithstanding, non-members may serve the church for purposes of administration and professional consultation.

Members should also strive to attend members' meetings, pray for the concerns of the church, and submit to the spiritual leadership of the pastors, as they in turn submit to Christ (Hebrews 13:17; 1 Corinthians 11:1, see also Article 13.01).

Section 6.04 Termination or Transfer. Members may be removed from membership at their request by informing a pastor/elder of the church of their intention to withdraw and the reasons for their withdrawal. If a member requests withdrawal of membership because of specific problems or disappointments with the church, the pastors/elders shall attempt to resolve those matters so that the member may remain in the church and enjoy greater fruitfulness and personal spiritual growth. If the pastors/elders are unable to resolve those matters, they shall offer to assist the member in locating a church of like faith and practice

that can respond more effectively to his/her gifts and needs and the governing board will end the individuals' membership.

Members of the church in good standing at their request shall be given letters stating their standing in the church and indicating their termination of membership. A member failing to share in the fellowship and responsibilities of the church for a period of one year (12 months) may forfeit membership.

ARTICLE VII: CHURCH LEADERSHIP

Section 7.01 Church Offices. There are two church offices listed in the New Testament (Philippians 1:1, 1 Timothy 3:1-13): pastor/elder and deacon. On this basis, Covenant Life Church has established both the office of pastor/elder and the office of deacon.

Section 7.02 Church Leadership. The responsibility for the leadership of the church shall reside in the pastors/elders of the church. In order to steward the pastoral resources of the church, authority is delegated to a governing subset of the non-vocational and vocational pastors/elders (hereinafter referred to as the governing board) as stipulated below (Article VIII). Key issues in the church require the vote of all of the pastors/elders.

Section 7.03 Vocational Pastors/Elders.

7.03.1 Qualifications. A vocational pastor/elder shall be a man (1 Timothy 2:12, 1 Timothy 3:1-7) and a member of the church whose character and gifts conform to the biblical qualifications presented in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4. In addition, the gifts and experience of the individual under consideration shall match the needs of the church and the duties of the position.

“We affirm that the creation narrative in Genesis 1:27 views men and women as equally created in the image of God. Therefore, men and women have equal value to God and have equal value as persons, and equal value to the church. We encourage women to full and free participation in the various ministries of the church, and desire to take full account of the wisdom that God has given to women with respect to the life of the church.”¹ (1 Timothy 2:12). However, Scripture teaches that the role of pastor/elder is reserved for men.

7.03.2 Duties. Specific duties will be set forth in a job description for all vocational pastor/elders. When considering the addition of a new vocational pastor/elder, the governing board shall approve a ministry job description, prior to his hiring. In fulfilling these duties, all vocational pastor/elders are accountable to the governing board. Ultimately, pastor/elders will give an account to God for their performance. (Hebrews 13:17).

¹ Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology*, Zondervan, 1994, p. 937.

7.03.3 Selection Process. The governing board is responsible for determining the leadership needs of the church and hiring men to meet those needs, with the input and affirmation of the congregation as described below.

7.03.4 Hiring. The governing board may hire qualified men from within the church or from other churches and denominations to become pastoral candidates when the governing board has approved both the candidate's assessment (character/gifting) and the candidate's job description.

7.03.5 Presentation of a Pastoral Candidate. After serving as a pastoral candidate for a period of time, a candidate will be assessed by the governing board and begin a confirmation process defined by the governing board. After the candidate has successfully completed the confirmation process, the governing board shall present the name of the candidate it is recommending as a vocational pastor/elder to the congregation at least four (4) weeks prior to the members' meeting (Article XIII). Members will be invited to affirm or express concerns about the candidate.

Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for an office, based on scriptural principles (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4), should express concerns to the pastors/elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant church members' meeting. If the elders conclude that the candidate meets the qualifications, he will be presented to the congregation for affirmation.

7.03.6 Affirmation of Pastors/Elders. Upon affirmation by sixty-six percent (66%) of the congregation attending the members' meeting, the candidate will be installed as a pastor/elder with the laying on of hands before the church congregation (1 Timothy 5:22).

If a candidate is unable to receive a sixty-six percent (66%) vote of affirmation, the candidate will not be installed as a vocational pastor/elder.

7.03.7 Selection and Service. Once a man has been affirmed by the congregation as a vocational pastor/elder of the church and has been prayed for before the congregation, he will be recognized as a pastor/elder. He is expected to serve as a pastor/elder indefinitely, subject to performance evaluation. (see Sections 7.07 and 8.08 below).

7.03.8 Resignation. Any vocational pastor/elder may resign by submitting his resignation in writing to a member of the governing board. The letter will be distributed to the other members of the governing board, and the pastor/elder's resignation shall be effective upon formal acceptance by the governing board or at such a date as the board shall set.

Section 7.04 Non-Vocational Pastors/Elders.

7.04.1 Qualifications. A non-vocational pastor/elder shall be a man (1 Timothy 2:12, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1-5-9) and a member of the church for at least one year

whose character and gifts conform to the biblical qualifications presented in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4. In addition, the gifts and experience of the individual under consideration shall match the needs of the church and the duties of the position.

7.04.2 Service. The church may recognize as many qualified non-vocational pastor/elders as the governing board deems useful.

7.04.3 Duties. When considering the addition of a new non-vocational pastor/elder, the governing board shall approve a ministry role description. In fulfilling their duties, non-vocational pastors/elders are accountable to the governing board. Ultimately, all pastor/elders will give an account to God for their performance. (Hebrews 13:17).

7.04.4 Congregational Recommendations. Members may recommend additional non-vocational pastor/elder candidates to the pastoral team at any time.

7.04.5 Candidate Selection. The governing board shall review member submissions along with any individuals already under consideration. The candidates shall have completed (or are able to complete) the elder training program.

7.03.6 Presentation of Candidates. After the candidate has successfully completed the elder training program and has been nominated by the governing board as a non-vocational pastor/elder candidate, the governing board shall present the name of the candidate(s) at least four (4) weeks prior to the members' meeting to the congregation. Members will be invited to affirm or express concerns about the candidate(s).

Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for an office, based on scriptural principles (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4), should express concerns to the pastors/elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant church members' meeting. If the elders conclude that the candidate meets the qualifications, he will be presented to the congregation for affirmation.

7.04.7 Affirmation of Non-Vocational Elders. Upon affirmation by sixty-six percent (66%) of the congregation attending the members' meeting, the candidate will be installed as a non-vocational elder with the laying on of hands before the church congregation (1 Timothy 5:22).

If a candidate is unable to receive a sixty-six percent (66%) vote of affirmation, the candidate will not be installed as a non-vocational pastor/elder.

7.04.8 Selection and Service. Once a man has been affirmed by the congregation as a non-vocational pastor/elder of the church and has been installed as an elder, he will be recognized as a pastor/elder. He is expected to serve as a pastor/elder indefinitely, subject to evaluation of the pastoral team and the governing board (see Section 7.07).

7.04.9 Resignation. Any non-vocational pastor/elder may resign by submitting his resignation in writing to the governing board. The pastor's resignation shall be effective upon formal acceptance by the board or at such a date as the board shall set. If a non-vocational pastor/elder is no longer able to fulfill his responsibilities, he will be asked to tender his resignation by the governing board.

Section 7.05 Lead Pastor.

7.05.1 Qualifications. The lead pastor will be a member of the church (or should be willing and eligible to become a member of the church) and a man whose character and gifts conform to the biblical qualifications presented in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4. In addition, the gifts and experience of the individual under consideration shall match the needs of the church.

7.05.2 Tenure. The lead pastor shall be called for an indefinite term of office.

7.05.3 Duties. The job description of the lead pastor will be determined by the governing board. His primary duty will be to serve as the church's primary preaching and teaching pastor/elder (1 Timothy 5:17, Ephesians 4:11, 2 Timothy 4:2, Titus 1:9), thereby preparing God's people for works of service (Ephesians 4:12). The lead pastor shall be directly accountable to the governing board, which will advise, assist, and evaluate him in his work. Ultimately, the lead pastor will give an account to God for his performance. (Hebrews 13:17).

Section 7.06 Change of Lead Pastor/Elder

7.06.1 Discipline. In the event that discipline of the lead pastor/elder becomes necessary, the governing board shall assume responsibility for the disciplinary process in keeping with scriptural instructions (1 Timothy 5:19-21), as well as the process stipulated in Section 8.06.

7.06.2 Resignation. In the event that the lead pastor/elder tenders his resignation to the governing board, the board shall consider whether it should accept the resignation. If the reasons for the resignation are deemed insufficient, then the governing board shall seek to dissuade the pastor from his resignation. If the pastor remains resolved to resign, the board shall accept the resignation and inform the church.

7.06.3 Severability. The remaining pastor/elders may continue to serve the church when the lead pastor retires, resigns, or is removed for any reason.

7.06.4 Removal of Lead Pastor. Recommendation for the change of the lead pastor may be initiated by the governing board or the lead pastor. The recommendation will be confirmed by a sixty-six percent (66%) vote of all of non-vocational and vocational pastor/elders. The lead pastor will relinquish his position within three (3) months after the results of a vote for pastoral change or at a time that is determined by the governing board.

7.06.4.1 Repositioning the Lead Pastor. When a lead pastor relinquishes his position, he will step down from the governing board immediately. The governing board will reassess and determine the future role of the former lead pastor.

7.06.5 Lead Pastor Candidates. In the event that a new lead pastor is to be called, the governing board shall present a candidate to the congregation. A vote of sixty-six percent (66%) of the governing board will be required to bring the candidate before the congregation for affirmation.

7.06.6 Congregational Involvement. The governing board will lead the church in becoming familiar with the character and ministry of any candidate being seriously considered as the next lead pastor, through preaching and the sharing of information about his training and experience.

7.06.7 Presentation of Lead Pastor. Once the governing board has selected a lead pastor candidate, it shall present the name of the candidate to the congregation at least eight (8) weeks prior to the members' meeting. Members will be invited to affirm or express concerns about the candidate.

Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for his role or office, based on scriptural principles (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4), should express concerns to the pastors/elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant church members' meeting. If the elders conclude that the candidate meets the qualifications, he will be presented to the congregation for affirmation.

7.06.8 Congregational Affirmation of Lead Pastor. An announcement for a special members' meeting for the affirmation of the lead pastor shall be made at least four (4) weeks prior to the meeting. Upon affirmation by sixty-six percent (66%) of the congregation attending the members' meeting, the candidate will be installed as lead pastor with the laying on of hands before the congregation (1 Timothy 5:22).

If a candidate is unable to receive a sixty-six percent (66%) vote of affirmation, the candidate will not be installed as lead pastor/elder.

7.06.9 Interim Lead Pastor. In the event that there is a vacancy in the lead pastor position, the governing board may appoint an interim lead pastor from its current staff or from outside the current staff until a new lead pastor is selected. An interim lead pastor shall normally not serve longer than one (1) year.

Section 7.07 Resolving Charges Against a Pastor/Elder.

Any charge(s) against a (vocational or non-vocational) pastor/elder because of moral impropriety or heresy shall be investigated by the governing board. Upon a sixty-six percent (66%) vote of the governing board that the charges are of a substantive nature, a task force will be assigned to investigate them. A simple majority of the task force must be

non-vocational pastors/elders.

If it is determined that the matters are non-scandalous issues of personal offense, the member will be referred to our policy on handling grievances with elders.

- A. The task force shall bring the results of its investigation to the governing board, which will adjudicate the charges against the accused pastor/elder according to the criteria of Scripture (James 3:1, 1 Timothy 5:19-21).
- B. A sixty-six percent (66%) vote of the governing board is necessary in order to find a pastor/elder guilty of any charge brought against him. The accused pastor/elder will not be permitted to vote on matters pertaining to the investigation. If the accused pastor/elder is found guilty on one or more charges, the governing board shall determine the consequences and the appropriate communication to the church (1 Timothy 5:20).
- C. If the accused pastor/elder is found not guilty of all charges, the governing board shall determine what communication, if any, needs to be made to the congregation.
- D. A pastor/elder who has been removed from office by disciplinary action may, depending on the circumstances and only after evidencing the fruit of repentance over time, be considered by the governing board and the congregation for a return to service in the office of a pastor/elder, following the selection and affirmation procedures outlined in this constitution.

Section 7.08 Change of Pastoral Role.

7.08.1 Change of Role. Subject to governing board approval, the management structures of the church may after a period of assessment, recommend the change in status of a vocational pastor/elder to a non-vocational pastor/elder. This change must be affirmed by a sixty-six percent (66%) vote of the governing board.

7.08.2 Termination. If it is decided after a formal evaluation process that either a vocational or a non-vocational pastor/elder is (1) no longer functioning effectively or fruitfully in his role, or (2) is found to no longer qualify for his position because of personal or moral failure, he may removed from the office of pastor/elder. This change must be affirmed by sixty-six percent (66%) of the governing board.

ARTICLE VIII: GOVERNING BOARD

Section 8.01 Composition. The church shall be governed by a governing board comprised of both vocational and non-vocational elders. The board shall be comprised of a minimum of nine (9) members, including a minimum of five (5) non-vocational elders. This board is considered the board of the corporation/church and is subject to the relevant laws of the state of Maryland.

Section 8.02 Vocational Pastors on the Governing Board. Vocational pastor/elders will be recommended for service on the governing board by vote of all the pastors/elders. Appointment to the board requires a simple majority vote of the all of the pastors/elders. Each pastor under consideration will recuse himself from any discussion or vote on his potential role as a governing board member.

Remaining pastors/elders will function as regular members of the pastoral team and may attend governing board meetings but will not have a formal vote in any official proceeding (except those requiring the votes of the governing board and all pastors/elders). They may raise objections to decisions made as described in Section 8.07. Additional responsibilities of pastors/elders not serving on the governing board are also defined in Section 8.07.

8.02.1 Terms. Each vocational pastor/elder who has been appointed to serve on the board shall serve for a term of three (3) years.

Section 8.03 Non-Vocational Pastors/Elders Serving on the Governing Board. Non-vocational pastors/elders will serve on the governing board at the request of the pastors/elders for a period of three (3) years. Appointment to the board requires a simple majority vote of all of the pastors/elders. Each pastor under consideration will recuse himself from any discussion or vote on his potential role as a governing board member.

Remaining non-vocational pastors/elders will function as members of the pastoral team and may attend governing board meetings but will not have a formal vote in any official proceeding. They may raise objections to decisions made as described in Section 8.07. Additional responsibilities of non-vocational elders not serving on the governing board are defined in Section 8.07.

Section 8.04 Officers. The governing board shall elect a chairman and secretary from its own membership.

8.04.1 Chairman. The chairman shall preside at all meetings of the governing board.

8.04.2 Secretary. The secretary shall keep minutes of all meetings of the governing board.

Section 8.05 Duties of the Governing Board. The governing board is responsible for governing the church and tending the flock as overseers. Specifically, these responsibilities include:

- A. Oversight of the preaching and teaching of God's Word.
- B. Administration of church discipline and judicial processes.
- C. Oversight of the strategic long-term goals and objectives of the church.
- D. Administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper.

- E. Clarification and guarding of church doctrine and practices, including the formulation of church policies and any revision to the church constitution and by-laws.
- F. Evaluation of the pastoral staff, including the preparation and/ revision of job descriptions.
- G. Delegation to the management structures of the pastoral team (see Article XII) such responsibilities as it deems appropriate.
- H. Oversight of the Financial Advisory Committee (FAC) and the pastoral team in establishing and presenting the church budget for congregational affirmation.
- I. Final authority for affairs pertaining to property and other temporal matters as required by civil law for nonprofit corporations.
- J. Oversight of the membership rolls of the church.
- K. The receipt, management, and stewardship of the resources received for the accomplishment of our mission (see Article XIV).

Section 8.06 Support of Governing Board by Pastors/Elders not on the Board. Vocational and non-vocational pastors/elders not serving on the governing board will:

- A. Preach and teach God's Word (1 Peter 5:1-3).
- B. Be involved in the strategic long-term goals and objectives for of the church.
- C. Administrate baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- D. Clarify and guard church doctrine and practices, including the formulation of church policies and any revision to the church constitution and by-laws.
- E. Participate in the election of new governing board members and any other votes so stipulated in the constitution.
- F. Read the minutes of each governing board meeting.

Vocational and non-vocational pastors/elders not serving on the governing board may:

- A. Ask for a meeting with a governing board member to discuss questions or concerns related to any decision.
- B. If their concerns are not assuaged, they may call for an item to be placed on the agenda of the next meeting of the governing board.
- C. If concerns are substantial enough, the pastor/elder may call for a vote of all of the pastor/elders on the matter.

Section 8.07 Removal of a Pastor/Elder from the Board. Any member of the governing board may be removed when sixty-six percent (66%) of the entire board votes for his removal. The members of the governing board shall be notified of such proposed removal at least twenty-four (24) hours prior to the meeting. A member of the governing board being considered for removal will have the opportunity to talk to the board, but he will be recused from the discussions to remove him and will not participate in the final vote related to his removal as a governing board member.

Section 8.08 Resignation from the Board. Any member of the governing board may resign by submitting his resignation in writing to the chairman or the secretary of the governing board. The resignation shall be effective upon formal acceptance by the governing board or at such date as the governing board shall set.

Section 8.9 Meetings. Generally, the governing board shall meet at least once each month. Special meetings may be called by the chairman, lead pastor, or a majority of the members of the governing board. Special meetings will require three (3) days' notice unless waived by a majority of the members of the governing board.

Section 8.10 Quorum. A majority of the governing board membership shall constitute a quorum.

Section 8.11 Board Decisions. Unless stipulated otherwise, a simple majority is required for decisions made by the governing board.

ARTICLE IX: DEACONS AND DEACONESSES

Section 9.01 Deacons. Deacons are men in the church who fulfill the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:8-10 & 12 and Acts 6:3 and serve under the direction and oversight of the pastors/elders.

Section 9.01.1 Qualifications. In accordance with 1 Timothy 3:8-10 & 12, deacons shall be men of dignity, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain, holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience, first tested and found blameless, and (if married) faithful husbands who manage their families well. In accordance with Acts 6:3, they must also be men who are of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom.

Section 9.01.2 Responsibilities. Deacons, under the direction and oversight of the pastors/elders, shall attend to the ministry needs of our members and, if it seems wise and appropriate, may also address the ministry needs of non-members and those in our community. Deacons may also perform other duties as determined by the governing board.

Section 9.01.3 Authority. The office of deacon is not a governing or teaching office; however, a person holding the office is not necessarily prohibited from teaching in the church.

Section 9.02 Deaconesses. Deaconesses are women in the church who fulfill the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:11 and serve with the deacons under the direction and oversight of the pastors/elders.

Section 9.02.1 Qualifications. In accordance with 1 Timothy 3:11, deaconesses shall be women of dignity, not slanderers, sober-minded, and faithful in all things.

Section 9.02.2 Responsibilities. Deaconesses shall serve alongside the deacons in the execution of their responsibilities, especially as it relates to ministry to women.

Section 9.02.3 Authority. Scriptures reserve certain activities in the church, namely teaching and exercising authority (1 Timothy 2:12), for the men of the church. Deaconesses are not an exception to these scriptural teachings.

9.03 Deacon and Deaconess Candidates. Candidates for diaconate ministry can be recommended by the elders or by members of the congregation. The elders should seek recommendations and involvement from the congregation in the nomination process.

Section 9.03.1 Presentation of Candidates. Candidates for diaconate ministry will be tested according to 1 Timothy 3:10. After the candidate has successfully completed diaconate training and has been nominated by the governing board as a candidate for diaconate ministry, the governing board shall present the name of the candidate(s) to the congregation at least four (4) weeks prior to the members' meeting. Members will be invited to affirm or express concerns about the candidate(s).

Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for diaconate ministry should express such concern to the pastors/elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant church members' meeting.

Section 9.03.2 Affirmation of Candidates. A sixty-six percent (66%) vote of affirmation will be required for a person to be selected as a deacon or deaconess.

Section 9.03.3 Selection and Service. Deacons and deaconesses shall serve one term lasting three (3) years. After this they must be reaffirmed by the pastor/elders.

Deacons and deaconesses may take sabbaticals from service as needed upon approval of the pastors/elders.

Section 9.03.4 Termination of Service. The following are reasons for termination of service.

- A. Resignation. Any deacon/deaconess may resign by submitting his/her resignation in writing to the governing board. The resignation shall be effective upon formal acceptance by the governing board or at such date as the governing board shall set. If a deacon/deaconess is no longer able to fulfill his/her responsibilities, he/she will be asked to tender his/her resignation to the

- governing board.
- B. Persistent conduct that violates the biblical qualifications for the office. This requires a sixty-six percent (66%) vote of the pastor/elders.
 - C. Persistent disagreement with the doctrinal outlook of the church as expressed in the statement of faith. This requires a sixty-six percent (66%) vote of the pastors/elders.

ARTICLE X: CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Section 10.01 Discipline. Discipline is the exercise of authority given by the Lord Jesus Christ to the church and exercised by the pastors/elders to instruct and guide its members and to promote the church's purity and welfare (For fuller explanation on this topic, please refer to the church's policy on Church Discipline).

All members of the church will be taught and exhorted to conduct their lives according to the standards set forth in Scripture. Such conduct includes individual moral purity (Galatians 5:22-23, 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Ephesians 4:25-32) and the promotion of corporate unity and doctrinal fidelity (Ephesians 4:3, Romans 16:17-18, 2 Timothy 3:1-17, Titus 3:10-11).

Section 10.02 Agreement to Submit to the Process of Church Discipline. Every church member consents to a willingness to support and when necessary submit to the process of church discipline outlined below.

Section 10.03 Purposes of Discipline. The church is commanded to pursue loving formal discipline of its members when they continue in open and/or habitual sin. The purpose of church discipline includes the following:

- A. To help us conform individually and corporately to Christ, in order to protect the purity and unity of his church, for the glory of God (Colossians 1:28, Ephesians 4:1-6, 1 Corinthians 10:31).
- B. To help restore a wandering soul back to Christ (Matthew 18:10-14, 15-17, 1 Corinthians 5:5, Galatians 6:1-5).
- C. To help protect the church from false teachers and division (Acts 20:25-31, Titus 1:10-11).

Section 10.04 Process of Discipline. Should any member persist in sin, Matthew 18:15-18, I Corinthians 5:5-7, and Galatians 6:1, shall inform the process of discipline to accomplish the purposes stated above.

- A. First, one should go privately to his fellow member and show him his fault (Matthew 18:15).
- B. If that fails, one should involve one or two others to establish the offense and further pursue repentance (Matthew 18:16).

- C. If that fails, one should tell the appropriate segment of the church for further reproof (Matthew 18:17). The appropriate segment of the church will be determined by the governing board, based on what will benefit the individual and the members of the church; in some cases, it could include the entire church.
- D. If still unrepentant, one should treat the brother or sister as an unbeliever by terminating his or her membership. Although this will likely include disassociation and severance of fellowship, the church's posture should be to win the individual back to Christ (Matthew 18:17). The church reserves the right to determine that some sins require the immediate termination of membership, as directed by 1 Corinthians 5.

The entire process of church discipline outlined above shall be carried out and enforced in a spirit of Christian love, care, and sensitivity (Matthew 18:21-22, Galatians 6:1, 2 Timothy 2:22-26).

Section 10.05 Enactment of Discipline. It is hoped that the preliminary steps of discipline outlined above will result in repentance. However, if there is no indication of repentance after these steps are taken, the unrepentant person shall be removed from membership. This will be decided by the governing board after due consideration, personal appeals for repentance, and prayer. The reason for removal shall be communicated personally if possible or in a pastoral letter sent to the individual.

Section 10.06 Removal or Transfer. If it appears to the governing board that a member has requested removal from membership merely to avoid church discipline, that request shall not be given effect until the disciplinary process has been properly concluded (Matthew 18:12-20).

Section 10.07 Restoration and Repentance. When the governing board concludes that an individual who has been placed under church discipline demonstrates genuine repentance, he or she can be restored into church membership.

ARTICLE XI: COOPERATION

This church may voluntarily associate with other churches or organizations in accomplishing its mission and purpose at the discretion of its governing board. These associations may not involve the subordination of the authority of this local church to any outside authority.

ARTICLE XII: MANAGEMENT STRUCTURES

Section 12.01 Management Structures. The governing board may establish management/leadership structures to provide oversight of ministry. These structures will report to and be accountable to the governing board.

Section 12.02 Committees. In order to promote efficient handling of governing board matters, the governing board may appoint various committees from within its

membership, the other elders, the staff, and the congregation at large to accomplish the mission of the church. These committees shall perform tasks solely in accordance with the duties and powers specifically delegated by the governing board. All councils and committees shall exist for the period specified by the governing board.

The general functions of committees are:

- A. To bring recommendations to the governing board.
- B. To provide a wider base of counsel and assistance to the pastors/elders.

ARTICLE XIII: MEMBERS' MEETINGS

Section 13.01 Members' Meetings. The governing board will call members of the church together at least once per year. Members' meetings will provide the pastors/elders an opportunity to present major initiatives and discuss other pertinent church issues. Members' meetings in which congregational affirmation is involved will be announced to the congregation at least four (4) weeks in advance.

Congregational affirmation shall occur in the following instances:

- A. Affirmation of a new lead pastor (Section 7.06.8)
- B. Installation of pastor/elders (Sections 7.03.6 and 7.04.7)
- C. Out-of-budget expenses in excess of five percent (5%) of annual operating budget.
- D. Annual church budget (Sections 14.02.6.C & 14.04)
- E. Changes to the constitution and Statement of Faith as set forth in Article XV.
- F. Other matters deemed appropriate for congregational affirmation as determined by the governing board.

Section 13.02 Voting Policy

13.02.1 Eligibility. All adult members of Covenant Life Church in good standing shall be eligible to vote in church membership meetings.

13.02.2 Vote Required for Decision. A simple majority vote of those members voting shall be required in all church decisions, except as specified elsewhere.

13.02.3 Quorum. At all members' meetings the members present shall constitute a quorum, provided the provisions of section 13.01 for notification have been met. Votes shall be tallied based on the number of votes cast by members present.

13.02.4 Absentee/Proxy Voting. There shall be no provision for absentee or proxy voting.

ARTICLE XIV: FISCAL MATTERS

Section 14.01 Governing Board Oversight. The governing board shall conduct its affairs with integrity in the sight of God and man and shall maintain prudent and responsible control and accountability over all the funds it receives.

Section 14.02 Financial Advisory Committee (FAC).

14.02.1 Composition. The FAC shall be comprised of no fewer than five (5) non-staff members of the church. In addition, two (2) staff members responsible for the church finances will be appointed by the governing board to attend these meetings as non-voting members.

14.02.2 Purpose. The FAC provides counsel to the governing board in financial, business, personnel, and administrative matters. It will function in accordance with the responsibilities outlined in Section 14.02.06 of this constitution.

14.02.3 Qualifications. The FAC is comprised of individuals of integrity who are not employees of the church and who possess significant business, management, or financial knowledge, as well as proven character as followers of Christ. Each individual must be a member in good standing of the church.

14.02.4 Term. Each FAC member shall serve for a term of three (3) years. A FAC member shall not serve more than two (2) consecutive terms, after which they shall be ineligible for reaffirmation for at least one (1) year.

14.02.5 Selection. Candidates will be appointed to the FAC by agreement of the governing board and a majority of the current FAC.

14.02.6 Duties. The FAC shall monitor the financial affairs and facility needs of the church, and serve in an advisory capacity to the governing board as follows:

- A. Review monthly financial statements of the church and provide counsel to the governing board.
- B. Make recommendations to the governing board regarding the purchase or sale of property, the borrowing of money, substantial gifts, and the establishing of special offerings or funds.
- C. Review the annual church budget to ensure that it is consistent with the approved ministry strategies, goals, and objectives of the church. In conjunction with the board of governing pastors they will prepare the annual budget for presentation and affirmation by the congregation. The annual church budget shall be approved by a simple majority of the congregation.

- D. Work with the compensation subcommittee (Section 14.02.8) for all budgeted and non-budgeted compensation issues.
- E. Provide input and recommendations on financial matters as needed.

14.02.7 Meetings. The FAC shall meet as necessary to carry out its assigned duties; it shall meet no less than four (4) times per fiscal year.

14.02.8 Compensation Subcommittee. The FAC will recommend, and the governing board will approve, a compensation subcommittee, which shall propose the salary and financial benefits for all church staff. This subcommittee will be comprised of members of the church who possess a background in this area of expertise. This subcommittee will propose salary and benefit packages based on comparisons with comparable churches. Individual base salaries shall be recommended based upon each staff person's experience, years of service, responsibilities, and performance. Recommendations shall be submitted to the FAC for approval. After approval of the FAC, the non-vocational pastors/elders serving on the governing board shall approve the salary recommendations for inclusion in the annual budget. In the event there are fewer than four non-vocational elders on the governing board, the FAC shall approve compensation recommendations.

Section 14.03 Fiscal Year. Unless otherwise amended by the governing board, the fiscal year shall begin on September 1 and shall end on August 31 of the following year. The governing board shall have the power to set, and from time to time to change, the fiscal year of the church.

Section 14.04 Budget Approval. A budget shall be approved by the membership at a members' meeting prior to the start of the fiscal year. Should a budget not be approved prior to the start of the new fiscal year, expenditures may continue at the prior year's level until the new budget is approved.

ARTICLE XV: AMENDMENTS

Section 15.01 Amendments to the Constitution. This constitution may be amended by a sixty-six percent (66%) vote of the pastors/elders, and subsequent affirmation by the congregation as described below. Amendments to this constitution by the governing board may only be approved at a meeting for which each pastor/elder has received notice at least thirty (30) days prior to the date of the meeting, and the notice must contain the proposed amendment(s) to the constitution to be considered at the meeting.

Before adoption, any governing board-approved amendment to the constitution must be affirmed by a sixty-six percent (66%) vote of the membership present at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing and shall have been announced from the pulpit at church services two successive Sundays prior to the vote. The revised church constitution shall be made available to church members.

Any member with reason to believe that the amendment is not biblically sound or helpful should express concerns to the pastors/elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant church members' meeting. The board will follow up with all concerns expressed.