



sojourn **church**  
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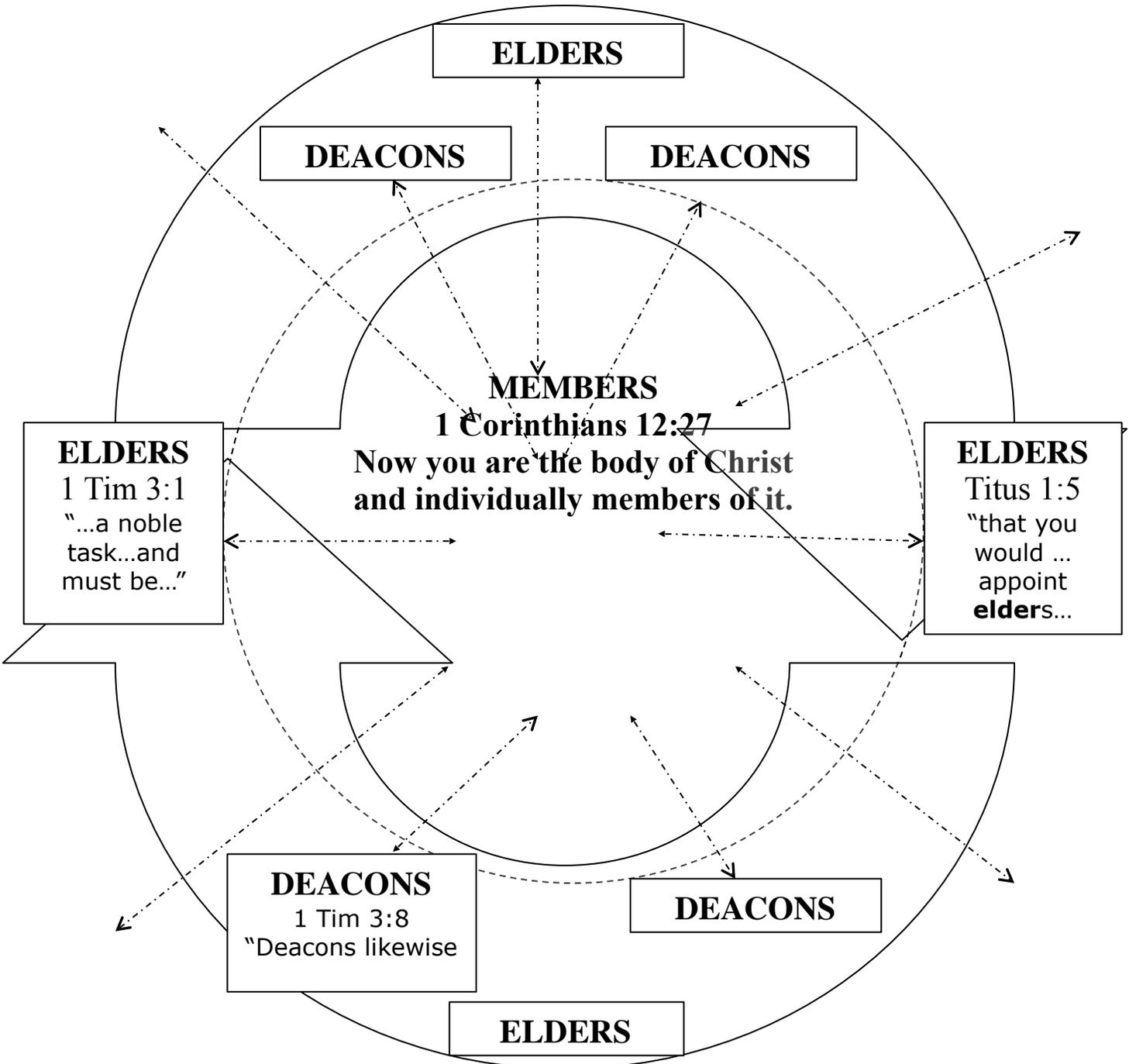
## **By-Laws of Sojourn Community Church**

“As a group of people redeemed by God’s grace shown in Christ Jesus, we willingly organize ourselves under the headship of Christ and do submit ourselves to the following articles so that all our affairs may be conducted in a fitting and orderly fashion for the glory of God.”

**Colossians 1:15-23**

<sup>15</sup> [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. <sup>16</sup> For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. <sup>17</sup> And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup> And he is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in everything he might be preeminent. <sup>19</sup> For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, <sup>20</sup> and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross.

<sup>21</sup> And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, <sup>22</sup> he has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him, <sup>23</sup> if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.



**BY-LAWS OF THE  
SOJOURN COMMUNITY CHURCH  
OF EVANSVILLE/NEWBURGH, IN**

**Introduction**

These By-Laws are established under Article VI Section 5 of the Constitution of Journey 242/Sojourn Community Church and are in accordance with that document. They seek to implement an elder form of rule, by congregational support.

**ARTICLE I – MEMBERSHIP**

**Section 1. Defined.** Membership does not accord a “right” but a taking responsibility of the discipleship and mission of following Jesus into disciple making as a part of Sojourn Community Church. We “own” this by taking responsibility for the mission and relationships as Scripture reveals it to us. As the church grows in numbers and maturity it is recommended, and likely, that covenant or promises to the community, mission, and purpose of the church will be added as needed for direction, guidance, and unity. We are declaring Jesus as head, and taking on the mission of making disciples through leaders, mission, and following Jesus with other members of Sojourn.

**Section 2. Admission.** Membership, as a function of this church, is to confirm membership in Christ’s Church, to promote our Christian life together and for the purpose of maintaining local church government in such a manner that our affairs may be conducted in decency and good order. To that end the following will apply for those seeking membership:

a. Attendance and relational involvement. Normally, to be considered a candidate for membership, an individual shall attend weekly services or gatherings for six months. This is to demonstrate a genuine desire to worship with us, commitment to this church, time to develop relationships and to be sure they want to join us. This should also allow current church members to determine if the potential candidate should be accepted into membership.

b. Membership teaching or class. All candidates for membership shall be required to complete a membership teaching conducted by the Elders. This class shall include at least four sessions. The class will cover the Statement of Faith of the Baptist General Conference, the constitution and by-laws, and its Values, Vision, and Mission, as well as other topics the Elders deem necessary. Candidates will present their personal testimony during this time so that the Elders can verify they meet the qualifications for membership as stated in Article VII, Section 2, of the Constitution of this church. Any reservations prospective member may have with the Statement of Faith will be discussed during the class or privately and the Elders will determine if those reservations are significant enough to disqualify the prospective member.

c. Congregational Vote. To be received into the membership of this church, a candidate must have completed the membership class, be recommended to the congregation by the Elders, and be accepted by a simple majority vote of the members at a congregational business meeting with a 30% quorum.

## **Section 2. Privileges and responsibilities.**

a. Members. Members who are 17 years of age or older may vote at any congregational business meeting. If qualified according to these By-Laws and called, members may serve in affirmed positions of leadership in this church.

b. Non-Voting Members. Members unable to attend business meetings for reasons such as out-of-the-area school or work commitments, missionary or military service, or physical incapacity may be designated as non-voting members by the Elders and will not be counted toward a quorum. This should normally be a temporary situation with a foreseeable conclusion except for incapacity.

c. Reinstatement of Voting Privileges. Non-voting members who desire to be voting members must apply to and be approved by the Elders and be announced as such at a congregational business meeting before any voting takes place.

**Section 3. Responsibilities.** Members must seek to fulfil their duties as described in Article VII sections 3 and 4 of the Constitution. They should contribute to maintaining contact with the Elders so that the Elders may help them fulfill these requirements.

## **Section 4. Termination.**

a. Resignation or death. Members will be dropped from membership at their resignation or in the event of their death. A personal resignation request may be made verbally to one of the Elders. A written notification, while acceptable, is not necessary.

b. Non-attendance or lack of commitment. Members who have not attended a worship service or Congregational Business Meeting at this church for a significant period of time may be dropped from the membership by the Elders. The individual will be given notice prior to their removal. Furthermore, if the Elders see the member regularly failing to live up to their responsibilities outlined in Article VII of the Constitution, they will seek to strengthen, encourage and edify the member. If, after diligent efforts, the member is still failing in their constitutional duties, the Elders may drop them from membership.

c. Disciplinary action. The procedures listed in Article II Section 2(d)iv shall be followed in the case of church discipline, also if leading to excommunication.

**Section 5. Reinstatement.** Persons dropped from the membership as provided in the previous section may be reinstated by the Elders in the following manners, for:

a. Resignation. A person who resigned their membership may be reinstated without attending the new members' class unless the Elders determine it would be beneficial for the church or the person seeking to be reinstated.

b. Non-attendance. If a person has been removed for non-attendance and they desire reinstatement they shall be in regular attendance for at least six months before being considered. The Elders shall decide if enrollment in the new members' class is necessary.

c. Disciplinary Action. At the Elder's discretion, see Article II Section 2(d)iv.

**ARTICLE II – GOVERNMENT**

**Section 1. Congregational Rule.** The final authority for this church is vested in its membership as stated in our Constitution Article VI Section I. We do not understand this to mean that the Body of Christ is a democracy where each member must vote on every decision, though they are to be involved in the governance of the church (for example see Acts 1:12-26; 6:1-6; 15.) This congregation will seek to recognize God’s calling of men to leadership positions, appoint such men as their leaders and willingly and humbly submit to those leaders as unto Christ (Constitution Article VI Section I). Members of this church shall exercise their vested authority by their 1) approving and contributing to the church’s budget, 2) affirming the calling of men to be Elders and Deacons, 3) approving the calling or removing of a man to be Pastor, 4) approving changes to the church’s Constitution and By-Laws, 5) adopting Articles of Doctrine, 6) accepting new people into membership, and 7) approving major property decisions.

**Section 2. Elders**

a. Qualifications. A man whom this church shall ordain to the office of Elder shall meet the biblical requirements of 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-5 as a current, present reality in his life. Additionally, he must be a member of this church in good standing for at least one year, shall have attended this church’s worship service regularly for at least a year and shall be a spiritually mature man who has evidence of the spiritual gifts to lead the church. He shall have a good understanding of biblical doctrine and be in agreement with the doctrinal position of the church as expressed in the Statement of Faith and Articles of Doctrine (Constitution Article IV & Appendix 1) as well as an additional Elder Affirmation of Faith (By-laws and Appendix 2: Elder Affirmation of Faith).

Most of the biblical qualifications for Elders are clear and easily understood. However, some are more difficult because of the differences between our culture and those of the New Testament. Following is basically how we understand those qualifications to apply to us today. Much more could be said, but provided is a brief description:

- i. “The husband of one wife” (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6). In the day in which this statement was written, bigamy was practiced. We do not understand the Apostle here to mean that only married men may be Elders nor that divorced and remarried men cannot be. His marriage and household are covered in other biblical injunctions. We believe that the Apostle is prohibiting “power-hungry” men, who misuse authority or seek it for its own ends, from the office of Elder.
- ii. “Able to teach” (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:9). One of the most important roles of an Elder is that of teacher. This does not mean that a prospective Elder must be a preacher or a teacher in a formal church setting since not all Elders devote themselves to these tasks (1 Timothy 5:17). In Titus 1:9 Paul says that an Elder must hold “fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.” In other words, he must be a man who understands doctrine well and can explain and apply it—someone who is theologically astute enough to recognize and refute error. He must be able to publicly address the congregation from the Scriptures in an encouraging and understandable manner.
- iii. “Not addicted to wine” (1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7). An Elder must not be a drunkard. This does not mean complete abstinence from alcohol, nor would it exclude a man who once had a problem with drinking but has lived a sober life for an acceptable period of time. If an Elder

drinks alcohol he should not drink to the point that he loses respectable control of himself. This can apply by inference to other legal or illegal substances.

iv. “Having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion” (Titus 1:6). Paul has established that men who are qualified to be Elders are men whose households are in order (1 Timothy 3:4). We believe ‘children who are faithful’ best carries the meaning of the phrase. Considering this with what Paul said in 1 Timothy 3:4, we understand this to mean children who are in submission to his rule and religion as a general way of life while under his roof. His children should not be self-indulgent nor needlessly cause division or resist authority.

b. Selection. The Pastor is exempt from this process (see Article II Section 2 paragraph e.)

i. Nomination. The Elders will develop a list of men to be considered for the office of Elder at a requested commitment time of 1 year. The 1 year will be from that January, regardless of when the man is presented to be approved as an Elder (example: if presented and approved in March, the 1 year of time will be started from January of that year). The desired minimum number of qualified and gifted men called to this office is three. The Elders will select as many qualified men as is necessary for the smooth functioning of the church. Members in good standing may be involved in this process if it is deemed necessary by the Elders.

1) The performance and qualifications of sitting Elders will be considered and if they remain qualified and willing to serve, they may be asked to serve again. A sitting Elder will not automatically be returned to office. If it is determined that a sitting Elder should not serve again or an Elder decides not to return to the office, the Elder will not be presented to the congregation for reaffirmation. He will cease to function as an Elder on the first of January of the year ending his commitment.

2) The reaffirmation process is not intended to, and should not, replace church discipline. If, during the year, a man becomes unqualified to be an Elder, he should be removed from office immediately. If sin is involved, church discipline should be exercised.

3) If there are no gifted men available for the position, none will be nominated. If this is the case, the Pastor will more diligently seek to train and disciple promising men for the office. The congregation should focus their prayers on God equipping and raising up such men for them.

ii. Congregational Review Period. Prior to the business meeting at which the nominated Elders will be affirmed, the Elders will publish the names of the men being considered for the office. During this time, the members will pray and should fast concerning the calling of these men.

iii. Affirmation. Elders will be affirmed by the congregation no later than the second week of December of each year. Elders will be affirmed by a 50% quorum with three-quarters voting in favor in a secret by-name ballot election.

iv. Installation. The Elders’ term of service will normally begin and end on January 1<sup>st</sup>. Newly affirmed Elders will be installed by having the current Elders lay hands on them and pray for them before the congregation. This shall normally be done in January.

v. Mid-year Appointments. In the event that another Elder is needed during the year (for example, to replace a sitting Elder who can no longer serve), the same qualifications and basic procedures apply. The Elders must submit the prospective Elder’s name to the members one

month in advance and a special congregational vote of affirmation will be held. His term as Elder will begin once the congregation has affirmed him and the Elders have laid hands on him.

c. Organization. The Elders shall meet as often as is needed but not less than monthly. They shall select from among themselves a Chairman, Clerk and Treasurer in accordance with Article VI Section 6 of the Constitution. The Pastor may only serve as Chairman if there are 3 or fewer Elders. The Elders will fill these positions prior to the first Elder meeting of the year as soon as is practical after the congregational vote of affirmation.

i. Chairman. The Elder designated as Chairman:

- 1) Will set the agenda for and preside over Elder meetings.
- 2) Will set the agenda for and preside at all congregational business meetings. He will employ Rules of Order at his discretion to ensure meetings are conducted in an orderly fashion (when in conflict, Roberts Rules of order are recommended).
- 3) May obligate the congregation contractually to the extent provided in the church budget or through specific action taken during a congregational meeting.
- 4) If there is a sufficient number of Elders, a Vice Chairman will be selected too. The Vice Chairman will fill in for the Chairman when the Chairman is not available.

ii. Clerk. The Elder designated as Clerk will be responsible to:

- 1) Record and publish the minutes of Elder meetings.
- 2) Keep the minutes of all congregational business meetings as part of the permanent church files. These minutes shall be made public after review by the Chairman.
- 3) Keep the roster of all members of this church and shall keep a record of attendance at all congregational business meetings.
- 4) File and keep minutes before necessary subsequent scheduled Elder or congregational business meeting.

iii. Treasurer. The Elder designated as Treasurer will coordinate with the church Financial Secretary as necessary. He will also:

- 1) Be responsible for ensuring the financial records of this church are audited as appropriate (each year is highly recommended). The results of this audit shall be reported regularly to Elders and any necessary congregational meetings.
- 2) Be responsible for the audit and financial committee. They shall consist of two or more church members in good standing. At the request of the Elders or a majority vote of the congregation, audits will be done by 2 or 3 members outside of this group at any time.
- 3) Submit written annual financial reports at the Elders and/or congregational business meetings.

4)Financial Secretary (s). The Financial Secretary (s) will be a church member (s) appointed by the Elders. He/she will:

a) Hold and disburse all church monies and issue receipts

b) Maintain an up-to-date, comprehensive financial records from which a monthly report shall be provided to the Elders.

iv.Decisions. In making decisions, the Elders will seek unanimity, although majority voting is sufficient unless otherwise stated. At times this may not be possible; in such cases, the chairman will exercise great care when deciding to proceed without unanimity.

d.Duties.

i.Leadership. All spiritual ministry, programs, activities, meetings, and administrative, business, and financial matters of this church shall be under the direct oversight of the Elders. The Elders shall set the direction of the church. In doing this, they shall seek to honor and glorify God through Jesus Christ, follow the commandments and limitations of the Scriptures, and strengthen and build up the church.

ii.Shepherding. The Elders will seek to watch over the souls that have been given into their care (Hebrews 13:17). In order to do this, the Elders will dedicate themselves to prayer, fasting, doctrine, and discipleship.

iii.Preaching and Teaching. One of the Elders' primary roles shall be to preach and teach God's Word. The Pastor will preach at the regular Lord's Day worship. The other Elders should be involved in teaching as agreed upon.

iv.Discipline. The Elders will encourage the church body to pursue purity together as the normal course of their life together in Christ. If intervention becomes necessary to correct sinfulness, the Elders will follow Galatians 6:1-2, Matthew 18:15-35, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 2 Corinthians 2:5-11 and 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15.

e.Charges Against an Elder. Disciplinary actions against an Elder discovered to be in unrepentant sin shall follow Article II Section 2 paragraph d(iv) of these By-Laws except that charges against an Elder must be presented by two or three witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19-20). These witnesses will be interviewed separately by the other Elders. If the charges are serious enough and the Elders agree, an accused Elder may be suspended during the discipline process. If the accusation is true and it disqualifies him from the office of Elder, he will be removed and be publicly rebuked. Restoration will be pursued through church discipline. If the Elder charged is the Pastor and he is found to be disqualified from the office of Pastor, the procedures for termination listed in Article II Section 2 paragraph e (iv) of these By-Laws will be followed.

f.Church Staff. As deemed necessary by the Elders, this church may call and support various staff members, full or part time. Such staff members shall work in conjunction with and be supervised by the Pastor. Hiring and termination of the services of the staff shall be accomplished as deemed appropriate by the Elders. All pastoral staff members and their respective wives shall be voting members of this church.

g. Deacons/Committees. The elders may appoint committees (preferably Deacons, but not necessary) at any time in order to complete required tasks, inform and advise the Elders, or for other designated reasons. Committees should normally be filled with church members. Non-members, including regular attenders, may be included when deemed appropriate.

**Section 3. Pastor.** In order to fulfill its stated purpose, this church shall call and support a man to be the Pastor.

a. Qualifications. The Pastor shall meet the same qualifications as other Elders; however, additional attention shall be given to his ability to preach and teach God's Word and his gifts and abilities at shepherding the flock of Jesus Christ. The Pastor shall subscribe to the church's Statement of Faith, Articles of Doctrine, Elder Affirmation of Faith, Constitution and these By-Laws.

b. Responsibilities. The Pastor will be primary responsible for the preaching at regular Lord's Day worship services, devoting his time to the teaching and preaching of God's Word, to prayer for the church, and to the care and oversight of the ministry of the church. Because of his full-time devotion to these tasks, he shall be "the first amongst equals" amongst the Elders.

c. Privileges. The Pastor is an Elder who serves the church in full-time ministry. In order to set him aside for ministry, the church will provide a suitable income for him and his family. Installation of a Pastor may be done at any date that is convenient. By virtue of his position, the Pastor and his wife shall be members of this church. The Pastor shall be an *ex officio* member of all committees of this church.

d. Selection. If the position of Pastor is vacant, the Elders shall establish a Pastoral Search Committee that will screen candidates for the office. The Elders will provide the committee with a profile of the man they are seeking and select a candidate put forth by the committee to be presented to the congregation for approval. A special business meeting shall be called to consider the candidate, with notice given to each member at least two weeks prior to the meeting. A quorum of 70% of the membership and a three-fourths vote by secret ballot in favor of calling the candidate shall be required to extend a call. Only one candidate shall be considered by the congregation at a time.

e. Termination. If the Pastor desires to resign his position or the congregation desires to terminate his ministry in this church, three months' notice of such action shall be given in writing, unless waived by mutual consent of the Pastor and the Elders. If the congregation desires to terminate the Pastor's ministry, a special business meeting shall be called with notice given in writing to each member at least two weeks prior to the meeting. A recommendation by the Elders for termination shall be presented and a vote shall then be taken. A quorum of 70% of the members and a three-quarters vote by secret ballot shall be required for termination.

#### **Section 4. Deacons**

a. Qualifications. Men or women whom this church shall ordain to the office of Deacon will meet the biblical requirements of Acts 6:1-7 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13 as a current, present reality in his life. They must be members and have regularly attended this church's worship service for at least a year and shall be spiritually mature. They shall be in agreement with the doctrinal position of the church as expressed in the Statement of Faith and Articles of Doctrine (Constitution Article IV & Appendix 1).

Most of the biblical qualifications for Deacons are clear and easily understood. However, some are more difficult because of the differences between our culture and those of the New Testament. Following is basically how we understand these terms to apply to us today. Much more could be said, but provided is a brief description:

i. “Not addicted to much wine” (1 Timothy 3:8). A Deacon must not be a drunkard. This does not mean complete abstinence from alcohol, nor would it exclude a man who once had a problem with drinking but has lived a sober life for an acceptable period of time. If a Deacon drinks alcohol he should not drink to the point that he loses respectable control of himself. This can apply by inference to other legal or illegal substances.

ii. Deacon’s Spouses. We understand the textual complexity of 1 Timothy 3:11 inferring that only men are deacons. At that time, and in this situation, it is obvious Paul is thinking of male deacons. The use of Phoebe in Rom 16:1 infers status or state of “deaconess” to women as well. Due to the conflict, and lack of direct resolution in the text, we accept that the office of Deacon can apply for “deaconess” as well. Similarly to how we infer that when a man is called to be an elder and they as a couple are called to that responsibility within the bounds of their covenant with each other and the church and all implications, so is a husband of a “deaconess.” In these matters, the context of 1 Timothy chapter 3, the requirements are best applied to those of a Deacon’s spouse, whether a wife or husband. This does not mean that Deacons are required to be married (see paragraph iii below) but that if they are, this conduct applies to spouses.

iii. “Let deacons be husbands of only one wife” (1 Timothy 3:12). In the day in which this statement was written, bigamy was practiced. We do not understand the Apostle here to mean that only married men may be Deacons nor that divorced and remarried men cannot be. His marriage and household are covered in other biblical injunctions. We believe that the Apostle is prohibiting “power-hungry” men, who misuse authority or seek it for its own ends, from the office of Deacon.

b. Selection. The Deacons will be selected in the same manner as the Elders following the procedure in Article II Section 2 paragraph b. The difference in selection shall be in the qualifications and giftedness for this unique office.

c. Duties. The Deacons will administer the benevolent and temporal concerns of this church as instituted by the Elders. They must fulfill the duties of their office in cooperation with, and in subjection to, the Elders. They will meet at least monthly and will submit a report to the Elders.

i. Deacons will receive donations for the church’s benevolence fund and will administer the fund under the oversight of the Elders.

ii. For simplicity's sake, the Deacons will appoint a chairman from among themselves (with Elder concurrence) who will interface with the Elders. This will be the primary, but not necessarily exclusive, form of liaison between these groups.

d. Decisions. In making decisions, the Deacons will seek unanimity although majority vote is sufficient. At times this may not be possible; in such cases, the chairman will exercise great care when deciding to proceed without unanimity.

**ARTICLE III – BUSINESS**

**Section 1. Congregational Business Meetings.** The Elders shall call congregational business meetings as necessary to the growth and maturity of the church. Annual meetings to affirm Elders and Deacons and approve a budget should be necessary. Other special congregational business meetings may be called as deemed appropriate by the Elders. The Elders will approve and publish agendas at least one week in advance; no other business will be conducted.

**Section 2. Quorum and Voting.** Following is a summary of the quorum and voting requirements provided for reference only. Refer to the appropriate Article.

Subject	Quorum	Vote	Secret	Paragraph
Call Pastor	70%	75%	Yes	Art II Sect 2 e iii
Terminate Pastor	70%	75%	Yes	Art II Sect 2 e iv
Affirm Elders	50%	75%	Yes	Art II Sect 2 b iii
Affirm Deacons	50%	75%	Yes	Art II Sect 3 b
Amend Constitution	50%	75%	No	Article X Sect 2*
Amend/Suspend By-Laws	50%	Majority	No	Article IV <sup>+</sup>
Adopt an Article of Doctrine	50%	Majority	No	Article V Sect 3*
Receive New Members	30%	Majority	No	Art I Sect 1 c
Approve Budget	30%	Majority	No	Article III Sect 3
All others	30%†	Majority†	As determined by the Elders	

\* Refers to the Church Constitution

+ To amend a voting requirement, the more stringent voting requirement must be met, see article IV.

† The Elders may increase these minimum standards on individual votes as determined appropriate.

**Section 3. Budgets.** Each year the Elders shall prepare and present a proposed church budget to the leadership for the coming fiscal year. The budget shall be passed by a simple majority of Elders and Deacons after presented to the church. A request for a congregational vote of approval can be required at the request of 3 members. The Elders shall be responsible to oversee the management of the church's budget. The Elders may authorize expenditures exceeding any budgeted line item provided that the total annual budget is not exceeded by more than 10% without majority Elder approval. Such excess expenditures shall be reported at the next regular Elder or congregational business meeting.

**Section 4. Basic Operating Manual or Expectations.** The Elders shall establish and maintain a Basic Operating Manual or Expectations in which policies and practices deemed necessary to the proper functioning of this church, but not contained in these By-Laws, shall be established.

## **Article IV – Amendments and Suspensions**

These By-Laws may be amended or portions suspended by a simple majority vote at any congregational business meeting with a quorum of 50% of the voting members. Notice of such amendments and suspensions must be given to all voting members at least two weeks prior to said meeting. However, sections requiring more stringent voting requirements may only be suspended or amended by those voting requirements. For example, the procedures for calling a Pastor require 70% quorum and three-fourths majority. Any amendments or suspensions of those procedures would have to be passed by a 70% quorum and three-fourths majority vote.