

Constitution

By-Laws

Cornerstone Fellowship

2009

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ARTICLE I: DEFINITION AND PURPOSE OF THIS CONSTITUTION

This written document is a declaration of our beliefs and understanding of the Holy Scriptures, as to our doctrinal beliefs, form of church government, organizational structure, and purposes as a body. It is vitally important for a church, if it is to glorify God and accomplish His purposes, that its people be in agreement with regard to doctrine, organizational structure and goals (1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:3, 13).

This is thus designed to be a statement of these things that it might promote oneness of mind within our own ranks and that those interested in becoming a part of this fellowship might have a clear concept of our beliefs and objectives.

This document is not equal to the authority of the Word of God. Neither is it a higher authority than the authority that God Himself has invested in those believers He has appointed to lead in this local church (Heb. 13:17). It must be remembered that the local church is a living, growing, and flexible body subject ultimately to the authority of Jesus Christ alone as it is declared in the Word of God (Eph. 1:22; 4:12-16). As we grow in the Word, this document is therefore subject to amendment. This document is, however, to be followed in all its parts as a protection to all until part or all is amended according to its provisions.

ARTICLE II: NAME

The name of this local church shall be Cornerstone Fellowship, located in Forest City, NC, a corporation under the laws of the state of North Carolina.

ARTICLE III: PURPOSE AND VALUES

A. Our Purpose

Cornerstone Fellowship exists to glorify God as we passionately pursue Him and make Him known through worship, discipleship, fellowship, and outreach!

1. *Cornerstone Fellowship...*

We are a local church in Rutherford County that is chosen by God to be His people and fulfill the above mission statement through our life and ministry.

2. *...exists to glorify God...*

Our ultimate purpose is to take delight in God – bringing Him praise and honor – through every aspect of our life and ministry.

"For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever!" (Romans 11:36).

"...whatever you do, do it all for the glory of God" (1 Corinthians 10:31).

3. *...as we passionately pursue Him...*

The Bible constantly reminds us to pursue God "with all of our hearts." This is not a passive pursuit but a passionate pursuit. We seek to know God in a more intimate way every day.

"But if... you seek the Lord your God, you will find Him if you look for him with all your heart and with all your soul" (Deuteronomy 4:29).

*"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength"
(Deuteronomy 6:5; see also "The Great Commandment" found in Matthew 22:34-40).*

4. ***...and make Him known...***

Our desire is to make Christ known to all persons from Rutherford County to the ends of the earth. We believe that to do so is to honor the Great Commission that Christ gave to all of His disciples.

"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you'" (Matthew 28:18-20).

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

5. ***...through worship...***

Worship is our active response to God whereby we declare His worth. Worship is not a mood but a response; it is not a feeling but a declaration! Through our worship we seek to declare that our God is the one true God!

"The Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind" (Deuteronomy 6:4-5).

"Ascribe to the Lord, O families of nations, ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due His name; bring an offering and come into His courts. Worship the Lord in the splendor of His holiness; tremble before Him, all the earth" (Psalm 96:7-9).

"Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship" (Romans 12:1).

6. ***...discipleship...***

We long to become Christ-like as a community of faith. We come to the Scriptures together to learn from God's teachings and follow the example set forth by Jesus Christ. We seek to make disciples of others who will continue the ministry of Christ on earth. Being a disciple is more than just being a believer – it is being a follower!

"Come, follow me,' Jesus said... At once they left their nets and followed Him" (Mark 1:17-18).

"A student is not above his teacher, but everyone who is fully trained will be like his teacher" (Luke 6:40).

"And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others" (2 Timothy 2:2).

7. ***...fellowship...***

We are part of the body of Christ and should live out our faith in community. To be a part of the fellowship of believers, each person must use his/her gifts to serve God and build up the body of Christ. As a community of faith, we will encourage one another, love one another, and bear one another's burdens.

"They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and to the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer... All the believers were together and had everything in common. Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had a need. Every day they continued to meet together in the temple courts. They broke bread in their homes and ate together with glad and sincere hearts, praising God and enjoying the favor of all the people. And the Lord added to their number daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:42-47).

"And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another..." (Hebrews 10:24-25).

"Carry each other's burdens..." (Galatians 6:2).

8. **...and outreach!**

God is at work in the world and He desires that we join Him. We should continue the ministry of Jesus on earth – to seek and save the lost and to reach out to our society. We are to be Christ's ambassadors as we represent Him in our community and to the world.

"...the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost" (Luke 19:10).

"...I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me" (Matthew 25:40).

"We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us" (2 Corinthians 5:20).

B. Our Values

1. **God-Centered**

We acknowledge that ministry flows out of an intimate relationship with God. Therefore, we commit ourselves to maintain a vital, growing personal relationship with God and to encourage others to deepen their own relationship with Him (Rom. 11:36, 1 Cor. 10:31, 2 Cor. 3:5, 18; 4:5-7, 1 Pet. 4:11).

2. **Bible-Based**

We recognize that the Bible is God's standard for life and ministry and is the primary instrument for changing lives. Its principles are applicable to the content and process of ministry. Therefore, we commit to handle the Word of God accurately and to model it consistently (1 Pet. 1:21, 2 Tim. 3:15-17, 2 Tim. 4:6-7).

3. **Holy Spirit Empowered**

We recognize that the Holy Spirit gifts and empowers us to accomplish His supernatural work. No amount of knowledge, skills, experience and/or tools can replace His working in life and ministry (Acts 1:8, Zech.4:6, 1 Cor.6:19-20, Eph. 5:18-21).

4. **Prayer-Based**

We recognize that without the Lord we can do nothing. We demonstrate our dependence on Him through prayer at every point of our life and ministry (Phil. 4:6-7, Col. 1:9-14, 1 Tim 2:1, James 1:5).

5. **Grace-Filled Community**

We acknowledge that the uniqueness of each person is designed by God to contribute to the building up of the body of Christ. We desire to foster a supportive environment for mutual growth that avoids a critical, judgmental attitude. Therefore, we commit to accept, encourage, love and care for one another in our pursuit of God and His purposes (Eph. 4:11-16, 1 Cor. 13:4-8, 13; Gal. 6:1-3, Phil. 2:1-4).

6. **Servant Leadership**

We affirm that biblically-based ministry involves the giving of ourselves to help others live a life that glorifies the Lord. Because this kind of ministry is motivated by love, we evidence an attitude of respect for those to whom we minister and are willing to sacrifice to meet their needs, without promoting an unhealthy dependence on us. We recognize that our ultimate purpose is to equip and empower others to depend on Christ to accomplish His purposes in their lives (2 Cor. 4:5, Gal. 5:13, John 13: 13-17).

7. **Integrity**

We commit to adhere, in word and action, to a biblically-based ethical code that results in moral soundness above reproach, transparency to the point of vulnerability, and consistency to the place of trustworthiness (Psalm 139:23-24, Luke 16:10-11, Col. 3:5-14, 1 Peter 2:12).

8. **Excellence**

We commit to attain the highest level of competency that God has purposed for us and to a mindset that does not settle for mediocrity. We want to be and do our best for the glory of God and for the good of those we minister (Ecc. 9:10a, Rom 12:11, Col. 3:17).

ARTICLE IV: DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

A. The Scriptures

We believe that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," by which we understand the whole Bible is inspired in the sense that holy men of God "were moved by the Holy Spirit" to write the very words of Scripture. We believe that while there was progress in revelation from God, this divine inspiration extends equally and fully to all parts of the writings—historical, poetical, doctrinal, and prophetic to the smallest word and inflection of a word as appeared in the original manuscripts. We believe that the whole Bible in the originals is therefore without error.

We believe that all Scriptures center about the Lord Jesus Christ in His person and work in His first and second coming, and hence that no portion, even of the Old Testament, is properly read or understood until it leads to Him. We also believe that all the Scriptures were designed for our practical instruction (Matt. 5:18; Mark 12:26, 36; 13:11; Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39; Acts 1:16; 17:2-3; 18:28; 26:22-23; 28:23; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 2:13; 10:11; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21).

B. The Godhead

We believe that the Godhead eternally exists in three persons—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—and that these three are one God, having precisely the same nature, attributes and perfections, and worthy of precisely the same homage, confidence and obedience (Matt. 28:18-19; Mark 12:29; John 1:14; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor. 13:14; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 1:4-6). Therefore, we believe in a Triune God, as revealed in Scripture and nature, made known in a heritage and made real through both community and individual experience.

C. Man Created and Fallen

We believe that humanity was created by God as human beings and did not evolve from a lower order of life. We believe that man was originally created in the image and after the likeness of God and that he fell through sin and, as a consequence of his sin, lost his spiritual life becoming dead in trespasses and sins (Gen. 1:26; 2:17; 6:5; Psalm 14:1-3; 51:5; Jer. 17:9; John 3:6; 5:40; 6:53; Rom. 3:10-19; 8:6-7; Eph. 2:1-3; 1 Tim. 5:6; 1 John 3:8).

D. Salvation

We believe that humans are sinful and are completely unable to save themselves. Nonetheless, God has provided each individual with an opportunity for salvation through the death and finished work of Christ. His complete deity, sinless life, followed by His vicarious death and bodily resurrection, qualifies Him to save all who trust in Him.

His salvation is received by grace through faith alone as God miraculously imputes His perfect righteousness to us and thus we become justified before Him. God's wrath is therefore appeased (propitiation) and we are fully reconciled to Him because our sinfulness is forgiven.

The believer becomes a new creation, evidenced by an undeniable regenerated heart, and now has an eternal relationship with God (Matt. 26:28; Gal. 3:13, 6:15; John 3:16-18; Eph. 1:7; Romans 12:1-2; John 5:24; Col. 2:10; 2 Cor. 5:21; Titus 3:5,7; Rom. 5:1, 6-9; Romans 10:9,13; Eph2:8; Romans 1:16-17; 3:24).

E. Sanctification

We believe that sanctification, which is a setting apart unto God, is three-fold: It is already complete for every believer because his or her position toward God is the same as Christ's position. Since the believer is in Christ, he or she is set apart unto God in the measure in which Christ is set apart unto God. We believe, however, that he or she retains his or her flesh nature, which cannot be eradicated in this life. Therefore, while the standing of the Christian in Christ is perfect, the Christian's present state is no more perfect than his or her experience in daily life. Nonetheless, believers will in the future realize complete sanctification in Christ at His coming. There is, therefore, a progressive sanctification wherein the Christian is to "grow in grace" and to "be changed" by the unhindered power of the Spirit (John 17:17; 2 Cor. 3:18; 7:1; Eph. 4:24; 5:25-27; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 10:10, 14; 12:10).

F. Eternal Security

We believe that, because of the eternal purpose of God toward the objects of His love, because of His freedom to exercise grace toward the meritless on the ground of the propitiatory blood of Christ, because of the very nature of the divine gift of eternal life, because of the present and unending intercession and advocacy of Christ in heaven, because of the immutability of the unchangeable covenants of God, because of the regenerating, abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of all who are saved, we and all true believers everywhere – once saved shall be kept saved forever (Jude 24-25; John 3:37-40; John 10:27-28).

G. The Holy Spirit

We believe that the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the blessed Trinity, though omnipresent from all eternity, took up His abode in the world in a special sense on the day of Pentecost according to the divine promise, dwells in every believer, and unites all to Christ in one body and that He, as the indwelling One, is the source of all power and all acceptable worship and service. We believe that He never takes His departure from the church, nor from the feeblest of the saints, but is ever present to testify of Christ; seeking to occupy believers with Him and not with themselves nor with their experiences (John 14:16-17; 1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 2:22).

H. The Church, A Unity of Believers

1. The Universal Church

We believe that the church is composed of all who are united by the Holy Spirit to the risen and ascended Son of God, that by the same Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether Jew or Gentile, and thus being members one of another, we are responsible to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, rising above all sectarian prejudices and denominational bigotry, and loving one another with a pure heart fervently (Matt. 16:16-18; Acts 2:42-47; Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 1:20-23; 4:3-16; Col. 3:14-15).

2. The Local Church

We believe that God's primary (intended) organization of believers, after the family unit, is the local assemblies of believers, committed to the Lord and to each other for the purpose of carrying out the universal Church's visible activities; that is, the communication of God's truth to the people of God, the worship of and prayer to God by God's people, the loving care of God's people for one another, and the spread of the Gospel to the ends of the earth, that these assemblies (or churches), though they should endeavor to cooperate with other Christian assemblies, are to function under the lordship of Christ, free from external controls of any religious organizations beyond the early oversight by the Church founders and the influence of its own mature leaders and that it is God's intention that all believers publicly identify with a visible, local assembly (Acts 2:41-47; 4:19; 5:29; 1 Cor. 1:1-2; 1 Thess. 1:1; Heb. 10:24-25).

I. The Two Ordinances of the Church

1. Baptism

We believe that Christ, the head over all things to the Church (Eph. 1:22), has commanded us to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). Baptism is an acknowledgment that one has accepted Christ as his or her Lord and Savior (Matt 10:32). The meaning of the word used for Baptism in the New Testament consistently asserts that the mode is immersion (Romans 6:3).

2. Communion

The New Testament is clear that believers are also to partake at His table. Unique to believers, this time is to be a reminder of our Savior's vicarious death, a symbol of His Body and Blood, and His promise that He will return (Matt 26:26-30; I Cor. 11:23-34).

J. The Christian's Walk

We believe that we are called with a holy calling to walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit and so to live in the power of the indwelling Spirit that we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. But the flesh, which in this life is never eradicated, being with us to the end of our earthly pilgrimage, needs to be kept by the Spirit constantly in subjection to Christ or it will surely manifest its presence in our lives to the dishonor of our Lord (Rom. 6:11-13; 8:2, 4, 12-13; Gal. 5:16-23; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:1-10; 1 Pet. 1:14-16; 1 John 1:4-7; 3:5-9).

K. The Christian's Service

We believe that divine, enabling gifts for service are bestowed by the Spirit upon all who are saved and that, wholly apart from salvation, benefits which, are bestowed equally upon all who believe, rewards are promised according to the faithfulness of each believer in his service for his Lord, and that these rewards will be bestowed at the judgment seat of Christ after He comes to receive His own to Himself (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; Eph. 4:11; 1 Pet. 4:10-11; 1 Cor. 3:9-15; 9:18-27; 2 Cor. 5:10).

L. The Great Commission

We believe that it is the explicit message of our Lord Jesus Christ to those whom He has saved that they are sent forth by Him into the world even as He was sent forth of His Father into the world. We believe that after they are saved they are divinely reckoned to be related to this world as strangers and pilgrims, ambassadors and witnesses, and that their primary purpose in life should be to make Disciples of Christ. We do not believe that conversion alone is the intent of the Great Commission but that the personal responsibility of each and every believer is to make disciples (Matt. 28:18-19; Mark 16:15; John 17:18; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:18-20).

ARTICLE V: GENERAL ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The local church body is composed of one body with many members all of whom are in vital relationship with Jesus Christ, but the body also has (Eph. 4:16) units of control and unity, i.e., church leaders. This together suggests body participation under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

First, the local government is invested in the body of believers who compose the local body under the headship of Jesus Christ according to the Word of God and the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 18:20; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:16; 5:21; Col. 1:18; 2:19).

Second, executive authority or leadership, however, is invested by the congregation, as authorized by Scripture, in a Board of Elders who lead the church and to whom the congregation is to submit under the headship of Christ. These men have the authority and responsibility to delegate to individuals, committees or Deacons authority and responsibility to carry out the business or ministry of the church in spiritual and physical (material) matters (Acts 20:28; 15:6; Eph. 4:11-12; Phil. 1:1; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:7, 17).

In using its delegated authority and in making its decisions the Board of Elders must seek to be guided by the Scripture, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and by input from the congregation (Acts 20:32; 6:2-5a; 11:22; 15:22; 2 Cor. 8:19).

A. Qualifications of Elders

Elders shall be men whose lives are characterized by the qualities set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. These qualities can be categorized as:

1. They must desire the office of Elder and demonstrate spiritual leadership abilities among the flock.
2. They must be able to teach and use the Word of God with wisdom and patience.
3. They must be lovers of God, men who take God and His Word seriously.
4. They must be able to manage their household in a biblical manner.
5. They must be able to spiritually manage their interpersonal relationships.
6. They must be men who are seeking to be controlled by Christ and His Word rather than by worldly and fleshly desires.
7. These men shall hold to the doctrinal statement of this Constitution in accord with the statements of Article V and be supportive of the entire Constitution.

B. Authority

The ministry of Cornerstone Fellowship shall be under the direction of the Lord Jesus Christ working in and through the Elders. The Elders will be the primary decision-making body within the church. However, it is critical that the Elders make decisions based on carefully assembled facts, scriptural insight, the individual and corporate leading by the Holy Spirit, and input from the Body (Acts 6:5; 15:6, 22; Heb. 13:17; 1 Thess. 5:12-13).

The Church is not a democracy or a government wherein the majority rules. Jesus Christ Himself is the Head and Ruler of the Church. However, as seen in Article VI, the Lord Jesus leads and directs through both the Body and the Elders. Since the Lord Jesus dwells in each member of the Body of Christ, and so leads and directs through the Body as to needs, desires, and responsibilities for each local Body, it is important and necessary for the Elders to seek input, information and guidance from the Body, especially on practical matters of church life.

C. Duties

Because of external and internal Christian testimony to be promoted with the local body, the Elders must first and foremost exercise a personal spiritual walk, which promotes self-examination, maintain a servant-like quality in life, and serve with gentleness and humility in all that he does. Out of a biblical perspective, the Elder is to undertake joyfully the following duties:

1. Give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Titus 1:9).
2. Guard and protect the flock (Acts 20:28).
3. Oversee and provide spiritual direction for the activities and growth of the flock (I Peter 5:1-5).
4. Aid in finding and developing gifted teachers of the Word (2 Tim. 2:2).
5. Warn and discipline (Titus 1:9).
6. Support, encourage, counsel, and lead in humility (I Peter 5:1-5).
7. See to the oversight of the finances of the Body with the cooperation of the Church Body (1 Cor.16:1-2).
8. Pray for and encourage the sick (James 5:14).
9. Seek the Lord's will to interpret the Articles and provisions of this Constitution in the light of the Scriptures.
10. Make decisions and perform any other duties as situations arise within the Church as necessary.
11. The Elders shall strive to maintain open communication with the flock, both to discern needs, concerns, and to communicate information and decisions. The Elders will strive to maintain open communication through all available methods (Acts 6:1-5; 11:22; 15:1, 6, 22; 16:2).

D. Appointment (General Principles)

The Scriptures emphasize that Elders in the Church are not appointed by men but by God (Acts 20:28). The task of the people in the Church then should be to seek to discover God's direction and leading within the Church Body in the appointment of Elders.

The need for an additional Elder, paid or non-paid, may be recognized by either the Elders or other members of the Church Body. The Elders, in consultation with or in response to the request of Body members, shall seek to discern the nature of the need and to follow God's leading in deciding if the need justifies the appointment of an Elder. Upon a decision by the Elders that a need does exist, the Elders will prayerfully and carefully seek God's direction in choosing the right man or men.

It is the purpose of Cornerstone Fellowship to base the selection process upon an orderly, proper sequence of events that will most easily facilitate **the recognition of God's appointment** of men to this ministry. The whole flock should be on the alert for men whose lives characterize the qualifications laid out in Scripture. Only qualified men will be appointed. If no qualified men are available, or if men are unwilling to serve who would otherwise be qualified, no appointment will be made. The Church should wait on the Lord either to remove the need or to provide qualified men.

E. Training

An appropriate measure of training or prior experience is non-negotiable for all Elder candidates prior to appointment. In addition, all men seeking ordination to serve as an Elder of Cornerstone Fellowship or for another local body must complete the process. Prior to appointment or ordination, the candidate must demonstrate a proficiency in the Old and New Testament, the elements of the Christian faith and the history of the Church. The existing Elders will determine adequate levels of competence in these areas.

F. Appointment of Non-Paid Elders

When the need arises for a new non-paid Elder (either for a new position or to replace an Elder who has left the position,) the existing Elders should assume a guiding and directing role in the search for the right man. The specific nature of the need and the decision to seek a new Elder should be announced to the flock. The flock will be asked to suggest qualified men for the position based on the biblical criteria for Elders (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:6-9; Acts 14:23; 6:1ff).

After a period of time and prayerful consideration, the Elders will meet to consider all the nominees as to their qualifications for the position. If the Board believes a man to be qualified, after they have considered the man's qualifications, a member of the Board will be appointed to approach each nominee to explain the specific nature of the need and to determine his willingness to serve (1 Tim. 5:22). The Board of Elders will ordain the new Elder.

G. Terms

An Elder is required to serve a minimum of 3 years before he is able to rotate out of the group. There will be a yearly review of the status of each Elder and consideration of the appointment of new Elders will be discussed during 4th quarter of each year.

A minimum of 3 Elders is required to serve on the Elder Board. If the minimum is not met, the remaining Elders will appoint an interim Elder (within 30 days) until the church appoints new Elder(s) to meet the requirement. The process will be done in a timely manner (within 90 days) with prayerful consideration (see Article V: D and F for Non Paid Elders and Article VI: A for paid Elders).

H. Voluntary Resignation

An Elder may step down at any time he chooses. The Elder should prayerfully reflect on his decision and seek counsel from his fellow Elders before making a final decision.

I. Involuntary Dismissal

Involuntary dismissal of any Elder, paid or non-paid, will be a disciplinary action of the Church Body in accordance with the instruction of 1 Timothy 5:19-20, Galatians 6:1, and Matthew 18:15-18.

1. If the situation is such that it necessitates dismissal from office, the other Elders may suggest voluntary resignation by the person involved. If he refuses or believes he has been unfairly treated, then it is to be brought before the congregation to hear the issues and to allow the person concerned to present his case. It will then be decided by a two-thirds vote of the body at a congregational meeting.
2. If members of the body believe they are not being properly and biblically represented by the Elders they are to follow the procedures of Matthew 18:15-16 and first discuss the issues with the Elders themselves.

ARTICLE VI: PAID ELDER/PASTORS AND STAFF

A. The Calling of New Paid Elder(s): Selection

All pastors shall also be known as Elders in accordance with the New Testament. Upon recognition of the need for a new paid Elder, the Elders will guide and direct the selection process. The attitude of the Elders should be one of submission to the Lord, waiting on God to fill the need with the right man. They should also be expectant, knowing that God will provide a person to fill the need.

The following procedure outlines the method Cornerstone Fellowship will follow in selecting a new paid Elder:

1. The selection committee shall be appointed by the Elders with a member of the Elders as the head of the committee. The committee shall consist of non-paid Elders, along with at least an equal number of members of the Body as chosen by the Elders.
2. The committee shall seek the names and résumés from any qualified and interested men by any means at their disposal.
3. The committee will carefully and prayerfully consider any résumés submitted. The résumés will be evaluated in light of the man's experience, interests, doctrinal beliefs, philosophy of the ministry, of the needs of the Body.
4. The committee will contact one man who appears to fill the needs of the church based on the résumés and other gathered information. The man may be invited to visit the church one or more times. This visit(s) should include time for the committee and Body to evaluate the man and his family, time for him to present the Word and time for him to evaluate the church and the community. Attendance of a man's family is not required on the first visit.
5. After each visit, the committee will prayerfully consider the candidate. During the process, they will seek input from the Body concerning the individual by means of written questionnaire or an open forum called by the Elders for such purpose. The committee will review all questionnaires. After evaluation of the candidate(s), the committee will announce its recommendation to the flock.
6. The Elders will call a congregational meeting at least two (2) weeks after the committee's recommendation is reported to allow the church ample time to prayerfully consider the decision. The vote will be conducted as secret ballot. If at least 90% of the voting members agree with the committee's recommendation, the committee will offer the position to the man.
7. If the man turns down the offer or if the Body does not agree with the committee's recommendation, the above procedure will be repeated until a qualified man is hired.

B. Non-Pastoral Staff

In the event that a need arises for paid staff members who are not Elders, i.e. Christian Education Director, Christian School Principal, Discipleship Director, etc., then the Elders will determine as to whether this is to be a paid or non-paid position. If it is determined, that such a position should require compensation then the Elders will present an appropriate proposal to the church.

C. Support Staff

The hiring of baby sitters, janitorial services, secretaries, etc., will be planned for and directed by the Elders or a team of leaders appointed by them. The terms of support staff will be reviewed each year and then recommended in the annual conference at the end each year.

ARTICLE VII: CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

A. Union in the Universal Body of Christ

At the time of personal faith in Jesus Christ, the believer is called into the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor. 1:2, 9; 12:12-13, 20; Col. 1:18), and joined into union with the universal Body of Christ, the Church, by the work of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12-13; Col. 1:18).

B. Union With a Local Assembly of Believers

There is another aspect of this fellowship into which the believer is joined. He or she is brought into the fellowship of fellow members of that body, and other believers on earth, that he or she might share and participate in the various blessings and ministries of the Body of Christ. For this to occur properly, believers are to seek the fellowship of one another in a local Body or assembly of believers to which they are to become responsible (1 Pet. 5:2-3; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1).

Believers living in isolation, operating independently of other believers, are living contrary to Scripture. Scripture teaches that there are to be local assemblies of believers, united together by a common faith, by union in Christ, and the universal indwelling of the Holy Spirit, by common purposes, commitments and responsibilities, and with a common leadership of that specific body, independent in government from other local assemblies (Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Pet. 5:1-3; 1 Cor. 1:2; Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Thess. 5:12-13). The local church is to be a Body of people allotted to the charge of Elders (1 Pet. 5:1-3; 1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 10:14-15; 1 Pet. 4:8-10; 1 Cor. 12:20-27), and subject to the discipline of that body or assembly (1 Cor. 5:2; 1 Thess. 5:14 [admonish the unruly], 2 Thess. 3:6, 14; 1 Tim. 5:20).

This of necessity implies more than a loose relationship of a believer or believers to a particular body or assembly. Membership involves a tie, an involvement, a commitment, responsibility and submission to both the leadership and to each other.

C. Church Membership Role

The Scriptures contain neither a mandate for nor a command against an official membership for local assemblies of the Church. In Acts, we see that believers were added to the church in Jerusalem; however, this serves primarily to show the growth in the early church (Acts 2:47; 9:31; 16:5). These people were devoting themselves to a local assembly and its leadership for teaching, leadership, fellowship and worship (Acts 2:42). There were also letters of commendation or acceptance written on behalf of both men and women to be welcomed and accepted into the fellowship or various assemblies. These letters commended believers to other assemblies regarding their faithfulness and ministry and thus they were not an actual transfer of membership (Rom. 16:1-2; 1 Cor. 16:10; Col. 4:10; 2 Cor. 3:1; 8:16-24).

The emphasis of these Scriptures is that every believer become identified and committed to a specific local assembly of believers following the leading and direction of God. This commitment is revealed by their attitude, faith, attendance, involvement, giving and submission to that assembly. Thus, a membership roll cannot, in and of itself, serve as the sole means of commitment a believer has to a local Body.

Cornerstone Fellowship does have a membership roll to aid in conducting business in an orderly manner and to provide legal protection in important, yet potentially controversial church decisions (such as discipline). An individual's decision to be placed on the membership roll should flow from his or her commitment to the Church. The individual should remember that being on the membership roll has no merit or value as far as his or her spiritual maturity or growth is concerned.

D. Procedure for Official Membership

- Be a born-again Christian.
- Be baptized by immersion, if you have not been already.
- Complete the official membership class.
- Sign an agreement to abide by the Constitution.
- Give a written/oral testimony to two Elders in a membership interview.
- Receive approval from the Elders for membership.
- Come before the church to be welcomed into the part of God's family that meets at Cornerstone Fellowship.

E. Procedure for the Removal of names from the Church Roll for Non-Disciplinary Reasons

The Elders will review the official church roll annually for the purpose of identifying persons who have been inactive for a significant period of time. The Elders will then determine as to whether we should pursue inactive members on an individual basis. If after 2 annual reviews an individual has remained inactive then his or her name will be removed from the membership roll without further proceedings.

F. Voting

The New Testament Church never voted. Therefore, the purpose of any voting shall not be simply to obtain a "majority-rules" consensus. Rather, all voting at Cornerstone Fellowship shall be to demonstrate God's leading within the flock on a particular issue or to satisfy a legal mandate.

Matters which call for a Congregational Vote are, and limited to:

1. The Calling of Paid and Non-paid Elders
2. The Annual Budget
3. Financial matters in which the Church would incur debt
4. Dismissal of an Elder under the guidelines of Article V: I. 1

G. Conference Policies

1. Member need to be 16 years of age or older to be eligible to vote.
2. No member shall vote if he or she is under disciplinary proceedings.
3. Voting is valid only during a called conference.
4. Only an active Elder with the consent of a majority of the other Elders shall be able to call the Church into conference.
5. There shall be no proxy voting
6. A 2/3 majority is required for all issues unless otherwise specified in this Constitution/By-Laws.
7. The Elders shall adjourn (by 2/3 majority of Elders) immediately any conference that in their judgment does not represent the purpose and nature of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
8. An Annual Conference shall be conducted each year in the month of December to address budgetary and other points of review and planning for the church.

ARTICLE VIII: CORRECTIVE CHURCH DISCIPLINE

We believe in the practice and necessity of church discipline as clearly outlined in Scripture. Though complex, church discipline has the divine authority of Scripture and is vital to the purity of the church. Therefore, we must fully understand and apply the following principles.

A. The Basis for Discipline

Scripture bases discipline on the holy character of God (1 Pet. 1:16; Heb. 12:11). The pattern of God's holiness and His desire for the Church to be holy is our basis for discipline in the Church.

Scripture offers biblical directives concerning how and when the Church must discipline. Any failure to exercise this responsibility demonstrates a lack of obedience and belief in the authority of the Word of God (1 Cor. 5:1-13; Matt. 18:17-18; Titus 3:10; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; 1 Tim. 5:20; Gal. 6:1).

A final basis for the necessity of church discipline is the testimony of the Church in the world; otherwise the Church loses its credibility and authenticity (1 Pet. 2:11-18; 3:8-16; 4:1-4).

B. The Purposes of Church Discipline

- The glory and honor of God
- The restoration of our brothers and sisters in Christ (Gal.6:1-2)
- The purity of the local body and its protection (1 Cor. 5:6-7, Titus 1:10-11)

Therefore, our purposes for discipline will automatically govern the spirit of all disciplinary action. Thus:

1. We will discipline in a spirit of humility, gentleness, and patience and with a close examination of ourselves (Gal. 6:1-2; 2 Tim. 2:24-25).
2. Those who walk disorderly are to be admonished, warned, and appealed to in love (1 Thess. 5:14-15; 1 Tim. 5:1-2; Eph. 4:15; 2 Tim. 4:2). Notice the Scriptures do not restrict this admonition to leaders but members of the Body may admonish each other (1 Thess. 5:14).
3. If there is no response in repentance and obedience then members are to withhold intimate fellowship until there is obedience (2 Thess. 3:6, 14). This is to indicate to the offender that his or her action has caused a rupture in the harmony of the body. Our goal is restoration and the person is still to be counted as a brother (2 Thess. 3:14-15).
4. If the person persists after admonition and withdrawal of intimate fellowship, the final step is a formal dismissal from this body (Titus 3:10; Matt. 18:17b), accompanied by public rebuke before all (1 Tim. 5:20). We find multiple examples of this level of confrontation in the Scriptures.
 - The Corinthian believers were to be "gathered together" in order to take action against the offending brother (1 Cor. 2:6).
 - The whole Church in Rome and in Thessalonica was to take action with regard to the unruly and schismatic (2 Thess. 3:6-15; Rom. 16:17).
5. Finally, discipline in the name of our Lord always includes a readiness to forgive. Those who discipline must always be ready and even eager to forgive, comfort, and reaffirm their love to the sinning person (2 Cor. 2:6-8).

C. The Practice of Church Discipline

1. When it is to be Practiced

According to Scripture, there are five categories, which warrant church discipline.

- a. Irresolvable Difficulties
Irresolvable problems between members (Matt. 18:15-17)
- b. Divisiveness
People causing divisions in the Church (Rom. 16:17-18; Titus 3:9-11)
- c. Disorderly Conduct
Conduct clearly out of line with the prescribed commands of Scripture (2 Thess. 3:6-15)
- d. Sin
Sins of the type mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5: incest, immorality, covetousness, idolatry, abusive speech, drunkenness, and swindling (1 Cor. 5:1, 11)

e. **False Teaching**

Erroneous teaching and views which concern the fundamentals of the faith, not lesser differences of interpretation (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18; also implied in Rev. 2:14–16; Phil. 3:2-3, 15-19; Rom. 16:17-18)

2. How it is to be Practiced

Matthew 18:15-17 and Galatians 6:1 shall be the criterion as to how we practice Church Discipline.

- **Step One**

Seek private correction and/or reconciliation with the offender (Matt. 18:15). The one offended or the one who recognizes the offense is to go privately and attempt to resolve the problem.

- **Step Two**

If not successful, he or she is to take witnesses, preferably spiritual leaders, so that if the matter is brought before the Church it can be firmly proven or established (Matt. 18:16-17).

- **Step Three**

If not successful, then the Elders shall take initiatory action following the concept of Galatians 6:1 in an effort to restore all offenders.

- **Step Four**

If not successful then the Elders will inform the offender of the Church's intent to discipline (2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:12-14; Titus 2:15; 3:10). The Elders will then take appropriate action which may vary from a public rebuke to exclusion from Cornerstone Fellowship.

3. How one is Restored...

- Restoration of the individual and the protection of the flock will be the primary focus for all Church discipline procedures (Gal.6:1).
- Restoration will be done in a spirit of gentleness (Gal.6:1).
- Restoration will be based upon the observable fruit of repentance which is changed behavior (Matt 3:8, Acts 26:20, Gal 5:22-23).
- Restoration will require a public statement of repentance to the Elders with a report to the congregation (Proverbs 28:13).
- Where public sin has occurred then a public statement from the offender to the congregation may be required (Psalm 51:17).
- In certain cases wherein an individual has demonstrated behavior that could be harmful to other members of the Body, a period of separation may be necessary wherein an individual will be required by the Elders to limit his or her contact with the flock during the restoration process.
- Ultimately, the goal of this process is the absolute forgiveness and spiritual healing of the fallen brother or sister by the Body of believers (1 John 1:9, 2:1-2 James 5:19).

ARTICLE IX: CHURCH COVENANT

God's amazing grace has brought us to repent of our sinfulness, confess our belief that Jesus Christ is Lord, and be baptized upon this profession of faith in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Relying on this same grace, we sincerely and joyfully renew our covenant with each other.

Together we pray for and seek the unity of the Spirit of God among us. We commit to care for one another, encourage one another, and admonish and implore one another as an occasion may require.

We will not forsake meeting together nor neglect to pray for each other. We will passionately pursue the Lord in all that we do and intentionally share our faith with our family and friends.

We will rejoice in each other's happiness and bear one another's burdens and sorrows. Our love for one another will be evident to the world around us.

We will, with God's grace, live obediently and faithfully to the Word of God in our everyday lives. We will be quick to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts as we live out of our identity as new creatures in Christ.

Together we will work to carry out the ministries of this church as we seek to glorify God through worship, discipleship, fellowship, and outreach. We will cheerfully give our time and resources to support the ministries and expenses of this church so that we can communicate the Gospel to our community and the world.

When God calls us to move from this place, we will as soon as possible unite with another group of Christ followers where we can continue to carry out the truths of God's Word.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all! Amen.