

Living Word Bible Church Constitution

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1. Church Name

This organization shall be known as LIVING WORD BIBLE CHURCH (LWBC). It was organized December 15, 1999.

2. Biblical Principles of Church Government

2.1. The Head of the Church

“He is also head of the body, the Church; and He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, so that He Himself will come to have first place in everything (NAS Colossians 1:18)

Christ is the head of the Church. He is the true source of all the Church is and does and His glory is to be the objective of every act, function, and motive of the body, both individually and corporately. (Ephesians 1:22,23)

2.2. The Church Receives its Guidance from Scripture

“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work” (NAS 2 Timothy 3:16,17)

God has provided His thoughts and His direction for the body in His Word. The Bible reflects and contains His commands, His counsel and His purpose for the Church and for every believer. (Psalms 119; Matthew 22:37-39; 2 Timothy 2:15)

2.3. The Source of the Church’s Power is the Holy Spirit

“but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.” (NAS Acts 1:8)

The Holy Spirit is the source of the Church’s power. The Holy Spirit’s role is to indwell and transform believers into Christ’s likeness. (Romans 8:10-11; Galatians 5:16; Ephesians 1:13; Ephesians 5:18)

2.4. The Local Church is Led by Elders

“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint Elders in every city as I directed you (NAS Titus 1:5)
“Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the Church of God which He purchased with His own blood.”(NAS Acts 20:28)

2.4. The Local Church is Led by Elders (Continued)

As Churches were established in the faith, Elders were appointed in each local body. The Elders were given the ultimate responsibility for the oversight of a particular Church body and the shepherding of its members. (Acts 14:23; Acts 20:28-32; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Timothy 5:17-20; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4)

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.” (NAS Hebrews 13:17)

In response to the Biblical pattern of leadership, members of the body are taught in the scripture to lovingly support their leaders and to submit to their leadership. (1 Corinthians 16:15, 16; 1 Thessalonians 5:12,13).

“So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task.” (Acts 6:2, 3)

As necessary, Deacons were also appointed to serve the Church, particularly in undertaking those areas of need that would otherwise limit the Elders from performing their Biblical responsibilities. (Acts 6:1-6)

2.5. Biblical Role of Elders

2.5.1. Shepherd the Flock

Serving in all humility, Elders are to guide, direct, guard, and protect the members of the body, seeking to meet their needs, warning them against harmful influences, and guarding against false teachers. (Acts 20:28-35; 1 Peter 5:1-3)

2.5.2. Lead Through Example

Elders are to provide a Scriptural role model and are to set a pattern before the flock of a right ordered life - with a single purpose, to glorify God. (1 Timothy 4:12; 1 Peter 5:3)

2.5.3. Teach, Exhort, and Equip

Elders are to see that the flock is fed through insightful and accurate Biblical instruction and admonition. (1 Timothy 3:2; 4:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Titus 1:9)

2.5. Biblical Role of Elders (Continued)

2.5.4. Refute Those Who Contradict the Truth

Elders are to confront those who are teaching what they should not teach or who are continuing in a pattern of behavior contradictory to Biblical truth. (Matthew 7:15-20; Acts 20:29-31; Titus 1:9)

2.5.5. Manage the Church of God

Elders are to oversee the life of the Church, with the assistance of Deacons. They must be people who can “rule well”. (1 Timothy 3:5; 1 Timothy 5:17; Acts 6:1-7)

2.5.6. Pray for the Sick

Elders are to pray for the spiritual and physical well-being of the members of the congregation. (James 5:14)

2.6. Biblical Qualifications for Elders

“An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, peaceable, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the Church of God?), and not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the Church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” (NAS 1 Timothy 3:2-7)

“if any man is above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, so that he will be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict” (NAS Titus 1:6-9)

2.7. Biblical Role of Deacons

“So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, “It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables. “Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task”. (NAS Acts 6:2-3)

2.7. Biblical Role of Deacons (Continued)

Deacons are to serve under the direction of the Elders, undertaking those areas of service necessary for the Church's functioning that would otherwise prohibit the Elders from performing their Biblical responsibilities. No specific, on-going roles are mentioned in Scripture, probably because service needs change, and so the role of Deacons should be flexible. (Note: Perhaps this is why qualifications for Deacons are stressed rather than specific tasks. In contrast, the function of the Elders is more stabilized, as spiritual needs are relatively constant).

While there is actual equality between Elders, Deacons, and in fact, all members of the body, for the purpose of order Scripture indicates that Elders are entrusted with the final authority within the local Church. (1 Timothy 3, Titus 1:1-5)

2.8. Biblical Qualifications for Deacons

“Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. These men must also first be tested; then let them serve as Deacons if they are beyond reproach. Women must likewise be dignified, not malicious gossips, but temperate, faithful in all things. Deacons must be husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households.” (NAS 1 Timothy 3:8-12)*

* We interpret this to mean Deacons' wives.

“Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine, and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience. They must first be tested; and then if there is nothing against them, let them serve as Deacons. In the same way, their wives are to be women worthy of respect, not malicious talkers but temperate and trustworthy in everything. A Deacon must be the husband of but one wife and must manage his children and his household well.” (NIV 1 Timothy 3:8-12)

2.9. Biblical Role of Members

Commitment of Members

“And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common; Day by day continuing with one mind in the temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they were taking their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart. (NAS Acts 2:44, 46)

The New Testament presents a picture of definable groups of people who, once committed to the Lord, identified themselves with and committed themselves to a particular local body.

2.9. Biblical Role of Members (Continued)

Time

“and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds, not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more as you see the day drawing near.” (NAS Hebrews 10:24-25)

Regular fellowship with other believers is vital to one’s own Christian walk. Therefore, believers should be willing to adjust their schedules to give priority to meeting with the body when it corporately assembles. Further, Christ gave of Himself on our behalf, we should be willing to give of our time to pursue those things of eternal significance. (Matthew 6:33; Romans 14:7-8; 2 Corinthians 5:14-15; Philippians 2:5-7)

Talents and Gifts

“For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;” (NAS Romans 12:4-6)

We recognize that the body of Christ is composed of interdependent members, each uniquely gifted by the Holy Spirit for the purpose of building up the body. Therefore, each believer should seek to identify, develop and utilize their spiritual gifts and natural talents and seek a place of service within the body, with the support and affirmation of the body. (Matthew 25:14-30; 1 Corinthians 12; 1 Corinthians 14, Ephesians 4:11-13)

Treasures

“Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. “But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; for where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (NAS Matthew 6:19-21)

Realizing that we were bought with the price of Christ’s blood, everything we are and have belongs to Him. In response to Christ’s abundant giving, we should increasingly seek to submit our personal resources to His Lordship, displaying a spirit of generosity and cheerfulness, knowing that as we give for the support of the body, our lives will be enriched. (Proverbs 3:9-10; Malachi 3:8-10; Matthew 6:33; Matthew 13:44; Matthew 23:23; Luke 6:38; Luke 21:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8 and 9; Ephesians 1:7; Philippians 3:7-8)

2.9. Biblical Role of Members (Continued)

Fellowship

“Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.” (NAS Philippians 2:1-4)

As members of the body, we should continually seek to develop a spirit of mutual love, concern, encouragement, bearing one another’s burdens, and uplifting one another in prayer. We are to be concerned with each other’s spiritual well being, stimulating each other to a deeper walk and commitment to Christ. (Psalms 133; Acts 2:42; Romans 12:10; 1 Corinthians 1:9; Galatians 6:2; Hebrews 3:13; 1 Peter 3:8-9)

2.10. Biblical Qualifications for Members

“If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God Raised Him from the Dead, you shall be saved.” (NAS Romans 10:9)

A testimony of faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior, and assurance of salvation. (Matthew 10:32, 1 John 5:10-13, Acts 5:14)

2.11. Biblical Principles for Church Discipline

Church discipline is an obligation given by the Lord to the Church so that personal sin can be dealt with. It is the responsibility of all Christians to engage in this exercise of discipline with love, humility, respect for the sinning believer, and consideration of their own sinfulness prior to judging another. A process is involved which, hopefully, will bring the sinning member to repentance and restoration while maintaining the purity of the Church (1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-18; Matthew 18:15-18; 2 Corinthians 2:5-7; 1 Timothy 5:19-24; and Galatians 6: 1).

2.11.1. Basis for Church Discipline

It should be noted that the basis for corrective Church discipline is the holiness of God. We are to be holy because He is holy (1 Peter 1: 16). Church discipline is a way to help a sinning believer flee sin and pursue righteousness. It is part of the total training and discipline of the Christian life.

2.11. Biblical Principles for Church Discipline (Continued)

2.11.2. Those Involved in Church Discipline

The New Testament does not give the local Church an option as to whether it will get involved in corrective Church discipline. For example, in 1 Corinthians 5:12,13, the Apostle Paul declares "Do you not judge those who are within the Church? But those who are outside God Judges." (Also note 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14; Matthew 18:15-18; 1 Timothy 5:20) All believers, in one sense, have a responsibility to deal with sin. Yet, it is the spiritually mature believer that has the task of dealing with difficult and complex situations. Paul states, "Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one..." (Galatians 6:1). In Acts 20:28-30, the Elders of the Ephesian Church were exhorted to keep sin from the flock.

2.11.3. The Purpose of Church Discipline

There are several reasons for engaging in Church discipline:

- 2.11.3.1. **TO PURIFY THE CHURCH** - Sin is a spiritual cancer which cannot be allowed to grow in the Body of Christ, the Church. The health and well-being of the Church requires its removal, either through repentance or excommunication. Since God is holy and His declared will is that the Church be holy, sin affecting the Church must be removed. (1 Corinthians 5:7-8)
- 2.11.3.2. **TO RESTORE THE SINNING BELIEVER** - Church discipline has the goal of restoration, not judgment and condemnation. This is a clear emphasis in Scripture (Matthew 18:15; 2 Thessalonians 3:15; 1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Timothy 2:25; Hebrews 12:10). Church discipline is designed to alert the sinning member to the folly of his ways and through the Word, enlighten him to the reality of his situation and the sure consequences of sin. This process is intended to bring about a godly sorrow, restoration and the joy of his salvation.
- 2.11.3.3. **TO ACT AS A DETERRENT TO SIN IN THE CHURCH** - Discipline of an individual is a reminder to all that sin and righteousness are serious matters in the Church. It is a clear indicator that sin which could "leaven the whole lump" (1 Corinthians 5:6) cannot be left alone, but must be dealt with. Godly fear is instilled where proper discipline occurs (Acts 5:11). And godly fear is a great deterrent to sin (Proverbs 16:6, 1 Timothy 5:20). When sin is allowed to flourish in the Church, the Church becomes weak and ineffective. Its power for life and ministry disappears.

2.11.3. The Purpose of Church Discipline (Continued)

2.11.3.4. TO DEMONSTRATE THE REALITY OF RIGHTEOUS LIVING TO THE UNSAVED AND TO KEEP THE WORLD FROM MOCKING THE CHURCH - Known sin that is not challenged and dealt with brings shame to the Church of Christ. If Christ could not give victory over sin, the Church was not only hypocritical, but it really had nothing to offer the unsaved world (1 Peter 2:11, 12).

2.11.4. Attitude in Church Discipline

Many wrong attitudes can creep into the lives of those involved in Church discipline. It is imperative that proper attitudes be maintained (2 Corinthians 2:2-11; Galatians 6:1; 1 Corinthians 5:2; and 2 Thessalonians 3:15). These attitudes are: (1) a readiness to forgive the sinning brother; (2) a love for him, desiring what is best for him, and (3) grief over the sin of the individual and the victory won by Satan. These attitudes, produced by the Holy Spirit through much prayer and time in the Word of God, will insure the power and favor of God in the process.

2.11.5. Disciplinary Offenses

Any sin weakens the Church and causes disunity and therefore, must be dealt with. Listed below are some specific sins that are mentioned in the New Testament:

2.11.5.1. DOCTRINAL DEVIATION (Galatians 1:6-8; Acts 20:28-30; 1 Timothy 1:18-20 with 2 Timothy 2:17,18) - When an individual departs from a fundamental truth of the faith, (such as the deity of Christ, His virgin birth, justification by faith alone, or the inspiration, inerrancy, and sole authority of the Scriptures), then leaders must exercise Church discipline. The Lord of the Church commended the Elders at Ephesus for doing this (Revelation 2:1-7). In the Church, there is room for different opinions or different views of what Christians may or may not do, but deviation from fundamental doctrines must not be tolerated.

2.11.5.2. DIVISIVENESS (Titus 3:10, 11; Romans 16:17-20) - A self-centered individual who constantly brings division within the Church is to be warned twice and then removed. He is turning aside from the command to strive for unity.

2.11.5. Disciplinary Offenses (Continued)

- 2.11.5.2. **DIVISIVENESS (Continued)** - As one specific and important example, a person may hold a different view from LWBC on a “non-essential” doctrine and “casually” share his/her view with others. However, this person must not actively promote his/her view within the body in such a way that it sows seeds of discord and divisiveness. This would be to undermine the doctrine and teaching of the Church (Cf. LWBC Membership Commitment). Each person must respectfully acknowledge the fact of the Church’s doctrinal position(s).
- 2.11.5.3. **UNDISCIPLINED LIVING** (2 Thessalonians 3:6,11,14; 1 Thessalonians 5:14) - This is looking at a believer whose life is dramatically "out of step" with the truth and righteous living. In the Church at Thessalonica, this was manifested in idleness, gossiping and taking from the resources of the Church.
- 2.11.5.4. **SINS OF THE FLESH** (1 Corinthians 5:11) - The Apostle mentions that disciplinary offenses include immorality, reviling (abusive speech), being a drunkard or a swindler. This is not a complete list of external sins of the flesh, but reveals the kinds of sin that bring shame and weakness to the Body of Christ. (For example, a thief would be subject to discipline even though that is not specifically detailed in 1 Corinthians 5; See also 1 John 2:15-17.)
- 2.11.5.5. **SINS OF THE SPIRIT** (1 Corinthians 5:11) - Covetousness and idolatry are given by the Apostle along with the other sins mentioned above. These sins of the spirit would, of course, manifest themselves in a pattern of life dominated by wrong desires, greed, self-promotion or materialism. While all believers at one time or another may grapple with these attitudes, Paul is looking at a believer whose life is consistently in the grip of these things. (See also 1 John 2:15-17.)

3. Government and Personnel

3.1. Authority and Responsibilities

The ultimate authority for the operation of the Church resides in the head of the Church, the Lord Jesus Christ.

3.2. Confirmation of Recommendations Made by Elders

As Section 2.4. states, “The Elders were given the ultimate responsibility for the oversight of that particular Church body, and the shepherding of its members.” In

3.2. Confirmation of Recommendations Made by Elders (Continued)

light of this tremendous responsibility and the fact that we are all sinners, a process of checks and balances for some of the Elder decisions is provided. This process applies to all of the decisions spelled out in Section 3.3. unless otherwise specified.

- 3.2.1. Whenever a recommendation in Section 3.3.3. has been determined by the Elders, this recommendation shall be brought before the congregation in a Church meeting.
- 3.2.2. The meeting shall take place with no requirement for a quorum and the recommendation shall be openly discussed with the congregation. After open discussion, the congregation will be requested to pray about the recommendation and to bring their concerns to the Elders in preparation for a second meeting in which the congregation will have an opportunity to confirm the recommendation.
- 3.2.3. A second Church meeting shall be scheduled as soon as possible, but not within 10 days of the first meeting. In this meeting, the congregation will have an opportunity to either confirm or veto the recommendation. A ballot vote requiring 80% agreement by those present and who have submitted absentee ballots is required for approval. One of the options on the ballot will be for an individual to elect not to vote and their vote will not count against the totals. If a member votes against the recommendation, they are requested to put their name and/or the reason on the ballot so that the Elders can consider the reasons for the dissenting votes. If less than 80% of the votes cast confirm the recommendation, then the recommendation has been vetoed and will require returning to Section 3.2.1. to reinstate the process for this decision.
- 3.2.4. If 80% or greater of the votes cast confirm the recommendation, then the recommendation has been ratified by the congregation.

3.3. Elders

3.3.1. Qualifications

Elders shall meet the Biblical qualifications outlined in Section 2.6.

3.3.2. Term of Elders

The scripture indicates no fixed term for Elders. Therefore, Elders may serve as long as they feel led unless they are deemed unqualified (Ref. Section 2.6.). In such a case, an Elder may be removed by a majority vote of the Elders. However, every 3 years, the Elders shall be required to be reconfirmed by the congregation by an 80% or greater vote. The first confirmation vote shall be taken at the same time as the constitutional review outlined in Section 8.

3.3. Elders (Continued)

3.3.3. Authority and Responsibilities

The Elders shall:

Confirmation by the congregation is not required for Sections 3.3.3.1. through 3.3.3.5.

- 3.3.3.1. Fulfill the Biblical role of Elders by shepherding the flock, leading through example, teaching & exhorting, refuting those who contradict the truth, managing the Church of God, and praying for the sick. This responsibility does not require confirmation by the membership. (Ref. Section 2.5.)
- 3.3.3.2. Approval of non-Pastoral Church staff. This responsibility does not require confirmation by the membership.
- 3.3.3.3. Serve as trustees of the corporation. This responsibility does not require confirmation by the membership.
- 3.3.3.4. Keep the members informed concerning the activities of the Elders. This responsibility does not require confirmation by the membership.
- 3.3.3.5. Establish committees and appoint committee members as deemed appropriate to carry out the purposes of the Church. This responsibility does not require confirmation by the membership.

Confirmation by the congregation is required for Sections 3.3.3.6. through 3.3.3.13.

- 3.3.3.6. Adopt and maintain by-laws for the administration of the Church in accordance with this Constitution. (Ref. Section 3.2.).
- 3.3.3.7. Call of Pastor or Pastoral staff (Ref. Section 3.5.4., 3.2.).
- 3.3.3.8. Appoint Elders (Ref. Section 3.3.4., 3.2.).
- 3.3.3.9. Appoint Deacons (Ref. Section 3.5.2., 3.2.).
- 3.3.3.10. Approve the annual budget (Ref. Section 3.2.).
- 3.3.3.11. Approve merger or affiliation with any other Church (Ref. Section 3.2.).
- 3.3.3.12. Approval of purchase, sale, conveyance, or mortgage or real property (Ref. Section. 3.2.).
- 3.3.3.13. Approve dissolution of the corporation (Ref. Section 3.2.).

3.3. Elders (Continued)

3.3.4. Selection of Elders

Scripture gives evidence that the first Elders were appointed by the founders of the Church. Based upon the example in Titus 1:5 it is implied that the existing spiritual leadership of the Church be intimately involved in the process of selecting Elders. This is to insure that the selection is based upon spiritual rather than other qualifications. Beyond this there are no guidelines given in scripture regarding the selection process. It would therefore appear that freedom is given to the individual Church to develop a process that will best serve its needs and situations.

The Elders shall consist of the Senior Pastor and members who have been selected according to the process outlined below.

- 3.3.4.1. Whenever the need arises and with the Biblical qualifications in mind, Elders and members of the congregation will be asked to prayerfully submit the names of men for the position of Elder.
- 3.3.4.2. Persons whose names have been submitted shall be informed by the Elders. These men shall be asked to engage in prayerful self appraisal and personal evaluation in light of the Biblical qualifications. Any person may remove his name from consideration if he does not aspire to the position of Elder or does not believe he adequately meets the qualifications.
- 3.3.4.3. After an appropriate period of time, nominees wishing to continue the process shall be interviewed by the Elders.
- 3.3.4.4. After prayerful consideration the Elders shall make the final selections. Nominees not selected at this point shall also be given the reason as to why they were not selected.
- 3.3.4.5. The names of the prospective Elders shall be brought before the members of the Church. The members will be given 28 days to show cause why any one of the prospective Elders would not be qualified to serve. Any member with such "cause" must express their concern to the Senior Pastor, an Elder or the candidate himself. If Biblical cause for disqualification is identified, then the nominee can remove himself from eligibility or he can be removed from the candidate list by the Elders.
- 3.3.4.6. After the 28 day period, the Elder nominees will be presented to the Church and will be required to give a brief testimony about themselves and why they aspire to the position of Elder. Then, the confirmation process as outlined in Section 3.2. will begin.

3.4. Deacons

3.4.1. Qualifications

Deacons shall meet the Biblical qualifications outlined in Section 2.8.

3.4.2. Term

The scripture indicates no fixed term for Deacons. Therefore, Deacons may serve as long as they feel led unless they are deemed unqualified (Section 2.8.). In such a case, a Deacon may be removed by a majority vote of the Elders. However, every 3 years, the Deacons shall be required to be reconfirmed by the congregation by an 80% or greater vote. The first confirmation vote shall be taken at the same time as the constitutional review outlined in Section 8.

3.4.3. Authority and Responsibilities

The Deacons shall:

3.4.3.1. Fulfill the Biblical role of Deacons as outlined in Section 2.7.

3.4.3.2. Under the direction of the Elders, they are to serve the congregation by undertaking areas of service necessary for the functioning of the Church that would otherwise prohibit the Elders from fulfilling their Biblical role.

3.4.4. Selection of Deacons

As the various ministries of the Church expand and develop, the need will arise for the supportive leadership of Deacons. The Elders are responsible for identifying these needs and determining the number of Deacons.

3.4.4.1. With the Biblical qualifications in mind, Elders and members of the congregation will be asked to prayerfully submit the names of men for the position of Deacons.

3.4.4.2. Persons whose names have been submitted shall be informed by the Elders. These men shall be asked to engage in prayerful self appraisal and personal evaluation in light of the Biblical qualifications. Any person may remove his name from consideration if he does not aspire to the position of Deacons or does not believe he adequately meets the qualifications.

3.4.4.3. After an appropriate period of time, nominees wishing to continue the process shall be interviewed by the Elders.

3.4.4. Selection of Deacons (Continued)

- 3.4.4.4. After prayerful consideration the Elders shall make the final selections. Nominees not selected at this point shall also be given the reason as to why they were not selected.
- 3.4.4.5. The names of the prospective Deacons shall be brought before the members of the Church. The members will be given 28 days to show cause why any one of the prospective Deacons would not be qualified to serve. Any member with such “cause” must express their concern to the Senior Pastor, an Elder or the candidate himself.
- 3.4.4.6. After the 28 day period, the Deacons nominees will be presented to the Church and will be required to give a brief testimony about themselves and why they aspire to the position of Deacon. Then the confirmation process as outlined in Section 3.2. will then begin.

3.5. Senior Pastor

3.5.1. Qualifications

The Senior Pastor shall meet the standards set forth in 2 Timothy 2 and 4 as well as those qualifications of an Elder as specified in Section 2.6.

3.5.2. Term - See Section 3.3.2.

3.5.3. Authority and Responsibilities

The responsibility of the Senior Pastor is to serve the congregation by fulfilling his scriptural responsibilities as a Pastor and Shepherd. He is recognized as an Elder (Section 3.3.3.) with the following additional responsibilities.

- 3.5.3.1. The Pastor Teacher is primarily to be a teacher of the word of God. He is to teach and exhort by precept and example. His goal is to help mature the saints, equipping them to be true “ministers” in the body. As a teacher, he must stress both the understanding and application of God’s truth. However, teaching within the body should not be limited to the Pastor. The New Testament emphasizes the need for teaching Elders and the utilization of other members who are gifted in this area, thus providing a variety of teachers and role models.
- 3.5.3.2. Supervise the Church staff.

3.5. Senior Pastor (Continued)

3.5.3.3. Administer the ordinances of Communion and Baptism.

3.5.3.4. Perform weddings within the congregation as requested.

3.5.3.5. Perform funerals within the congregation as requested.

3.5.4. Selection of a Pastor

A Pastor is essentially an Elder. However, the role of Pastor is best suited for a man who has had formal training in theology so that he can better teach God's word and refute attacks against the truth. In addition, a Pastor should be free from the worries of providing for himself and his family, so that he can be free to study the word, pray, and shepherd the flock. As such, he holds a special position in that his financial and physical needs are met by the Church. Since he holds no more authority than any other Elder, the burdens of responsibility for the body should be shared with all other Elders so as not to overwhelm him.

3.5.4.1. When the Elders have determined the need to call a Pastor, a Pastoral search committee consisting of at least two Elders and two Deacons shall be appointed by the Elders considering the spiritual gifts necessary to accomplish the task. The congregation will be asked to pray for this committee and their search.

3.5.4.2. The committee shall perform their search and make a formal recommendation to the Elders who will take this recommendation under advisement. If the Elders determine that the candidate is unqualified, then the search committee will be requested to continue their search.

3.5.4.3. If the Elders determine that the candidate is qualified, then the candidate will be offered opportunities to preach before the congregation and visit with our members. The candidate will be required to meet with the congregation for an open question and answer session.

3.5.4.4. If the Elders decide to make a recommendation to call the Pastor, the name of the prospective Pastor shall be brought before the members of the Church. The members will be given 28 days to show cause why the candidate would not be qualified to serve. Any member with such "cause" must express their concern to the Elders. If after the 28 day period, the candidate is still deemed qualified, then the process outlined in Section 3.2. will begin.

3. Government and Personnel (Continued)

3.6. Members

3.6.1. Qualifications

Members shall meet the Biblical qualifications outlined in Section 2.10. Members shall have been baptized and any person who has not previously had believer's baptism shall be baptized by immersion unless special circumstances prevent (Matthew 28:18-20, Romans 6:1-11, Ref. LWBC Articles of Faith on Baptism).

“And Peter said to them, “Repent and let each of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is for you and your children, and for all who are far off, as many as the Lord our God shall call to himself.” And with many other words he solemnly testified and kept on exhorting them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation!” So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and were added that day about three thousand souls. And they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer.” (NAS Acts 2:38-42)

3.6.2. Term

The term of membership in LWBC is indefinite except for the following reasons. A member may be removed because of disciplinary action (Ref. Section 2.11., Section 4.) or a valid request from the member.

The Elders shall be responsible to see that the Church roll is reviewed continually and revised as necessary.

3.6.3. Process of Becoming a Voting Member

It is the desire of LWBC to extend its fellowship to all individuals. We welcome those who wish to identify with LWBC as their Church home, while still allowing them the freedom to further investigate their faith and/or the ministry of LWBC before entering into the commitment of membership. Membership shall be required of all those holding Elder, Deacon, teacher or other positions identified by the Elders.

All individuals over 18 years of age who meet the criteria for membership and desire to be committed to LWBC may become voting members by the following procedure:

3.6. Members (Continued)

- 3.6.3.1. Personal discipleship or attendance in a membership class to train the prospective member on the Articles of Faith and the Church Constitution. Personal discipleship can be accomplished by an Elder, Deacon, or faithful man or woman in the Church.
- 3.6.3.2. Personal interview by two Elders.
- 3.6.3.3. A recommendation for membership by the Elders.
- 3.6.3.4. Statement of Commitment as articulated in the LWBC Membership Commitment, and introduction of new members to the congregation.

NOTE: Existing members would not need to make a new Statement of Commitment in light of the LWBC Membership Commitment, but they would be held accountable to the LWBC Membership Commitment as it summarizes what is already expected of members in the Constitution, Articles of Faith, and Statement of Vision.

3.6.4. Voting Eligibility

- 3.6.4.1. A member must be 18 years of age to be eligible to vote.
- 3.6.4.2. To ensure appropriate checks and balances by the congregation, Elders are ineligible to vote on recommendations made by the Elder.
- 3.6.4.3. If a member is under the discipline of the Church leadership, then he/she is ineligible to vote.

3.6.5. Authority and Responsibilities

- 3.6.5.1. Fulfill the biblical role of members as stated in Romans 12 and as outlined in Section 2.9.
- 3.6.5.2. Confirm or veto recommendations of the Elders.
- 3.6.5.3. Faithfully participate on all committees as appointed by the Elders.

4. Church Discipline

The following steps shall be taken when Church discipline becomes necessary. Note that the process shall stop at anytime, upon evidence of repentance on the part of the sinning believer. These steps of Church discipline are applicable to all members and to all professing believers who regularly attend LWBC.

4.1. Step 1

The person responsible for initiating discipline is any believer who is aware of another believer's sin and can see clearly to reconcile the problem (Matthew 7:1-5). *"And if your brother sins, go and reprove him in private; if he listens to you, you have won your brother"* (NAS Matthew 18:15).

4.2. Step 2

"But if he does not listen to you, take one or two more with you, so that by the mouth of two or three witnesses every fact may be confirmed." (NAS Matthew 18:16)

4.3. Step 3

"And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the Church..." (Leadership) (NAS Matthew 18:17a). The Elders shall be informed of the situation. To insure the accuracy of reports and to make sure that the general procedure of Matthew 18:15-18 is carried out, the leadership should confront the sinning believer with the truth of God if they did not participate in Steps 1 or 2.

4.4. Step 4

"And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the Church..." (membership; NAS Matthew 18:17a). The Church as a whole should be informed by the Elders that the brother has been dealt with and is now under the discipline of the Church leadership. In this situation, believers are not to associate with him, avoiding him as much as possible until repentance takes place. However, he is still to be seen as a brother in Christ (2 Thessalonians 3:15). It would be possible that he could still attend worship services.

4.5. Step 5

"And if he refuses to listen even to the Church, let him be to you as a gentile and a tax-gatherer" (NAS Matthew 18:17b). He is no longer viewed as a brother in Christ. This individual is now out in Satan's realm and after defying God-given authority, is in the awesome situation of facing "the destruction of the flesh" by Satan (1 Timothy 1:20; 1 Corinthians 5:5). This is formal, public removal of the one sinning from the rolls and the life of the Church.

4. Church Discipline (Continued)

4.6. Discipline of Church Leaders

Should a Pastor, Elder, Deacon or other Church leader sin, the same general process applies. But, due to his position of leadership with its high visibility and influence, other factors are considered. According to 1 Timothy 5:19 and 20, an accusation against a leader is serious and must have two or three witnesses confirming it. It is important that the Church deal with a leader who is in sin. To show partiality to a leader would undermine the credibility of the Church's life and ministry. According to 1 Timothy 5:20, a leader's discipline will have a great affect on the Church. Should the Pastor or other leader repent of his sin, he too, of course, is to be forgiven completely and restored to fellowship. In many cases, however, it may be best if the leader resigns his position. By sinning, he has violated the trust of the ones he has led and has likely disqualified himself from a leadership position (Ref. Section. 2.6., 2.8.). Time is needed for him to restore his priorities, reputation and credibility. If the leader does not voluntarily resign; it is the responsibility of the Elders to decide whether a resignation should be requested. The good of the Church and the man himself must be kept in mind. It should be noted that sin in the life of a leader does not mean that he will necessarily be removed forever from serving the Lord in the capacity of a leader.

4.7. When Repentance Occurs

When a believer acknowledges the seriousness of the sin, demonstrates a godly sorrow and confesses it to God and men (since men have now become involved), then forgiveness and restoration to full fellowship (not necessarily to full ministry) is to take place. If Church discipline has proceeded to Step 3 or beyond, the Elders have the responsibility of determining if genuine sorrow and repentance has occurred. In some cases, restitution may be necessary. Restitution may be significant in demonstrating the genuineness of a person's repentance. When the godly sorrow which leads to real repentance takes place, the repentant one is to have special care and encouragement from the Church to keep him from being "swallowed up with overmuch sorrow" (2 Corinthians 2:7).

5. Finances

5.1. Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the Church shall be from January 1 to December 31 inclusive.

5.2. Budget

The Elders shall be responsible for appointing and overseeing a Budget committee for the purpose of developing the annual budget and presenting the budget to the congregation for confirmation.

5. Finances (Continued)

5.3. Non-Budgeted Expenses

Any non-budgeted expense exceeding 3% of the approved annual budget requires confirmation by the congregation as specified in Section 3.2.

5.4 Deacon's Fund

A separate Deacon's fund will be established to allow the Deacons to freely meet personal physical needs as they arise. Distribution of the Deacon's fund is solely the responsibility of the Deacons.

6. Meetings

6.1. Worship Meetings

The Church shall meet regularly every Sunday for corporate worship.

6.2. Business Meetings

A business meeting shall be held annually to review and approve the budget and special business meetings shall be held when the need arises. Notice of business meetings shall be made from the pulpit and announced in the bulletin a minimum of two weeks prior to the meeting. If an urgent need arises, then attempts will be made to notify each member by mail, phone, visit, or e-mail as to the date and time of the special meeting.

7. Disposition of Church Property

Upon dissolution of the association, assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding Section of any future federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose. Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of by a Court of Competent Jurisdiction of the county in which the principal office of the association is then located, exclusively for such purposes or to such organization or organizations, as said Court shall determine, which are organized and operated exclusively for such purposes. If for any reason the Church ceases to function, the Church property remaining, after paying all proper debts, shall be distributed in a manner that does not inure to the benefit of any individual member. Any assets of the Church must be distributed to one or more organizations which adhere to the Articles of Faith of LWBC.

8. Amendments

8.1. Amendments to the Constitution

Amendments to this Constitution shall be introduced through recommendations made by the Elders. This Constitution shall be reviewed by the Elders a minimum of every 3 years and presented to the congregation for confirmation. If the changes to the Constitution are not confirmed, the old Constitution remains in effect.

8.2. Amendments to the Articles of Faith

Amendments to the Articles of Faith shall be introduced through recommendations made by the Elders. The Articles of Faith shall be reviewed by the Elders a minimum of every 3 years and presented to the congregation for confirmation. If the changes to the Articles of Faith are not confirmed, the old Articles of Faith remain in effect.

9. Purpose

The association is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, educational, and scientific purposes, including, for such purposes the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code or any future tax code.

10. Limitations on Non-Exempt Activities

Notwithstanding any other provision of these articles, the association shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by an organization exempt from federal income tax under Section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code or the corresponding provision of any future federal tax code, or (b) by an association, contributions to which are deductible under Section 170(c) (2) of the Internal Revenue Code or the corresponding provision of any future federal tax code.