

THE CONSTITUTION OF THE
BETHEL BAPTIST CHURCH

PREAMBLE

We, being born-again and Bible-believing Christians by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; believing the Bible to be the divinely inspired and authoritative Word of God and final authority for all Christian faith and practice; accepting the historical Baptist distinctives; in the interests of growth and knowledge of Jesus Christ through worship and work; and that we might fulfill our responsibilities to propagate the Word of God both at home and abroad; and to contend earnestly for the faith (Jude 1:3); and that "all things might be done decently and in order": (I Cor. 14:40); we do, therefore, band ourselves together as a body of immersed believers in Jesus Christ and hereby adopt the following constitution as the statement by which we willingly and cheerfully agree to be governed.

ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this organization shall be called the Bethel Baptist Church of Laramie.

ARTICLE II. PURPOSE

The purpose of this church shall be to accomplish the will of the Lord Jesus Christ through the uniting of Christians in fellowship, faithful to the Word of God, through the preaching of the whole counsel of God, through maintaining regular services, both devotional and for public worship, for spiritual edification of saints, the winning of lost sinners to Christ, the establishment of New Testament churches both at home and abroad, and for the observance of the ordinances.

ARTICLE III. STATEMENT OF FAITH

A. The Holy Scriptures. We believe the Holy Scriptures, consisting of the Old and New Testaments only, to be the plenarily, verbally inspired Word of God, inerrant in the original manuscripts, authoritative, infallible and God-breathed; and that they are the only supreme and ultimate authority for faith and practice (II Tim. 3:16; II Peter 1:20-21; Matt. 5:18).

B. The Godhead. We believe in one triune God, existing in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, eternal in being, identical in

essence, equal in power and glory and having the same divine attributes and perfections; yet exercising them in varied offices (Deut. 6:4; Matt. 28:19; John 14:7-12; John 16:7; II Cor. 13:14)

C. The Person and Work of Jesus Christ.

1. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal and divine Son of God, became man without ceasing to be God, having been conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary, in order that He might reveal God and redeem sinful man (Matt. 1:18-20; John 1:1,2,14, 18; Luke 1:35).

2. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, as a substitutionary sacrifice, and that all who receive Him are justified on the ground of His shed blood (Rom. 3:24-25; 4:25; I Cor. 15:3-4; II Cor. 5:21).

3. We believe in the resurrection of the crucified body of our Lord Jesus Christ and that our redemption and salvation is guaranteed to us by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead; in His bodily ascension into heaven; and in His present life there for us as High Priest and Intercessor (Matt. 28:5-6; I Cor. 15:12-19; Acts 1:9; Heb. 4:14-16; 7:23-25; 9:24; I John 2:1-2).

4. We believe in "that blessed hope" which is the personal, visible, and imminent return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ (I Cor. 15:51-53; I Thess. 4:14-17; Titus 2:13; I John 3:2-3).

D. The Personality of the Holy Spirit. We believe that the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person, equal with the Father and the Son and of the same substance and nature; that He convicts the world of sin, righteousness and judgement; bears witness to the truth; is the agent of the new birth; and that He seals, endues, guides, teaches, witnesses to, sanctifies, and helps the believer; that He baptizes them into the body of Christ, indwells them permanently, seals them unto the day of redemption, bestows spiritual gifts upon each one, and fills for service those yielded to Him. We believe that certain of the spiritual gifts of the Holy Spirit to the church such as apostleship, prophecy, and speaking in tongues were temporary, were needed only in the infancy of the church and are not to be expected today and therefore, not practiced. We believe that the Holy Spirit testifies concerning Jesus Christ and never leads any person, at any time, contrary to the teaching of the Bible (John 3:8; 14:16; 15:26-27; 16:7-15; Acts 5:1-4; I Cor. 12:4-13; 13:8-11; Eph. 4:30; 5:18).

E. The Depravity of Man. We believe that man was created in the image and likeness of God, but that in Adam's sin the race fell and thereby incurred not only physical death, but also spiritual death, which is separation from God; and that all mankind has inherited a sinful nature, became willful sinners with the first expression of personal choice, are totally unable to regain their former position, and are without excuse before God (Gen. 1:26; 3:1-24; Rom. 3:23; 5:12; Eph. 2:1-6,12).

F. Salvation, Regeneration, Eternal Security of the Believer.

1. We believe that salvation is a gift of God brought to men by grace and received by personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, whose blood was shed on Calvary for the forgiveness of sins. Salvation is solely through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ who shed His blood for the forgiveness of our sins, and being a gift, is not earned by any good works whatsoever; and that all those who receive Jesus Christ are regenerated and become sons of God (Eph. 1:7; 2:8-9; 1 John 1:2; 3:57).

2. We believe that the Scriptures teach that the regeneration, or the new birth, is that inner re-creation by the Holy Spirit by which a new nature and spiritual life, not before possessed, are imparted and the person becomes a new creation in Christ Jesus; and without it salvation is impossible (John 3:3-6; II Cor. 5:17; I Peter 1:23; Titus 3:5).

3. We believe that the salvation of every believer is secure for all eternity from the moment of regeneration. This security is guaranteed to each believer by the fact that the life received is eternal life, by the keeping power of God, by the sealing ministry of the Holy Spirit, and by the interceding ministry of Jesus Christ (John 5:24; 10:27-30; Eph. 4:30; Heb. 7:25).

G. Separation. We believe in the Biblical doctrine of separation which encompasses three things: 1) the separation of the local church from all affiliation and fellowship with those who deny the verities of the "faith once delivered to the saints"; 2) the separation of the individual believer from all worldly practices that may dishonor the Savior; and 3) the separation of church and state (II Tim. 3:1-5; Rom. 12:1-2; 14:13; I John 2:15-17; II John 9-11; II Cor. 6:11-7:1).

H. The Eternal State. We believe that the souls of those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation do at death immediately pass into His presence, and there remain in conscious bliss until the resurrection of the body at His coming when soul and body reunited shall be associated with Him forever in glory; but, that the souls of unbelievers remain after death in conscious misery into the final judgement of the Great White Throne at the close of the

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Millennium, when soul and body reunited shall be cast into the lake of fire eternally separated from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (Luke 16:19-26; 23:43; II Cor. 4:8; Phil. 1:23; II Thess. 1:7-9; Rev. 20:11-15; 14:9-14; I Thess. 4:13-18).

I. The Church. We believe in the Church, a living, spiritual body consisting of all born-again believers of which Christ is the Head, and we believe that each local church is a visible expression of the Body of Christ and is a congregation of believers in Jesus Christ immersed upon a credible confession of faith, and associated together by covenant for worship, evangelism, observance of the ordinances and fellowship. We believe that the local church is the center of God's program for this age, and that every Christian is bound by Scripture to give his unhindered cooperation to the program of his local church as it follows God's Word (Acts 2:41-47; 14:27; I Tim. 3:1-16; Titus 1:4-11; I Cor. 3:10-17; 11:2; Matt. 16:16-18; I Cor. 12:12-13; Gal. 3:27; Eph. 1:22-23; 5:25-27).

J. The Church's Ordinances. We believe that the Lord Jesus instituted two ordinances, baptism and the Lord's Supper; to be observed by all believers until His return.

We believe that baptism is the immersion in water of a believer in Christ, in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to show forth by solemn and beautiful symbolism, the believer's identification with Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, and that it is a Scriptural prerequisite to church membership (Matt. 28:19; Acts 8:36; Rom. 6:3-5; I Peter 3:21; Acts 2:38-41).

We believe that the Lord's Supper is partaking of bread and the fruit of the vine (non-alcoholic), as symbols of Christ's body and blood, commemorating His suffering and death for us and our continual benefit therefrom; that participation should be encouraged to only those who have united to the local church by baptism and testimony, or those

who are baptized members of like faith and practice, and that participation should be preceded by careful self-examination (I Cor. 11:23-32).

K. The Great Commission. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ has commissioned the church to take the gospel to the world, and that evangelism at home and abroad should be primary in the program of the local church (Matt. 28:19; Acts 1:8).

L. The Responsibility of Believers. We believe that all

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believers should seek to walk by the Spirit, not bringing reproach upon their Lord and Savior, exercising Christian liberty regulated by love, separated from worldly pleasures and practices, separated from organizational association with apostate groups (Rom. 12:1-2; Gal. 5:16; II Cor. 6:14-17; I Cor. 8:1-13).

We believe that it is the responsibility of all believers to witness by life and by word to the truths of the Holy Scriptures and to assume responsibility for the spreading of the gospel to all the world (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8).

We believe that it is the responsibility of all believers to remember the work of the local church and its extension ministries in prayer, to support it with their tithes and offerings as the Lord prospers them, to participate in all the regular services of the Church as the Lord enables, and to voluntarily submit to the watchcare and discipline of the local church (I Cor. 16:2; Heb. 10:19-25; 13:17-18).

M. Creation. We believe that God created the heavens and the earth including all life, "each after its own kind", by direct act in six (6) twenty-four (24) hour days, and not by any process of evolution (Gen. 1 & 2; Col. 1:16-17; John 1:3).

N. Last Things. God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord. (Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22,37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians

4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27,28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13).

O. Human Sexuality & Ministry Roles.

We affirm both the Nashville Statement and the Danvers Statement, which are attached at the back of this Constitution.

ARTICLE IV. OUR CHURCH COVENANT

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of

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the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ. We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute regularly and cheerfully to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and spreading of the gospel through all nations. We also engage to maintain family and personal devotions; to raise our children in a Godly fashion; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances, to walk cautiously in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our conduct; to avoid all gossiping, backbiting, and excessive anger; to abstain from drunkenness or any misuse of alcohol whatsoever, to abstain from the misuse of all drugs, and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay. We moreover engage that, when we remove from this place, we will as soon as possible unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

ARTICLE V. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Requirements. This Church shall consist of believers in Christ, Scripturally immersed in water, who take the Holy Bible as the verbally inspired Word of God as their only rule of faith and practice, and are willing to subscribe to the Articles of Faith and Church Covenant of the Bethel Baptist Church of Laramie, Wyoming.

Section 2. Registry. The membership of the Bethel Baptist Church shall be composed of that body of persons listed on the church rolls in the custody of the Church Clerk, and each person 18 years old and above shall have one vote. The members of the Bethel Baptist Church shall be chosen and added to the roll in compliance with this constitution.

Section 3. Admission by Recommendation. All persons desiring membership in this church shall make their desire known. The Pastor and Deacons shall interview the applicant with regard to his salvation and spiritual life. Finding the applicant eligible, he shall be recommended for membership prior to the time when the vote is taken. Each applicant will be required to accept the obligations imposed on

all members by our constitution and give testimony of salvation to the congregation prior to the time of voting.

Should any member object to the applicant, he must immediately appear before the Pastor and Deacons and state Scriptural reasons supporting his objection, upon which the Pastor and Deacons shall recommend whether valid or invalid at the business meeting. The objection having been ruled valid, the application shall be held in suspension pending further investigation and attempted correction by the Pastor and Deacons.

A majority vote, at any regular service, by members present and voting is required for acceptance of the applicant into membership of the church.

Section 4. Admission by Baptism. Any persons professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, giving evidence of change of heart, and having accepted the aims and ideals of the church as set forth above, may be received for baptism by vote of the members present at any regular service of the church, and upon baptism automatically becomes a member of the church in good standing.

Section 5. Admission by Letter. Members from other churches having been properly immersed and holding like faith may be received as members with us by presenting themselves for membership at any regular service of the church upon the vote of the members present and voting. The action, except in special cases, upon such an applicant shall be contingent upon the securing of a letter of dismissal or proper credentials from the sister church in which the applicant presently holds membership.

Section 6. Admission by Experience or Restoration. All applicants for membership other than by baptism or by letter, i.e. by profession of salvation, or by restoration shall be received into the church in the same way as those by baptism (Article V, Section 4), except that this ordinance shall not necessarily be administered. If they have not been properly baptized, this ordinance shall be required.

Section 7. New Members. All persons uniting with this church, following a recommendation and vote, in any of the three ways above shall be made acquainted with the program of the church and shall be given opportunity to fulfill their stewardship obligations as to worship, service, and giving.

Section 8. Dismission of Members. Should any member of this church in good standing desire to unite with another church of like faith and order, this church (in conference) may grant a letter of dismissal.

Should any member of this church unite with another church which is not of like faith and order, his name shall be dropped from the roll by vote of the church.

Members who have moved away will be allowed between six months to a year to find a church of like faith and practice before, upon the majority vote of the congregation, the member will be dismissed from the roll.

ARTICLE VI. ORGANIZATION

Section 1. Officers and Standing Committees. In addition to the Pastor and the Deacons, the general officers of this church shall be: a Clerk, Assistant Clerk, a Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer, a Sunday School Superintendent and Assistant, Head Usher and the specified committees and such additional committees and personnel as the church may deem necessary to be chosen, elected, or employed in such manner as time and occasion require and the church directs.

Section 2. Pastor. The Pastor is recognized as the chief officer of the local church, and shall preach the Word of God, administer the ordinances of the New Testament, shepherd the church and lead it in the fulfillment of its sacred task. All paid employees of the church shall be under his supervision. He shall act as moderator at all business meetings of the church when present and shall be an exofficio member of all organizations and committees of the church, and counselor of all departments. He shall maintain at all times a Godly deportment, that no reproach may come through him upon the Body of Christ.

Section 3. Deacons. It shall be the duty of the Deacons to cooperate with the Pastor in the work of the church. They shall be charged especially with: 1) the spiritual advancement and interest of the church and the watch-care of its members; 2) the preparation and distribution of the Lord's Supper and the preparation for the ordinance of Baptism; 3) the care of the needy. They are to seek the harmony of the entire body of the church. The organization of the Deacons shall be known simply as the Deacons. The Chairman of Deacons shall serve as vice-moderator to the church in conference in the absence of the Pastor. They shall nominate a chairman annually. The number of Deacons shall be a minimum of three (3) and others may be added by the church as time and need require. The term of office shall be three (3) years.

Section 4. Trusteeship. The Deacons of Bethel Baptist Church shall act as the Trustees. They shall be charged with the responsibility of the maintenance and improvement of all property owned by the church, and to recommend to the church the purchase of equipment

and necessary materials to carry out said responsibility, except as exclusions are made by the church in the budget or in conference in setting up a special committee for the erection and equipment of a new edifice. The Deacons shall appoint three of their number to transact the following business of Bethel Baptist Church. They shall hold legal title to all property of the church, real or personal. They shall have the power to create mortgages and dictate the terms of repayment when authorized specifically by the church to do so. By way of description but not limitation, they shall be empowered to sign notes, bonds, debentures and other evidences of indebtedness including deeds of trust when said instruments are in conformity with resolutions adopted by the church and accompanying said instruments.

Section 5. Clerk. The Clerk shall accurately keep the record of all church business which shall be approved at each church conference, and shall keep a correct register of the membership with the date and manner of their admission and dismissal. He shall secure letters or proper credentials for applicants presenting themselves for church membership by letter. At the annual meeting of the church he shall submit a statistical report of the membership for the past year, and a general record of the work of the church. The Clerk shall be elected annually and may succeed himself in office.

Section 6. Treasurer. The Treasurer shall deposit church funds in a designated bank to the account of the Bethel Baptist Church and shall disburse all funds for local expenses, missions, and benevolence. The Treasurer shall hold all monies belonging to this church, and shall without special vote or authority pay out of the church funds available for the purpose of all items authorized by the annual budget of the church. He shall be authorized by the chairman of each committee to disburse funds allocated to that particular committee. He shall not pay any bill, claim or request not authorized by the annual budget except by the direction of the church in conference. He shall keep record of all receipts and disbursements with proper vouchers. He shall present a summary of the financial condition of the church at each quarterly business meeting of the church and a complete report at the annual business meeting of the church year. He shall be an ex-officio member of the Deacons and budget committees. He shall be elected annually and may succeed himself in office.

Section 7. Sunday School Superintendent. The Sunday School Superintendent shall be the executive officer of the Sunday School and may exercise general supervision over all departments. He shall be

appointed annually by the Pastor and the deacons and may succeed himself in office.

Section 8. Head Usher. The Head Usher shall be elected by the congregation. The Ushers shall be appointed by the Head Usher. It shall be the duty of the Ushers to welcome visitors, see that the building is as comfortable as possible, receive offerings during services, and to do whatever may be deemed wise in the eyes of the head usher to maintain dignity and order during public worship services.

Section 9. Nominating Committee. At the monthly church conference, at least sixty days before the annual business meeting, the church shall elect a committee of four (consisting of two deacons and two of the laity) to serve as the Nominating Committee. This committee shall nominate one or more candidates for each place to be filled at the annual business meeting and inform the church at least one month prior to the election. Further nominations for each office may be made from the floor during the annual meeting.

Section 10. Budget Committee. The Budget Committee shall be composed of the Deacons and the Treasurer. This committee shall formulate a proposed budget to be presented to the church for adoption at the annual business meeting. All committee chairmen should forward their proposed annual financial needs to this committee. When the budget has been adopted by the church, the budget committee shall be dissolved until time for a new budget to be formulated.

Section 11. Missions and Evangelism Committee. The Deacons shall serve as the Missions and Evangelism Committee.

Section 12. Pulpit Committee. When the office of Pastor is vacated, a Pulpit Committee shall be formed. This committee shall be composed of the Chairman of the Deacons and four other members of the church, at least two of whom shall be Deacons. This committee shall be elected by the church in conference.

Section 13. Music Committee. The Music Committee shall consist of an appointed (official) chairman and others as needed. This committee shall be responsible to arrange for all special music. The Music Chairman shall be appointed by the Pastor and the Deacons annually.

Section 14. Church Social Committee. The Social Committee shall be composed of one or more members. It shall be the responsibility of this committee to enlist help in caring for all the church social events. This committee shall be appointed by the Pastor and the Deacons annually.

Section 15. Nursery Committee. Two shall be appointed annually by the Pastor and the Deacons, after passing a background check, to supervise and coordinate the nursery and necessary arrangements involved in care of children during services.

Section 16. Vacancy in Office. If any member of these offices or committees shall habitually absent himself from meetings without a reason satisfactory to the committee or the church, in the case of general officers, his place shall thereby automatically be vacant. In either of the above cases a successor may be elected to serve out the unexpired term of office at a regular business meeting of the church, after the delinquent officer has been notified of his failure.

ARTICLE VII. PASTOR

Section 1. Scriptural Qualifications. His qualifications shall reflect the requirements as stated in I Tim. 3:1-6 and Titus 1:59.

Section 2. Selection of a New Pastor. The Pulpit Committee shall secure prospective candidates for the pastorate when such has been vacated. They shall interview each prospective candidate and endeavor to hear him speak before recommending him as a candidate. Each prospective candidate must be in full agreement with the doctrinal position of this church.

Each candidate shall preach in one or more of the public services of the church.

Each candidate shall be voted upon before considering another. No vote shall be taken until at least two days have expired following the candidate's appearance.

The Pastor shall be called by a 3/4 vote of the members present and voting. Notice of the meeting shall be given by the Church Clerk in at least two regular services of the church prior to the election. The vote shall be by written ballot.

The Chairman of the Deacons shall be responsible to notify the Pastor-elect, to report his acceptance to the congregation, and to make arrangements for his moving and housing.

Section 3. Pastoral Benefits. The Pastor shall receive a salary for meeting the financial needs of his family, a sum agreed to by mutual agreement between Pastor and church. This agreement shall be made before the candidate is voted upon.

The Pastor shall be granted an annual vacation with full pay, away from the church work and meetings for two weeks, designated as 14 days.

Section 4. Pastor's Term of Office. He shall serve for an indefinite period of time with reciprocal rights to terminate his services upon thirty days written notice.

Accusations against the Pastor shall be submitted to the Deacons, and shall not be considered unless supported by the testimony of two or more witnesses (I Tim. 5:19). If he err in doctrine or conduct, the Deacons shall, in brotherly love, attempt to correct him (Gal. 6:1). If this is not effective, the matter shall be referred to the church which alone has authority to act.

The Pastor may be dismissed by 3/4 vote of the eligible members present and voting; after it has been announced at two successive regular services immediately prior to this meeting. The vote shall be by written ballot.

If the Pastor is dismissed, he shall vacate the pulpit immediately, shall receive thirty days' pay, and shall vacate the parsonage within thirty days of his dismissal.

Section 5. Assistant Pastor. (If needed) He shall be selected in the same manner as the Pastor.

He shall assist the Pastor in carrying out his duties and shall, therefore, seek conscientiously to achieve the objectives and purposes of this church and to defend the statement of faith.

He shall serve the church under the direct supervision of the Pastor.

ARTICLE VIII. DEACONS

Section 1. Qualifications of Deacons. Their character shall reflect the requirements as stated in Acts 6:3 and I Tim. 3:8-13. No Deacon of this church may be a member of any secret order or lodge.

They shall be members of this church and shall subscribe wholeheartedly to its doctrinal statement and constitution.

Section 2. Deacon's Term of Office. The office of Deacon shall be three years. One third of their number shall be elected each year. If a deacon commits an offense beneath the dignity of the office, the rest of the deacons and the pastor may ask the deacon to step down. If the

deacon refuses, the issue will be brought to the church. Upon a $\frac{3}{4}$ vote of members present and voting, a deacon may be removed from office.

ARTICLE IX. QUALIFICATIONS OF OFFICERS

Their character shall reflect the requirements as stated in Acts 6:3, I Tim. 3:8-13, and Titus 2:12-13. No officer of this church may be a member of any secret order or lodge. Officers shall be members of this church and shall subscribe wholeheartedly to its doctrinal statement and by-laws, and shall seek by life and words to promote the best interest of the individual members and the body as a whole.

ARTICLE X. DISCIPLINE

Section 1. Method and Spirit. Any member having cause of complaint against another should seek to remove it as directed in Matthew 18:15-17. All discipline shall be formulated and carried out in the light of the teachings of Jesus Christ, in meekness and Godly fear, lest any fall by the way.

Section 2. Exclusion. Upon the recommendation of the Deacons and majority vote of the church, a member guilty of conduct unbecoming his profession and membership may be excluded, provided that a reasonable notice of such contemplated action shall be given to such member (if he can be found) and opportunity given for defense or satisfactory explanation. No member shall be excluded from the church without the privilege of a hearing (if he can be found).

ARTICLE XI. MEETINGS

Section 1. The Lord's Day. The church shall meet regularly on the Lord's Day (Sunday) for morning and evening services.

Section 2. The Mid-Week Service. At least once during each week the church shall meet for prayer and Bible study. The second Wednesday of January, April, July, and October shall be designated as church conference night (business meeting) at which time the church shall hear reports and transact business. The Lord's Supper shall be observed on the first Wednesday of each month unless otherwise designated by the church. The establishment of these regular times shall serve as notice to all members of the church.

Section 3. Special Meetings. Special meetings shall be called by the Pastor or the Deacons and the giving of due notice thereof, at a regular Sunday service previous to the meeting stating the purpose to all members and except in emergency cases, ten days notice must be given when matters of unusual importance are to be considered.

Section 4. Annual Business Meeting. The annual business meeting of the church shall be held on the second Wednesday of January each year.

ARTICLE XII. ELECTIONS

Section 1. Elected Officers and Their Tenure. All officers of elective status shall be filled at the annual business meeting of the church.

Tenure of office shall be one year, except for Deacons.

An individual may be elected to more than one office provided he is qualified and can fulfill all the responsibilities of each office held.

Assumption of office date shall be immediately following the annual business meeting.

Section 2. Requirements for Election. Candidates receiving a majority of votes cast shall be declared elected.

Section 3. Vote by Ballot. Elections shall be by written ballot. The chairman of the meeting shall appoint tellers who shall collect, count the ballots, and report to the church the results of the election.

Section 4. Quorum. Twenty-five per cent (25%) of the voting resident members of the church shall constitute a quorum.

Section 5. Rules of Order. This church shall follow Robert's Rules of Order for business meetings.

ARTICLE XIII. MISSIONS

This church shall support missionary causes and educational institutions consistent with its own belief and practices. All missionaries supported by this church shall be in full agreement with the doctrines and practices of this church. Designated personal or

special offerings, complying with this article, will be honored. All missionary candidates shall be interviewed by the Deacons and Pastor for financial support. Continued support of any missionary shall be contingent upon a satisfactory biannual report via letter. If any missionary changes their field of ministry, a congregational vote shall be had to determine continued support. Upon a majority vote of members voting, support for the missionary shall be continued. All missionary support must be approved by 2/3 majority vote of members present and voting.

ARTICLE XIV. AFFILIATION

This church is a sovereign Baptist church under the headship of Christ and the leadership of God-given pastors. Upon a two-thirds vote of members present and voting this church may choose to affiliate or to disaffiliate with any local, state, or national association of churches; or it may for reasons known to itself, choose to remain unaffiliated with any group of churches. In the event that it does affiliate with an association of churches, such affiliation shall be understood to affect in no way the rights, powers, and privileges of the church, either as relates to its property or the operation of its affairs. Withdrawal from any and all affiliations shall in no wise jeopardize its property.

ARTICLE XV. CHURCH ORGANIZATIONS

Section 1. Recognition. It is recognized that this church may have within it various subsidiary organizations such as the Sunday School, Christian School, women's and men's fellowships, youth groups, choirs, committees, and other organizations.

Section 2. Relationship of these Groups to the Church. All such groups shall be considered arms of the church. No group shall follow any procedure in its constitution or its practice which conflicts with any portion of the church constitution.

All such groups shall be under the supervision of the Pastor and Deacons and shall be responsible to the church as a whole. The church may call for a report from any organization at any time, and may dissolve any organization by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present and voting after posting a two weeks notice.

All officers of church organizations shall be members in good standing of this church. Any person ceasing to be a member in good

standing of the church shall automatically forfeit any offices he holds in any church organization and shall return within one week any monies, books, minutes, or other property of the organization.

No group or organization shall financially support missionary projects separately from the church. No financial support for any missionary project shall be undertaken without prior approval of the church.

ARTICLE XVI. CHURCH YEAR

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

ARTICLE XVII. AMENDMENTS

All proposed amendments to this constitution shall be presented in writing to the Pastor and Deacons and upon their recommendation, shall be posted before the membership for at least two weeks and be read at two mid-week services prior to the business meeting at which they shall be considered for adoption. Amendments may be adopted by a two-thirds majority of members present and voting.

ARTICLE XVIII. CHURCH BUILDINGS AND FACILITIES

Section 1. Authority for Use. The Pastor and the Deacons shall exercise the authority to permit the use of the buildings and shall refuse the use of the buildings for any meeting or activity contrary to church policy and belief.

Section 2. Property Rights. Persons dismissed or who have withdrawn from membership of the church have no right to make claim upon any of the church property and any such property in their possession shall be returned immediately.

ARTICLE XIX. DISSOLUTION OF THE CHURCH

In the event of the dissolution of the church, after paying or making provision for payment of all its liabilities, the church shall dispose of all its remaining assets to such organization or organizations formed and operated exclusively for religious purposes as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the

corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law) .

The Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

The "Danvers Statement" summarizes the need for the Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) and serves as an overview of our core beliefs. This statement was prepared by several evangelical leaders at a CBMW meeting in Danvers, Massachusetts, in December of 1987. It was first published in final form by the CBMW in Wheaton, Illinois in November of 1988.

Rationale:

We have been moved in our purpose by the following contemporary developments which we observe with deep concern:

1. The widespread uncertainty and confusion in our culture regarding the complementary differences between masculinity and femininity;
2. the tragic effects of this confusion in unraveling the fabric of marriage woven by God out of the beautiful and diverse strands of manhood and womanhood;
3. the increasing promotion given to feminist egalitarianism with accompanying distortions or neglect of the glad harmony portrayed in Scripture between the loving, humble leadership of redeemed husbands and the intelligent, willing support of that leadership by redeemed wives;
4. the widespread ambivalence regarding the values of motherhood, vocational homemaking, and the many ministries historically performed by women;
5. the growing claims of legitimacy for sexual relationships which have Biblically and historically been considered illicit or perverse, and the increase in pornographic portrayal of human sexuality;
6. the upsurge of physical and emotional abuse in the family;

7. the emergence of roles for men and women in church leadership that do not conform to Biblical teaching but backfire in the crippling of Biblically faithful witness;

8. the increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities devised to reinterpret apparently plain meanings of Biblical texts;

9. the consequent threat to Biblical authority as the clarity of Scripture is jeopardized and the accessibility of its meaning to ordinary people is withdrawn into the restricted realm of technical ingenuity;

10. and behind all this the apparent accommodation of some within the church to the spirit of the age at the expense of winsome, radical Biblical authenticity which in the power of the Holy Spirit may reform rather than reflect our ailing culture.

Affirmations:

Based on our understanding of Biblical teachings, we affirm the following:

1. Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18).

2. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart (Gen 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Tim 2:12-14).

3. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin (Gen 2:16-18, 21-24, 3:1-13; 1 Cor 11:7-9).

4. The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women (Gen 3:17, 12, 16).

o In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility. o In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility, and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.

5. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18; Gal 3:28). Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Tim 2:11-15).

6. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.

o In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership (Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; Tit 2:3-5; 1 Pet 3:1-7).

o In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 1 Tim 2:11-15).

7. In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission-domestic, religious, or civil-ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin (Dan 3:10-18; Acts 4:19-20, 5:27-29; 1 Pet 3:1-2).

8. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries (1 Tim 2:11-15, 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-9). Rather, Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.

9. With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world (1 Cor 12:7-21).

10. We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.

The Nashville Statement

Preamble

Evangelical Christians at the dawn of the twenty-first century find themselves living in a period of historic transition. As Western culture has become increasingly post-Christian, it has embarked upon a massive revision of what it means to be a human being. By and large the spirit of our age no longer discerns or delights in the beauty of God's design for human life. Many deny that God created human beings for his glory, and that his good purposes for us include our personal and physical design as male and female. It is common to think that human identity as male and female is not part of God's beautiful plan, but is, rather, an expression of an individual's autonomous preferences. The pathway to full and lasting joy through God's good design for his creatures is thus replaced by the path of shortsighted alternatives that, sooner or later, ruin human life and dishonor God.

This secular spirit of our age presents a great challenge to the Christian church. Will the church of the Lord Jesus Christ lose her biblical conviction, clarity, and courage, and blend into the spirit of the age? Or will she hold fast to the word of life, draw courage from Jesus, and unashamedly proclaim his way as the way of life? Will she maintain her clear, counter-cultural witness to a world that seems bent on ruin?

We are persuaded that faithfulness in our generation means declaring once again the true story of the world and of our place in it—particularly as male and female. Christian Scripture teaches that there is but one God who alone is Creator and Lord of all. To him alone, every person owes gladhearted thanksgiving, heart-felt praise, and total allegiance. This is the path not only of glorifying God, but of knowing ourselves. To forget our Creator is to forget who we are, for he made us for himself. And we cannot know ourselves truly without truly knowing him who made us. We did not make ourselves. We are not our own. Our true identity, as male and female persons, is given by God. It is not only foolish, but hopeless, to try to make ourselves what God did not create us to be.

We believe that God's design for his creation and his way of salvation serve to bring him the greatest glory and bring us the greatest good. God's good plan provides us with the greatest freedom. Jesus said he came that we might have life and have it in overflowing measure. He is for us and not against us. Therefore, in the hope of serving Christ's church and witnessing publicly to the good purposes of God for human sexuality revealed in Christian Scripture, we offer the following affirmations and denials.

Article 1

WE AFFIRM that God has designed marriage to be a covenantal, sexual, procreative, lifelong union of one man and one woman, as husband and wife, and is meant to signify the covenant love between Christ and his bride the church.

WE DENY that God has designed marriage to be a homosexual, polygamous, or polyamorous relationship. We also deny that marriage is a mere human contract rather than a covenant made before God.

Article 2

WE AFFIRM that God's revealed will for all people is chastity outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage.

WE DENY that any affections, desires, or commitments ever justify sexual intercourse before or outside marriage; nor do they justify any form of sexual immorality.

Article 3

WE AFFIRM that God created Adam and Eve, the first human beings, in his own image, equal before God as persons, and distinct as male and female.

WE DENY that the divinely ordained differences between male and female render them unequal in dignity or worth.

Article 4

WE AFFIRM that divinely ordained differences between male and female reflect God's original creation design and are meant for human good and human flourishing.

WE DENY that such differences are a result of the Fall or are a tragedy to be overcome.

Article 5

WE AFFIRM that the differences between male and female reproductive structures are integral to God's design for selfconception as male or female.

WE DENY that physical anomalies or psychological conditions nullify the God-appointed link between biological sex and selfconception as male or female.

Article 6

WE AFFIRM that those born with a physical disorder of sex development are created in the image of God and have dignity and worth equal to all other image-bearers. They are acknowledged by our Lord Jesus in his words about "eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb." With all others they are welcome as faithful followers of Jesus Christ and should embrace their biological sex insofar as it may be known.

WE DENY that ambiguities related to a person's biological sex render one incapable of living a fruitful life in joyful obedience to Christ.

Article 7

WE AFFIRM that self-conception as male or female should be defined by God's holy purposes in creation and redemption as revealed in Scripture.

WE DENY that adopting a homosexual or transgender selfconception is consistent with God's holy purposes in creation and redemption.

Article 8

WE AFFIRM that people who experience sexual attraction for the same sex may live a rich and fruitful life pleasing to God through faith in Jesus Christ, as they, like all Christians, walk in purity of life.

WE DENY that sexual attraction for the same sex is part of the natural goodness of God's original creation, or that it puts a person outside the hope of the gospel.

Article 9

WE AFFIRM that sin distorts sexual desires by directing them away from the marriage covenant and toward sexual immorality— a distortion that includes both heterosexual and homosexual immorality.

WE DENY that an enduring pattern of desire for sexual immorality justifies sexually immoral behavior.

Article 10

WE AFFIRM that it is sinful to approve of homosexual immorality or transgenderism and that such approval constitutes an essential departure from Christian faithfulness and witness.

WE DENY that the approval of homosexual immorality or transgenderism is a matter of moral indifference about which otherwise faithful Christians should agree to disagree.

Article 11

WE AFFIRM our duty to speak the truth in love at all times, including when we speak to or about one another as male or female.

WE DENY any obligation to speak in such ways that dishonor God's design of his image bearers as male and female.

Article 12

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ gives both merciful pardon and transforming power, and that this pardon and power enable a follower of Jesus to put to death sinful desires and to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ is insufficient to forgive all sexual sins and to give power for holiness to every believer who feels drawn into sexual sin.

Article 13

WE AFFIRM that the grace of God in Christ enables sinners to forsake transgender self conceptions and by divine forbearance to accept the God-ordained link between one's biological sex and one's self-conception as male or female.

WE DENY that the grace of God in Christ sanctions selfconceptions that are at odds with God's revealed will.

Article 14

WE AFFIRM that Christ Jesus has come into the world to save sinners and that through Christ's death and resurrection forgiveness of sins and eternal life are available to every person who repents of sin and trusts in Christ alone as Savior, Lord, and supreme treasure.

WE DENY that the Lord's arm is too short to save or that any sinner is beyond his reach.