

Constitution of Emmanuel Baptist Church  
Ocean Springs, MS

**Article I: Name and Purpose**

1. The name of this church shall be, "Emmanuel Baptist Church".
2. The purpose of this organization shall be the worship of Almighty God according to the teachings of His Word. To practice the precepts and examples of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ set forth in the New Testament. To sustain the ordinances and doctrines and to preach and propagate to the whole world God's salvation by a personal faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. (Matthew 28:19-20)
3. It is important to state that included in the purpose of the church is the intent that all should be welcomed to worship regardless of religious or social standing. All are welcomed, all are loved by both Christ and the membership. All are encouraged to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit. It is understood that not all who attend worship will become members of the church. This for various reasons including the reluctance or refusal to abide by or personally accept the articles as presented in the Statement of Faith.

**Article II: Statement of Faith (We Believe)**

**Of the Bible:** We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end and truth for its content; that it is without error; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds and opinion should be tried.

(2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:19, 21; John 10:34-35)

**Of the True God:** We believe that there is the one and only God, an infinite Spirit, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of Heaven and Earth; inexpressively glorious in holiness and worthy of all possible honor, confidence, love; that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons; the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; equal in every divine perfection and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.

(John 4:24; 14:26, 15:26; Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14; Genesis 1:26)

**Of the Holy Spirit:** We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, equal with God the Father and God the Son and of the same nature; that He was active in the creation; that in His relation to the unbelieving world He restrains the evil one until God's purpose is fulfilled; that He convicts of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; that He bears witness to the truth of the gospel in preaching and testimony; that He is the agent in the New Birth; that He seals, endues, guides, teaches, witnesses, sanctifies and helps the believer.

(John 14:16; 1 John 3:5; Matthew 28:19; Hebrews 9:14)

**Of Jesus Christ:** We believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God who so loved the World that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life; that God sent His Son into the world that the world through Him might be saved.

(John 3:16-17)

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**Of the Devil or Satan:** We believe in the personality of Satan, that he is the unholy god of this age and the author of all the powers of darkness and is destined to the judgement of an eternal justice in the lake of fire.

(Matthew 4:1-3; 2 Corinthians 4:4; Revelation 20:10)

**Of Creation:** We accept the Genesis account of creation and believe that man (male and female) came by direct creation of God and defines, according to scripture, the status and relationships of men and women in this world and confirmed within the scriptures, Gods divine instruction.

(Genesis 1 and 2; Colossians 1:16-17; John 1:3)

**Of the Fall of Man:** We believe that man was created in innocence under the Law of his Maker, but by voluntary transgression fell from his sinless and happy state, in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, not only by constraint, but of choice and therefore under just condemnation without defense or excuse.

(Genesis 3:1-6; Romans 1:32, 5:10-19)

**Of the Virgin Birth:** We believe that Jesus was begotten of the Holy Spirit in a miraculous manner, born of Mary, a virgin, as no other man was ever born of woman, and that He is both the Son of God, and God, the Son.

(Genesis 3:15; Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:35; John 1:4; Galatians 4:4)

**Of the Atonement for Sin:** We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace; through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God, who by the appointment of the Father, freely took upon Him our nature, yet without sin, honored the divine law by His personal obedience and by His death made a full and vicarious atonement for our sins; that His atonement consisted not in setting us an example by His death as a martyr, but of voluntary substitution of Himself in each sinner's place, the Just dying for the unjust; Christ, our Lord, dying for sinful man, bearing our sin in his own body on that tree; that having risen from the dead, He is now enthroned in Heaven and uniting in His wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfection. He is in every way qualified to be a suitable, compassionate and all-sufficient Savior.

(Ephesians 2:8-10; Acts 15:11; Romans 3:24; John 3:16; Matthew 18:11; Philippians 2:7; Hebrews 2:14; Isaiah 53:4-7; Romans 3:25; 1 Corinthians 15:3; 1 John 4:10)

**Of Grace in the New Creation:** We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be born again; that the new birth is a new creation in Christ Jesus; that it is instantaneous and not a process; that in the new birth the one dead in trespasses and in sins is made a partaker of the divine nature and receives eternal life, the free gift of God; that the new creation is brought about in a manner above our comprehension, solely by the power of the Holy Spirit in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the Gospel; that its proper evidence appears in holy fruits of repentance and faith and newness of life.

(John 3:3; 2 Corinthians 5:17; 1 John 3:6-7; Acts 16:30-33; 2 Peter 1:4; Romans 6:23; 2 Corinthians 5:19; Colossians 2:13; John 3:8)

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**Of the Freeness of Salvation:** We believe in God's saving grace; that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the Gospel; that it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a cordial, penitent and obedient faith; and that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth but his inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the Gospel; which rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation.

(1 Thessalonians 1:4; Colossians 3:12; 1 Peter 1:2; Titus 1:1; Romans 8:29-30; Isaiah 55:1-6; Romans 10:13, John 6:37; John 3:15-16; Ephesians 2:4-5)

**Of Justification:** We believe that the great Gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in Him is justification; that justification includes the pardon of sin, and the gift of eternal life, on the principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done; but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood, His righteousness is imputed to us.

(Acts 13:39; Isaiah 53:11; Zechariah 13:1; Romans 4:25; Romans 5:1, 9, 16, 18; Ephesians 2:8-9; 2 Corinthians 5:19)

**Of Repentance and Faith:** We believe that repentance and faith are solemn obligations and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the quickening Spirit of God; thereby being deeply convicted of our guilt, danger and helplessness and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ and openly confessing Him as our only and all-sufficient savior.

(Luke 13:5; Acts 4:12, 20, 21; John 14:6; 2 Peter 3:9)

**Of the Local Church:** We believe that a local church is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant of faith and fellowship of the Gospel; observing ordinances of Christ; governed by His laws; and exercising the gifts, rights and privileges invested in them by His Word; that its officers are Pastors and deacons, whose qualifications, claims, and duties are clearly defined in the Scriptures. We believe the true mission of the Church is the faithful witnessing of Christ to all men as we have opportunity. We hold that the local church has the absolute right of self-determination free from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations; and that the one and only superintendent is Christ through the Holy Spirit; that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other in contending for the faith and for the furtherance of the Gospel; that each local church is the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation; that on all matters of membership, of policy, of government, of discipline, of benevolence, the will of the local church is final.

(Acts 2:41-42; 1 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 1:22-23; Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:17-28; 1 Timothy 3:17; Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 5:23-24; Acts 15:13-18)

**Of the Perseverance of the Saints:** We believe that real believers endure unto the end; that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; that a special providence watches over their welfare; and that they are kept by the power of God through faith unto eternal salvation.

(1 Peter 1:5; Ephesians 1:13; 4:30; John 8:31-32; 10:28-29; Matthew 13:19, 21; Romans 8:23; 1 John 2:19)

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**Of Baptism and the Lord's Supper:** We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion in water of a believer; in the name of the Father, of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, with the authority of a church to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem of our faith in the crucified, buried and risen Savior, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life; that it is a prerequisite to the privilege of church membership and to the Lord's Supper; in which the members of the congregation by the sacred use of bread and fruit of the vine are to commemorate together the dying love of Christ; preceded always by solemn self-examination.

(Colossians 2:12; Corinthians 11:23-30; Acts 8:36-39; Matthew 3:6, 16, 26:26-30; 28:19-20; John 3:23; Romans 6:4-5)

**Of the Righteous and the Wicked:** We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked; that such only as through faith are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and sanctified by the Spirit of our God, are truly righteous in His esteem; while all such as continue in impenitence and unbelief are in His sight wicked and under the curse and this distinction holds among men both in and after death, in the everlasting felicity of the saved and the everlasting conscious suffering of the lost.

(Malachi 3:18; Acts 10:34-35; Genesis 18:23; 1 John 2:29; Romans 6:17-18; 1 John 3:7; Matthew 25:34, 41; John 12:25)

**Of Civil Government:** We believe that civil government is of divine appointment, for the interest and good order of human society; that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored and supported except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the coming Prince of the Kings of Earth.

(Romans 13:1-7; 2 Samuel 23:3; Exodus 18:21-22; Acts 23:5; Matthew 22:21; Acts 4:19-20; 5:20; Daniel 3:17-18)

**Of the Resurrection-Personal, Visible, Premillennial Return of Christ and Related Events:** We believe in:

- A. The Bodily Resurrection. (Matthew 28:6-7; Luke 24:39; John 20:27; 1 Corinthians 15:4; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:2-6)
- B. The Ascension. (Acts 1:9-11; Luke 24:51; Mark 16:19; Revelation 3:21; Hebrews 12:2)
- C. The High Priesthood. (Hebrews 8:6; 1 Timothy 2:5; 1 John 2:1; Hebrews 2:17; 5:9-10)
- D. The Second Coming. (John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16; James 5:8; Hebrews 9:28)
- E. The Resurrection of the Righteous Dead. (1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, 52)
- F. The Change of the Living in Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Philippians 3:20-21)

**Of Missions:** We believe that the command to give the Gospel to the World is clear and unmistakable and this commission was given to all Christians.

(Matthew 28:19; Mark 16:15-18; Acts 1:8; John 20:21; Romans 10:13-15)

**Of the Grace of Giving:** Spiritual giving is one of the fundamentals of the Faith. We believe that God's method of financing His earthly work of spreading the Gospel to all nations, the care of the churches and

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the support of the ministry is by the tithes and offerings of His people; that it is to be given to the Lord through His church or storehouse, to be distributed as the need arises. (1 Corinthians 16:2). That everyone is accountable to the Lord for one-tenth of his income and that it was practiced by the early Church.

(2 Corinthians 8:7; Malachi 3:10; Hebrews 7:2, 4; Matthew 23:23, Leviticus 27:30; Acts 4:34-35, 37)

**Of Marriage and the Marriage Ceremony:** We believe that marriage is a sacred union of one man and one woman, as originally created and intended and as described in the creation account in Genesis, who enter a covenant commitment for a lifetime. We further believe that the act of marriage is a gift from God that is designed to reveal the union between Christ and the Church.

As a body of believers, we believe that God has designed marriage to model the way God relates to his people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the Church. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the Church willingly submits to the headship of Christ.

These foundational beliefs shape the principles set forth for the marriage ceremony. As a church, we understand the Bible to speak of marriage in terms of the union of a man and a woman. In each case, the church understands the meaning of man and woman to be that of the physical and genetic definition of male and female without regard for alternative gender preference, identification or intentional bodily changes to assume the appearance of altered physical attributes other than an at birth physical and genetic makeup.

(Genesis 2: 18-25; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-19)

**Of Stewardship of Properties and Finances:** We believe that the blessings and benefits derived from the buildings, programs, missions and congregation are those granted by the grace of God. It is therefore the position of the Church that all processes, both financial, programmatic or ceremonial are to be conducted in a manner consistent with the teachings of the Bible as the Holy Inspired Word of God. No function or financial transaction shall be conducted that may be construed as being outside the belief structure of the Church or representing unbiblical concepts, social secularism or any influence intended to restrict the autonomy of the church.

### **Article III: Membership**

#### **1A. Candidacy**

- A. Those desiring membership in this church are received in the following manner:
1. Persons may become members by a public profession of faith in Christ through repentance and faith. This public act is to be followed by baptism by immersion. The church duly authorizes the one who administers the act of baptism.
  2. Persons may become members by transfer of letter of recommendation from another church of like faith.
  3. Persons may become members by statement of prior conversion and baptism in a church of like faith and practice when no transfer is obtainable. Any person who has at some time been a member of a church of like faith, and who has been baptized

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according to the New Testament, but whose membership has lapsed or been lost, may be received upon statement of these facts and the vow of his or her faith in and love of Christ.

- B. When a person is presented for membership as a candidate for baptism or on promise of a letter, such person does not officially become a member until he or she has been baptized or until the letter of recommendation from the previous church has been received. In the event that a letter is not received, the candidate will be received by a statement of their faith.
- C. Every applicant for membership shall first meet with the Pastor or a member of the church staff. The purpose of this meeting is to make certain that the applicant has experienced a genuine relationship with Christ and to make the applicant aware of the privileges and responsibilities of members.
- D. Each applicant for membership shall appear in person before the church.
- E. Any member may object to the reception of any applicant for membership, in which case the applicant shall not be received, and the applicant's name shall be referred to the Pastor and deacons without explanation or debate. The committee of Pastor and deacons will provide a recommendation for this situation to the church at a later time.

**1B. Membership Status**

- A. Active membership is defined as regular and faithful involvement in church life (i.e., ministry; activities; giving; attendance).
- B. Inactive membership is defined as irregular and / or inconsistent involvement in church life. This would include members who do not attend regular services for a period of six (6) consecutive months without just cause (see C.).
- C. Church members who are "providentially hindered" (i.e., sickness; family emergencies; move out of the area; etc.) are considered active members if those hindrances would otherwise not prevent them from being faithfully involved in church life.
- D. Should the need arise, it shall be the task of the Pastor, church staff, and / or deacons to determine the status for specific members.

**2. Privileges of members**

- A. Active members are entitled to vote, provided the member is present for the meeting at which the vote occurs.
- B. Active members are eligible for consideration by the membership as candidates for committees, ministry teams, teaching positions, and elected offices in the church as outlined below.
  - 1. An active member may serve on any ministry team and / or committee of the church, except the finance or personnel committees, immediately upon their becoming a

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member of the church. A member is eligible to serve on the finance or personnel after twelve (12) consecutive months of active membership in the church.

2. An active member may serve in a teaching position after a period of six (6) consecutive months of active membership
- C. Should an active member become inactive, the aforementioned privileges shall be suspended until active membership is resumed.
- D. Every member may participate in the ordinances of the church as administered by the church.
- E. Every member has equal rights to the use of the church building(s) for weddings, receptions, etc., as the building is available.

### **3. Responsibilities of Members**

- A. It shall be the duty of each member to agree to and acquaint himself with the Statement of Faith (*Constitution, Article 2*) and the constitution and bylaws of this church and to abide thereby. Membership (regardless of status) indicates that each person agrees with the statements contained in these documents.
- B. It shall be the duty of each member to attend the regular meetings of the church body.
- C. It shall be the duty of each member to honor and esteem the Pastor, and to pray for him frequently and to manifest a tender regard for his reputation.
- D. It shall be the duty of each member to honor and support church staff and personnel, recognizing that each staff member seeks to serve the body of Christ at EBC.
- E. It shall be the duty of each member to financially support the church through tithes and Offerings.
- F. It shall be the duty of each member, when leaving the local area and expecting not to return, to seek another church home as soon as possible.

### **4. Termination of Membership**

- A. The church deletes members from its membership in the following manner:
  1. By request for a letter of recommendation from another church
  2. Upon the death of the member
  3. By deletion when a member embraces a faith contrary to the one the church practices
  4. By exclusion of the church
  5. By deletion when a member joins another church by statement
  6. By inactive membership status (see "Inactive membership status" above)
- B. Any person having professed salvation and / or united with this church or that shall, at a later

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date, profess salvation and unite with another church shall be automatically removed from the membership of this church.

- C. The church may grant a letter of dismissal and recommendation for any member in good standing, wishing to unite with some other like-minded church.
- D. No letter shall be granted to any individual upon their own personal request.
- E. It shall be understood that termination of membership also removes said person from any offices held in this church.

### 5. Church Discipline

It will be the practice of this church to emphasize to its members that every reasonable measure will be taken to assist any troubled member. The Pastor, staff, and the deacons are available to provide counsel and guidance. The attitude of members toward one another will be guided by a concern for redemption rather than punishment.

The following shall serve as a standard to what shall cause a break of fellowship with the church and shall cause a church member to be disciplined by the church:

**A. Personal Offenses:** Discipline will be exercised only after the pattern of Matthew 18:15-17 has been followed. That pattern is as follows...

- 1. The one offended goes to the offender and seeks to resolve the matter.
- 2. If no resolution is reached, the one offended carries two or three "witnesses" with him or her to seek a solution.
- 3. If no resolution is made, the conflict is then brought to the church. If this occurs both the one offended and the offender are to be notified by letter as to the date and time of a special called meeting of the church. If no resolution is made, the church may exclude the offender from membership, always stressing the possibility of restoration. In situations where no one will take the initiative, the church is within her rights to step in to seek a solution.

### B. Public Offenses

- 1. Heresy is defined as an open knowledge and teaching of false doctrine, as understood by the church, and subversive of the faith. Heresy may also include joining a religious organization with practices alien to the Baptist faith and doctrine (see Galatians 1:9; 2 John 10; 1 Timothy 6:3-5).
- 2. Immoral conduct or disorderly conduct is defined as things considered in Scripture as fruits of the flesh, acts that are of a worldly nature, or acts that are detrimental to the harmony of the body of Christ.
- 3. Sexual Crimes Covenant. This covenant is designed to guide both church members and community members about the process Emmanuel Baptist Church (EBC) will implement when one of its members falls into the following categories:



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- a. A church member is accused of being involved in any activity in which sexual misconduct, solicitation, molestation, etc., is involved
- b. A church member is found guilty, after due process of law, of being involved in any activity in which sexual misconduct, solicitation, molestation, etc., is involved
- c. An individual joins the church and it is discovered that he or she is a registered sex offender as defined by the statutes and laws of the state of Mississippi.

This covenant consists of two portions: a biblical / theological statement and a practical Statement.

**Biblical / Theological Statement**

As a church, our desire is to be biblical in everything that we do. To that end, we will utilize the principles of Matthew 18:15-17 to guide our response to sexual offenders.

This process involves three steps.

- A. Pastor will meet with the offender to discuss the situation. *“If your brother sins against you (in this case, the church as a whole), go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.”* (Matt. 18:15, parenthetical emphasis added). If the offender has a genuine, heartfelt spirit of repentance, the church will extend forgiveness as mandated by Scripture. *“Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.”* (Eph. 4:32). If the offender does not offer a spirit of repentance, the church leadership will proceed to the second step.
- B. The Pastor and one or two other members (deacons, due to their role in the church as servant leaders) will go to the offender to discuss the issue. *“But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses.”* (Matt. 18:16). If the offender has a genuine, heartfelt spirit of repentance, the church will extend forgiveness as mandated by Scripture (Eph. 4:32). If the offender does not offer a spirit of repentance, the church leadership will proceed to the third and final step.
- C. A meeting will be called of all church members on a specified night for the specific purpose of dealing with the issue. *“If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church”* (Matt. 18:17). The purpose of this meeting will be for the church to ask the member to repent of his or her sin. If the member in question offers a genuine, heartfelt spirit of repentance, the church will extend forgiveness as mandated by Scripture (Eph. 4:32). However, if the member in question offers no repentance, the church will then vote to remove said member from church membership: *“if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.”* (Matt. 18:17).

**Practical Statement**

In the case with a member who has been charged with sexual offenses against a child and / or minor, the protection of the child is of paramount importance. Regardless of personal feelings towards the accused member, the church will maintain a broad perspective and be reminded that the member has been accused of a sexual crime.

EBC recognizes the seriousness of such accusations and crimes. Although we believe that a

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person is innocent until proven guilty, we also realize the enormous impact such an accusation has on the accused members' reputation, his or her Christian witness, and the church as a whole. Due to these factors, forgiveness of a person's sin should not be viewed as an endorsement of said sin. Neither should forgiveness be equated with the church allowing the accused or convicted member to serve in areas of ministry that would cause even a hint of danger to be detected.

In order to provide a safe environment for all attendees of EBC, and in order to provide an environment in which those in our community can feel safe when their children are attending EBC, we will ask each offender to abide by the covenant requirements listed below. If an accused and / or convicted member does not agree to abide by these requirements, he or she will not be allowed on church property.

- A. The member in question may attend any public or church-wide function in which contact with children or youth does not occur. This would include attending the worship services of the church, church-wide fellowships, etc. The member in question may not, under any circumstance, have contact with children or youth at these events.
- B. Certain areas of the church campus are off limits to the member in question. Such areas include the entire children's area (including the restrooms in the children's wing hall), the entire youth area, including Sunday school rooms, game area, restrooms, etc., and any restroom in which a child or youth is present.
- C. The member in question will be assigned an accountability partner. The accountability partner will stay within sight of the offender during any and all church activities.
- D. The member in question cannot hold any teaching office within the church, including assistant positions. In addition, the member in question cannot serve on committees or other such ministry teams involved with any aspect of the children's ministry or youth ministry. Furthermore, the member in question cannot hold a leadership role in the church (i.e., staff position, deacon position, etc.)
- E. The member in question cannot serve as a chaperone or sponsor of any event related to the children's ministry or youth ministry, nor can he or she host events for children or youth at any time or at any place.

**Consequence**

If the member in question violates any of the provisions outlined in this covenant, he or she will no longer be allowed on church property.

**Application of Covenant**

When an accusation is made, EBC will work with law enforcement agencies as they investigate. After their investigation, if it is determined that no sexual misconduct occurred, the terms and conditions of this covenant will be nullified as it pertains to the member accused of

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the crime. Additionally, this covenant will no longer be binding if the accuser later states that his or her accusations were false.

**Balancing Love and Forgiveness with Accountability**

The leadership and membership of EBC realizes that everyone has faults and everyone sins. In addition, we realize that in God's eyes, sin is sin. However, we also acknowledge that sins, although consistent in nature, differ in degree of consequence.

EBC will always maintain love and extend forgiveness to all members who fall prey to sin, regardless of the nature of the sin. We believe that if Jesus Christ can forgive us for our sin causing his death, then we can forgive others who sin.

We do, however, have an obligation to maintain the reputation of the church and the safety of the church. As the cliché says, the best way to prevent getting burned is to not start a fire. Our goal in creating this covenant is to ensure that no one can ever say a "fire" got started at EBC. We despise sin in our own lives and in the lives of others, but we love each other because we are all sinners before God.

**Acceptance of Covenant**

Below is a statement of acceptance of this covenant. After reading the covenant, the person accused should sign the statement. The signed covenant will then be placed in a sealed file in the church office. A copy of the covenant will be provided to the person accused upon his or her request.

*"I, the undersigned, understand the seriousness of the situation I am involved in and the ramifications it can have on Emmanuel Baptist Church. My desire is to not do anything that would cause anyone in our church or community to feel that a child or youth is threatened in my presence. Therefore, I agree to abide by the terms and conditions of this covenant. I fully understand what is expected of me and the consequences if I fail to meet these requirements."*

Member's Name (printed) & Date:

Member's Signature:

Witnessed by:

Church Representative (printed) & Date:

Church Representative (signature):

**C. Serious Condition.** Should some serious condition exist which would cause a member to become a liability to the general welfare of the church, the Pastor and the deacons will take every reasonable measure to resolve the problem. Finding that the welfare of the church will best be served by excluding the member, the church may take this action by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the members present at a meeting called for this purpose.

D. A spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance shall pervade all such disciplinary procedure.

**6. Restoration**

The church may restore to membership any person previously excluded, upon request of the excluded person, and by vote of the church upon evidence of the excluded person's repentance and reformation. Such a vote by the church will require a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of those members present and voting.

## **Article IV: Ordained Positions**

### **1. The Office of Pastor**

The relationship between the church and its Pastor is unique. Jesus Christ is the Founder and Lord of the church. After his death, burial, and resurrection, Jesus ascended back to heaven where He is presently at the right hand of the Father. From that position He calls certain men to the office of Pastor. The office of Pastor implies that of an ordained minister of the gospel. There may be other positions that are occupied by duly ordained individuals who function in a support role to the Pastor and to the church community. They are subordinate to the Pastor but will be expected to conform to all other considerations of character as indicated below.

The Pastor, according to Acts 20:28, is the overseer of the church on earth. He is to be an under shepherd of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ. He should be able to say with the Apostle Paul, "I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you," in all areas of his leadership of the church.

The church is admonished in 1 Thessalonians 5:12 to "respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you." The church is further admonished in that same book and chapter to "esteem them very highly in love because of their work." (1 Thessalonians 5:13)

The Pastor, with the Holy Spirit as his guide and the Holy Bible as his source of information, is responsible to be involved as an overseer in all the ministry of the church. In this place of God appointed leadership, the Pastor is an ex-officio member of every ministry and / or committee in the church.

- A. The Pastor operates on delegated authority from the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, and the church. Christ does not permit him to be a dictator of the church, but a servant-leader. As he follows direction given by Christ through the Spirit, the church is obligated by Scriptural injunction to follow his leadership (Hebrews 13:17).
- B. The Pastor has the responsibility of being a man of character and integrity. He is accountable to God, his family, and the church to conduct himself in an appropriate manner both publicly and privately (1 Timothy 3:1-7).
- C. The Pastor is responsible for leading the church to function as a New Testament church. The Pastor will encourage the congregation, assist all church ministry teams, and lead the church staff to perform their tasks.
- D. The Pastor is the leader of Pastoral ministries in the church. As such he works with the church staff and deacons to lead the church in achievement of its purpose, proclaim the gospel to unbelievers, disciple believers that they may participate more effectively in carrying out the purpose of the church, and care for the church membership.
- E. The qualifications of the Pastor shall be those set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Emmanuel Baptist Church considers only males as prospects to fill the office of Pastor.
- F. Call of a Pastor: A Pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs.

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## **2. The Office of Deacon**

It is recognized that the Bible does not give a detailed account or a specific list of duties to be performed by a deacon. The duties and responsibilities of a deacon are very flexible as to meet the needs of individual churches and the individuals who make up the church.

In accordance with the meaning of the word and the practice of the New Testament, deacons are to be servants of the church (Acts 6:1-7; 1 Timothy 3:8-16).

- A. Deacons are to be zealous to guard the unity of the spirit within the church.
- B. Deacons shall serve as council of advice and conference with the Pastor in all matters pertaining to the welfare and work of the church.
- C. By proper organization and method among themselves, deacons are to establish and maintain proper fraternal relations with, and inspiring oversight of, all the membership of the church. They are especially to seek to know the physical needs and the moral and spiritual struggles of the church family. They will serve the whole church in relieving, encouraging, and developing all who are in need.
- D. In counsel with the Pastor, and by such methods as the Holy Spirit may direct in accordance with the New Testament teaching, deacons will have oversight of the discipline of the church. In administering such discipline, they are to always be guided by the principles set forth in Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Corinthians 5:9-13, and 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14.
- E. Deacons should be an example in service to and through the church, meeting the needs of church members and helping the church reach those who do not have a relationship with Jesus Christ.
- F. They shall assist in the ministration of the ordinances and make the necessary provisions for the same.
- G. They shall be expected to visit the sick and sorrowing of the church.
- H. If the church is without a senior Pastor or interim Pastor, the deacon body will be responsible for securing pulpit speakers and/or an interim Pastor.

## **3. Qualifications**

- A. The nominee for deacon must have been a member of the church for twelve (12) consecutive months prior to election. A man, previously ordained from an evangelical church, may serve prior to twelve (12) months church membership at EBC if approved by a vote of the church body.
- B. The nominee for deacon should be a faithful and loyal supporter of the total church program. He should be diligent in visitation and regular in his attendance, except where illness and other reasons approved by a good conscience render this impossible.
- C. The nominee for deacon should demonstrate the level of spiritual maturity described in Acts 6:3-5 and 1 Timothy 3:8-12.

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**4. Deacon Officers**

The deacons shall elect officers to serve the specific needs of the deacon body.

**5. Deacon Membership**

- A. Each year the deacon body will determine how many deacons are needed to provide adequate ministry to the church family.
- B. A deacon will initially be elected to serve a three (3)-year term. Provided that an adequate number of deacons are nominated and elected during a year, each deacon will rotate off for one (1) year after his three (3)-year term expires.
- C. Should a need arise in which a deacon is needed to serve beyond his three (3)-year term without rotating off, he may do so at the pleasure of the deacon body and by affirmation of the church.
- D. If a vacancy occurs during the year, the deacon body shall fill that vacancy in a manner that they deem best, provided the church body is given the opportunity to affirm their decision.
- E. When deacons are chosen by the church, if they have not already been ordained to the office, the Pastor is authorized to assemble a council or presbytery of ordained ministers and ordained deacons for their examination and ordination. A nominee for deacon shall be tested for spiritual maturity, moral integrity, and display of a healthy familial relationship.
- F. All men so ordained are always thereafter a deacon whether serving a term on the deacon body or not, unless excluded from the church or from the office of deacon for a just cause.

**6. Deacon Election**

- A. Each November, or more frequently as needed, the church membership will be given the opportunity to nominate qualified candidates to serve as deacons for a three (3)-year term. Nominations must be made using the church-approved "Deacon Nomination Form."
- B. Upon nomination, the Pastor and / or chairman of deacons will contact the nominee to inform them of their nomination and to gauge their interest in becoming a deacon.
- C. Nominees will be presented to the church body during the church's yearly business meeting (held in January). The church body will vote to elect those nominated to the office of deacon.

**Article V: Church Ordinances**

**1. Baptism**

- A. This church may receive for baptism any person who publicly professes acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior through personal faith who requests baptism at the hands of this church.

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- B. Those desiring to be baptized must meet with the Pastor or a member of the ministerial staff prior to being baptized. The purpose of this meeting will be to ascertain the candidate's relationship with Christ.
- C. Baptism shall be by immersion in water. Baptism is a prerequisite for church membership.
- D. The Pastor, or whomever the Pastor shall authorize, shall administer baptism.
- E. Baptism shall be administered as an act of worship during any service of the church.

**2. Communion**

- A. The church shall observe communion as deemed appropriate by the Pastor.
- B. The appropriate ministry team (committee) will make preparations for the observance of the communion.
- C. Communion shall be administered by the Pastor and the deacons, under the leadership of the Pastor.
- D. Anyone attending the service in which communion is offered may participate in it, provided they have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.

**Article VI: Changes in the Constitution and Bylaws**

All changes in the church constitution and bylaws will be brought before the church one monthly business meeting before voting on the change. An official roll of active membership will be brought to the meeting by the church clerk or designee and only those whose names are present on that roll will be allowed to vote. The initial vote will be by a show of hands. If an outcome cannot be determined by a majority of hands, a vote by ballot shall take place. The results of the vote will be recorded by the church clerk or designee and will be placed in the official church minutes for approval at the next scheduled business meeting.

**Article VII: Limits of the Constitution**

All matters not specifically prescribed for in this constitution are reserved for treatment by the Pastor and congregation in regular business meetings.

THIS SUBMISSION OF THIS CONSTITUTION HAS BEEN APPROVED BY THE BODY OF THE CHURCH AND IS CURRENT AS OF OCTOBER 20,2021

Church Secretary: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: October 21, 2021

Scripture quotations in this document are taken from the English Standard Version of the Bible but members are free to use whichever translation of the Bible they feel led.