

Providence Bible Church

Constitution

Our positions and practice

PREAMBLE

We, the members of Providence Bible Church, do establish the following Articles, to which we voluntarily and solemnly submit.

ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of the church is: **Providence Bible Church** of Fort Collins.

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE

The purpose of this church is to glorify the God of the Scriptures by maintaining and promoting His worship both individually and corporately, by edifying His saints, and by evangelizing sinners.

ARTICLE III: AFFILIATION

Providence Bible Church believes, as our Confession states, that 'churches ... ought to hold communion among themselves, for their peace, increase of love, and mutual edification.' (London Baptist Confession of Faith, 1689, 26.14) For this reason, we will actively seek to cultivate fellowship with doctrinally likeminded churches.

ARTICLE IV: Statement of Faith

Please refer to our Statement of Faith booklet (separate).

ARTICLE V: CREEDS AND CONFESSIONS

We declare ourselves to be in substantial agreement with many of the ancient confessions of faith, such as the *Apostles' Creed* and the *Nicene Creed*. We hold to the 'Solas' of the Reformation as most recently articulated in *The Cambridge Declaration*:

Sola Scriptura – Scripture alone is the source of God's written revelation

Solus Christus – Christ alone is the Savior

Sola Gratia – Grace alone is the cause of salvation

Sola Fide – Faith alone secures the righteousness of Christ

Soli Deo Gloria – God's Glory alone is the great motivating principle of life

We further regard the *London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689* as a good, though not inspired, expression of the teachings of the Word

of God.¹ We acknowledge the Confession as a valuable teaching tool under Charles Spurgeon's following disclaimer:

This little volume is not issued as an authoritative rule, or code of faith, whereby you are to be fettered, but as an assistance to you in controversy, a confirmation in faith, and a means of edification in righteousness. Here the younger members of our church will have a body of divinity in small compass, and by means of the Scriptural proofs, will be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in them.

ARTICLE VI: AGREEMENT

We do promise and endeavor by God's grace ...

to worship only the one true and living God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who has revealed Himself to us in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments, to have no other gods before Him, and to declare His glory to the nations

to meet together on Lord's-days, and to sanctify the day by special exercises of public and private worship; and to meet together at other times, as the Lord gives us opportunities

to worship God in His appointed way and to exclude from our worship anything that He has not appointed

to refrain from using the name of our God emptily or to take it upon ourselves carelessly, but to walk in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake

to raise our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; by maintaining family devotions and generally cultivating God-honoring lives and homes

to honor and obey, within the bounds of Scripture, all our superiors, whether in family, church, state, or business; and, if we be superiors, to deal reasonably and lovingly with our subordinates and thus to teach them by word and example to fear God and keep His commandments

to avoid whatever tends to destroy us or our neighbors and to engage vigorously in all lawful endeavors to preserve our own lives and the lives of others, especially by ready reconciliation and faithful exhortation in the church

¹ Providence Bible Church does not wholly affirm Chapters 7, 19, 22, 23, and 26 paragraphs 4 and 9.

to bear one another's burdens, to cultivate genuine fellowship
to watch over each other's lives, and not to allow sin upon one
another, so far as God shall reveal it to us; and to stir up one
another to love and good works; to warn, rebuke, and admonish
one another with gentleness, according to the rules left to us by
Christ
to pray for one another, and for the glory and increase of this church,
and for the presence of God in it, and the pouring forth of His
Spirit on it, and His protection over it to His glory
to bear with one another's weaknesses, failings, and infirmities, with
much tenderness, not revealing them to any outside the church,
nor any inside, unless it is according to Christ's rule, and the order
of the Gospel provided in that case
to strive together for the truth of the Gospel and purity of God's ways
and ordinances, to avoid causes, and causers of division,
endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace
to possess our bodies in holiness as vessels joined to Christ and
indwelt by the Holy Spirit and to avoid all uncleanness of thought,
speech, or action; to walk in holiness, godliness, humility, and
brotherly love
to be diligent in our vocations, that we may provide for our own
households, avoid theft of time, money, or goods, and have to
give to him who has need
to earnestly promote truth among men and to avoid anything that
would prejudice the truth or injure our neighbor's good name
to be fully content with our own condition in life, to rejoice in the
advancement of our neighbor, and to avoid envying him or
coveting anything that is his
to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the church

These and all other Gospel duties we humbly submit unto, promising
and purposing to perform, not in our own strength, being conscious of
our own weakness, but in the power and strength of the blessed God,
Whose we are, and Whom we desire to serve. To Whom be glory
now and for evermore. Amen.

ARTICLE VII: MEMBERSHIP

A. Warrant for Membership

The New Testament demands of all Christians, formal, open, solemn, voluntary and enduring commitment to Jesus Christ, to His truth and to His people. A true Christian's commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ must include, and is inseparable from his commitment to Christ's truth and to Christ's people. Such a commitment to Christ, His truth and His people ordinarily requires a formal, open, solemn, voluntary and enduring commitment of church membership in a local church for the following biblical reasons:

1. Fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission requires church membership. According to the Great Commission of Christ (Mt. 28:18-20) there is an inseparable connection between making disciples, baptizing them and teaching them. The Apostles implemented this commission by gathering baptized disciples into local churches. It was therefore in local churches that baptized disciples were taught all that Christ commanded (Acts 2:38-42, 1 Co. 4:17). With the uncertain exception of the Ethiopian eunuch, the New Testament knows nothing of believing men and women who are not members of local churches.
2. Obedience to Christ's directive to observe the Lord's Table encourages church membership. Since all believing men and women are required by Christ to observe the Lord's Table (Luke 22:19; 1 Co. 11:23-25), and since the Lord's Table is clearly a local church ordinance (1 Co. 11:17-18, 33-34; cp. 1 Co. 1:1-2), it follows that all Christians should belong to a local Bible-believing church in order to partake biblically.
3. The New Testament presents the local church as a group of individuals which could:
 - a. be counted (Acts 2:41-42; 4:4)
 - b. be added to (Acts 2:47; 5:14)
 - c. be called upon to select leaders and representatives from among itself (Acts 6:1-6; 2 Co. 8:19, 23; Acts 15:22)
 - d. be officially gathered together (Acts 14:27; 15:22)

- e. carry out church discipline (Mt. 18:17; 1 Co. 5:4, 13; 2 Co. 2:6)
- f. observe the Lord's table as a wholly present corporate assembly (1 Co. 11:17-20, 33-34)

There is therefore clear biblical warrant for the existence and careful maintenance of local church membership involving formal, open, solemn, voluntary and enduring commitment. This biblical warrant compels us to use great care in maintaining a biblically-ordered church membership.

B. Requisites for Membership

1. To be eligible for membership, a man or woman (Acts 5:14; 8:3, 12) must demonstrate repentance toward God with the fruits thereof (Acts 26:20), and that faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21) which produces godly works (Eph. 2:8-10; James 2:18, 22), beginning with believer's baptism.
2. The candidate for membership must also profess a general agreement with our Statement of Faith (Article IV). Anyone who is in substantial disagreement with the constitution of the church could not be consistently submissive to the church's teaching ministry. Therefore, to admit such a person to membership would be unwise (Eph. 4:3) and unscriptural. Occasionally, individuals may have reservations about specific doctrinal positions. The church still allows that these may be considered members in good standing if they declare their specific reservations (privately to the eldership), and commit not to speak contrary to the church's doctrinal positions. (Note: Men who maintain significant doctrinal differences *may* not be considered for service as an elder of this church, depending on the particular doctrinal position -- see Article X: Officers).
3. Church members must be in submission to the appointed rule (elders) of the church to which they belong (Heb. 13:17). He who cannot intelligently and freely submit to a church's government or elders should not belong to that church.
4. The candidate must also be willing to submit to the constitution of this Church, noting carefully the Agreement of

Fellowship (Article VI), and the governmental structure of this church. Finally, he or she must not be under the biblically warranted, corrective discipline of a genuine church (3 Jn. 9-10; Mt. 18:17-18; 1 Co. 5:11-13; 2 Th. 3:6, 14-15; 2 Co. 2:6-8).

5. If one who is already a member of the church at any time concludes that he no longer satisfies the requirements for membership, he is obligated to inform the elders of that fact, and both actively begin seeking another fellowship and submission to dismissal of this church.
6. All who are received into the membership of the church (according to the procedures set forth in Section D of this Article), and who do not come under the corrective discipline of the church (as set forth in Article VIII), shall be considered regular members in good standing and entitled to all the rights and privileges of membership in the church (Acts 2:37-47).

C. Reception into Membership

1. Any person desiring to become a member of the church must submit a written testimony to the elders explaining his understanding and experience of the Gospel of Christ. Exceptions to this requirement shall be determined by the elders in cases involving extraordinary circumstances. The written testimony is intended to promote a proper evaluation of the potential member and to encourage knowledgeable fellowship with him. The elders may request further clarification and/or expansion of this written testimony before proceeding with the application process.
2. If the applicant has been a member of another church, the elders will investigate his standing in that church before he is accepted as a member in this church. Where it is possible and appropriate, a letter of transfer will be requested. Reception by transfer does not negate any of the requirements for becoming a member in this assembly.
3. Upon the reception of a written testimony, the elders may at their discretion ask for a preliminary meeting with the applicant; otherwise, the name of the applicant shall be announced for at least three consecutive Lord's Days at stated meetings of the church. This time period is for the purpose of

enabling the members to read the applicant's testimony and to raise any questions or objections concerning his or her qualifications. Members are expected to consider this a serious personal duty. They are expected to voice privately to the elders all questions or objections that have not yet been resolved, after personal contact has been made with the applicant (Mt. 18:15ff; Lev. 19:16-17).

4. During the application process, the applicant will be interviewed. During the interview the elder(s) will seek to clarify any questions the applicant may have concerning the church or church membership. They shall also determine whether or not that person meets the qualifications as stated in Article VII, Section B, of the Constitution and, if necessary, resolve any questions or objections raised by the church. The elders may postpone the reception of the person into membership until any objections can be resolved. If the elders are satisfied that the applicant meets the qualifications, the person will be received at a stated meeting of the church (Mt. 3:6-12; Acts 9:26-27; 1 Jn. 4:1; Rev. 2:2).

D. Privileges of Membership

In God's order, commitment normally constitutes the pathway to the possession of privileges. Therefore, membership in this church includes the following privileges:

1. Participation in the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:41-42; 1 Co. 11:18-26, 33);
2. Attendance and appropriate participation in church business meetings (Acts 6:1-6 (cp. Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:13-14); 1 Co. 5:4-7; 13 (cp. 1 Co. 1:2));
3. Laboring to extend God's Kingdom in ministries of the church (as one's gifts, graces and calling make appropriate) (1 Co. 12:4-27 (cp. 1 Co. 1:2); Eph. 4:7; 11-12; 16; 1 Pe. 4:10-11).
4. Reception of the committed oversight and care of the pastors of the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Pe. 5:2-3).
5. Reception of the committed care and discipline (as needed) of the membership of the church (Acts 6:1-2 (cp. Acts 2:41; 5:13-14; 9:26); 1 Co. 5:4-5 (cp. 1 Co. 1:2); Gal. 6:10).

E. Requirements of Membership

1. All members of this church are expected to attend worship services on the Lord's Day unless providentially hindered by illness, unusual work conditions, and other such circumstances (Heb. 10:24-25). Members are encouraged to attend other *official* services so deemed by the elders.
2. All the members are strongly encouraged to attend other stated meetings of the church including, church business meetings, or any special meetings that the elders shall occasionally deem necessary. When any member must absent from the above stated meetings, he or she is encouraged to inform an elder.
3. All the members of the church are strongly encouraged to make use of the various other means of grace that are available to them, such as daily private prayer and systematic reading of the Bible, daily family worship, and a proper reverence for and observance of the Lord's Day.
4. All the members of this church are strongly encouraged to support the work of the Lord financially by systematic and proportionate giving made through the local church (Mal. 3:8-10; 1 Co. 16:1-2; 2 Co. chs. 8-9) as we are clearly taught in the Scriptures. Added to this should be gifts and offerings according to one's ability and the willingness of his heart (2 Co. 8:1-5; Ex. 36:2-7).
5. All the members of this church are expected to obey the teachings of Scripture in respect to the life and government of the family. The husband is the God-appointed head of the family and must rule his household with gentleness, love, wisdom, and firmness (Eph. 5:25ff; 1 Ti. 3:4, 5; 1 Pe. 3:7). The wife must be in Scriptural subjection to her husband in all things (Eph. 5:22-24; 1 Pe. 3:1-6). The husband and wife must bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:1-4). This includes setting a godly example before them, consistently instructing them from the Scriptures (Deut. 6:4-9), and administering corporal chastening to them when needed (Prov. 13:24; 22:15; 29:15; Heb. 12:7).

6. It is the duty of every Christian, as an individual and as a member of a local church, to labor by prayer, word, and deed for the extension of the kingdom of God in ever widening circles, beginning at home and stretching forth to the ends of the earth (Is. 54:1-3; Acts 1:8). Therefore, every member of this church is expected to prayerfully recognize and seize every opportunity to bear witness to his faith in Christ, by consistent Christian conduct and by the testimony of his lips.
7. Each member of the church is required to render loyal obedience to all the moral precepts of God's Word in his daily life (Rom. 8:3-4; 1 Co. 9:20-21; James 2:12). If God has not condemned or forbidden a practice in His Word, a Christian is at liberty to participate in it. The exercise of Christian liberty, however, must at all times be governed by an earnest desire to walk in the fear of God and to glorify Him in all things (1 Pe. 1:17; 1 Co. 10:31), a loving regard for the consciences of weaker brethren (1 Co. 8:9; Rom. 15:1-3), a compassion for the lost (1 Co. 9:19-22), and a zealous regard for the health of one's own soul (Rom. 13:14; 1 Co. 6:12; 9:24-27; Gal. 5:22-23; 1 Pe. 2:16).
8. All members of this church are expected to recognize and to submit to the authority of the overseers of the church (1 Co. 16:15-16; 1 Th. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:17).
9. We who have been joined to Christ by faith and are members of this church are also members one of another (Rom. 12:5). With this privileged relationship come particular responsibilities. We must maintain mutual transparency and honesty (Eph. 4:25). We must rejoice in each other's honor and bear one another's sorrows (1 Co. 12:26). We must discreetly confess our faults one to another (James 5:16). We must mutually oversee each other, faithfully admonish and encourage one another, avoid all backbiting and gossip, and keep in strict confidence all matters which the elders determine are of private concern to the church (Prov. 11:13; Mt. 18:15ff; 1 Th. 5:14-15; Heb. 3:12-13; 10:24-25). Also, we must, when necessary, help meet the material needs of our brethren (Gal. 6:10; James 2:14-16; 1 Jn. 3:16-18).

F. Termination of Membership

1. Types of Termination

a. By Physical Death.

When a member of the church is removed from our midst by death, their name shall be transferred to the file of former members.

b. By Transfer

(1) Because the New Testament norm for Christians is that they be members of true local churches of Christ, and because the spiritual health of believers is endangered when they are not thus committed to a church, any Christian who leaves the membership of this church should seek to do so by means of transfer to another true church of Christ. Therefore, if a church member in good standing whose conduct does not warrant corrective discipline desires to leave the membership of this church, he is strongly urged to leave in an orderly way by privately indicating that desire to the elders along with his reasons for leaving, and by submitting a request to the elders for a transfer of membership to another true church of Christ.

(2) When such a departing member has not yet chosen a suitable church to which he may transfer, the elders may provide, if he wishes, for a transitional period which will allow the departing member to decide where he wishes to be transferred. Such a transitional status will be allowed to continue as long as the departing member maintains regular contact with the elders, does not unnecessarily prolong the transitional process, and does not engage in conduct requiring the exercise of church discipline.

(3) When it is so requested, the elders may transfer a departing member of good standing to the fellowship of another church. A letter of transfer will be sent to the appropriate officer(s) of the church to which the member wishes to transfer. No such letter may be given to a member who is at the time under the corrective discipline of this church. The elders may

refuse to grant a letter of transfer to any church which is in their judgment disloyal to 'the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints' (Jude 3) or which does not exercise godly care over its members.

c. By Dismissal

- (1) Occasionally, a person's membership may need to be terminated under circumstances which make both transfer and corrective discipline inappropriate. In such circumstances a member may be dismissed.
- (2) While there is no explicit precedent for Dismissal in the New Testament, it is required by biblical principles, including the voluntary nature of local church membership (Acts 5:13; 9:26; 1 Jn. 2:19), by the demands of biblically defined love and justice (Lam. 3:31-33; 1 Co. 13:4a, 5a, 7a; Prov. 17:15; 18:5); and by the exigencies of a church not yet wholly redeemed and facing the results of nearly 2000 years of church history.
- (3) Dismissal may be initiated either by the written request of a member to the elders, or by the elders themselves when a member ceases to maintain vital contact with this church. In either case, the final decision regarding the action of Dismissal will lie with the elders. Church membership is a very serious matter. Members, therefore, shall be dismissed only after due inquiry and admonition by the elders, whenever such contact is possible. Before any individual is dismissed, the church shall be informed of the intention of the elders to dismiss the individual. This information must include the grounds for the proposed Dismissal. A suitable period of time following the announcement shall be given for the church to privately raise concerns with the elders. After due consideration of such concerns, the elders may proceed with Dismissal. When possible, they shall send a letter to the dismissed individual informing him of his Dismissal. The elders shall subsequently communicate to the church that the person has been dismissed. If one who has been

dismissed applies again for membership, the normal procedures shall be followed as set forth in Section D of this Article.

(4) Dismissal may be warranted for the following reasons:

- (a) A member in good standing concludes that he is not truly saved.
- (b) A member in good standing wishes to terminate his membership for reasons that do not impugn his Christian profession.
- (c) A member ceases to maintain contact with this church due to relocation or other circumstances.

d. By Excommunication

According to the teaching of Holy Scripture, a church must cut off from its fellowship and visible membership any person who teaches or insists on holding to false and heretical doctrine, or who blatantly or persistently conducts himself in a manner inconsistent with his Christian profession, or who persists in disturbing the unity or peace of the church (Mt. 18:15ff; 1 Co. 5:1f; Rom. 16:17; Titus 3:10-11). The procedure to be followed in such excommunication is set forth in Article VIII, Section B, of this Constitution.

2. Implications of Termination

- a. Providence Bible Church does not exist in isolation from, but is part of the universal church of Christ, composed of all true churches. Accordingly, open and forthright communication among the churches is vital for the purity, peace, edification and unity of the church universal. Therefore, the elders may, at their discretion, disclose to the members of this church and to other churches the circumstances under which a person's membership was terminated (Acts 15:24; 1 Ti. 1:20; 2 Ti. 2:17; 4:10; 1 Jn. 2:18, 19).
- b. In addition, Providence Bible Church does not exist in isolation from society at large. Accordingly, this church has a moral obligation to society both to act with integrity

and to maintain its testimony (2 Co. 8:20-21). Therefore, the elders may, at their discretion, disclose to other persons outside the ecclesiastical circles mentioned above the circumstances under which a person's membership was terminated (Lev. 5:1; Prov. 29:24; 1 Pe. 4:15).

- c. Termination of membership does not give license to former members to sow discord, spread false teachings or reports, or engage in any other behavior which threatens the peace and unity of this church or the church universal. Accordingly, when it is established that a former member is behaving divisively, the elders may issue whatever warnings they deem appropriate to maintain and preserve the peace and harmony of this church and the church universal (Acts 15:24; Rom. 16:17-20; 1 Ti. 1:20; 2 Ti. 2:17; 4:10; 1 Jn. 2:18, 19).

G. Records of Membership

The elders shall keep a file of all past and present members. This file shall have two divisions: current members and former members. The file of former members shall include the date and reason church membership was terminated, as well as any other necessary information (see Article VII, Section F).

ARTICLE VIII: CHURCH DISCIPLINE

A. Formative Discipline

Every disciple (follower) of Christ must be under His discipline (His instruction and correction), which is administered to each one through the church (1 Co. 12:12-27; 1 Th. 5:12-15; Heb. 3:12-13; 10:24-25). Mutual submission to one another (Eph. 5:21) and to the overseers whom the Lord has set over His church (1 Pe. 5:5) will result in the sanctification of each member individually and of the whole body of the church collectively. There are occasions, however, when one's failure to respond to this formative discipline makes the application of corrective discipline necessary.

B. Corrective Discipline

Corrective discipline becomes necessary when heretical doctrine or disorderly, immoral, or scandalous conduct appears among the members of the church. As a general rule, and whenever feasible,

an effort must be made to resolve difficulty, correct error, and remove offense through counsel and admonition before more drastic steps are taken (Gal. 6:1; James 5:19, 20). The principles given to us (Mt. 18:15-17, Rom. 16:17-20, 1 Co. 5:1-13, 2 Th. 3:6-15, 1 Ti. 5:19-20, Titus 3:10, Jude 22-23, 1 Th. 5:14) must be carefully followed and applied to each and every case of corrective discipline as appropriate. In some cases, public admonition and/or public repentance may be warranted (Mt. 18:17; 1 Ti. 5:20). In the most extreme cases excommunication from the membership of the church may be necessary (Mt. 18:17; Rom. 16:17-20; 1 Co. 5:1-13; 1 Ti. 1:20; Titus 3:10). All members of the church are obliged to submit to and enforce as appropriate the decision of the church in acts of corrective discipline.

1. Means of Punishment

Since the church is a spiritual and religious institution, the punishments inflicted by the church in corrective discipline (2 Co. 6:7) are also spiritual. They include public verbal reproof (Mt. 18:17; 1 Ti. 5:20), social avoidance (Rom. 16:17; 1 Co. 5:9-11; 2 Th. 3:6, 14), suspension from the Lord's Supper (1 Co. 5:11), and removal from the membership of the church (Mt. 18:17; 1 Co. 5:13). They are intended to effect repentance through a sense of sorrow and shame (2 Co. 2:7; 2 Th. 3:14). The church has no right, however, to confiscate goods, revoke conjugal rights, or inflict corporal punishment of any kind. Nevertheless, a member guilty of criminal actions may be delivered to the civil authorities according to the rule of Scripture (1 Pe. 4:15).

2. Goal of Correction

The goals of corrective discipline are always the glory of God, the welfare and purity of the church (1 Co. 5:6) and the restoration and spiritual growth of the offender (1 Co. 5:5; 2 Co. 2:5-8; 1 Ti. 5:20).

3. Process of Correction

If anyone who is charged with serious misconduct² persists in the sin, after having been confronted and admonished from

² Examples of 'serious misconduct' would include, but are not limited to: a stubborn private offender (Mt. 18:15-17); Divisive teachings or behavior (Rom. 16:17-20;

Scripture, they may be admonished a second time with at least one Elder present (representing the consenting Elders). If the individual remains unrepentant they shall be exposed to the church membership as such. This action shall be communicated privately to the membership of the church following a Sunday service (Mt. 18:15-17). At this time the entire church body shall begin to pray for and call the individual to repentance. After a thirty-day period, during which time the church should be engaged in much prayer, if the individual remains unrepentant, they are removed from the membership of the church and expelled until which time they repent (Mt. 18:17; 1 Co. 5:2, 7; 2 Th. 3:6, 14). This action too shall be communicated privately to the membership of the church following our Sunday-morning worship service. Thus communicated, the body will continue to pray for the individual to come to repentance but shall have no Christian fellowship with them.

4. Restoration

Excommunication is not intended to be the final 'step' of church discipline; the goal is rather restoration to the offended, the church, and to the Lord Jesus Christ. Since one purpose of church discipline is to restore a fallen brother or sister, it is the duty of the church to forgive and to restore to full membership a suspended or excommunicated member who gives satisfactory evidence of his repentance. Hence, upon both private and public statements and deeds of remorse and repentance the individual shall be fully restored to the body (Mt. 18:15; James 5:19-20; Gal. 6:1; 2 Co. 2:5-11.) to the glory of God. This shall be done in a duly convened business meeting of the church.

Titus 3:10); Disorderly Behavior (2 Th. 3:6-15); Scandalous sin; or contempt of Church discipline.

ARTICLE IX: ORDINANCES

A. General Statement

There are two ordinances of special significance that our Lord has commanded us to observe, namely, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Neither of them has saving merit, nor is any grace imparted to the recipient through the water of Baptism or through the bread and the cup of the Supper. These ordinances are not means of 'special grace,' but they are special 'means of grace' and powerful aids to the faith of the believers who participate in them.

B. Baptism

Only confessed disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ are proper candidates for Baptism (Acts 2:38, 41, 47; 5:13, 14). Baptism in water is the God-ordained sign of one's personal union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and the door of entrance into the visible community of the people of God. Immersion in water is the biblical mode of baptism, and is the only mode to be administered by this church.

C. The Lord's Supper

Whereas Baptism is the initiatory ordinance by which one enters the visible church and should be observed only once by each believer; the Lord's Supper should be celebrated frequently by the assembled church (1 Co. 11:26). While this is a most holy ordinance and should be observed with solemnity and dignity, the bread and the cup of the Supper are and remain only symbols of the broken body and the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. In order to maintain the purity of this ordinance, the elders will faithfully seek to insure that only true believers who are members in good standing of true churches are admitted to the Table. Children who come to faith in Christ may partake of the Lord's Supper only after meeting with the elders and their parents to verify their readiness. Visiting believers will be encouraged to partake in the Lord's Table only if they regularly fellowship, and are in good standing in a like-minded church. True believers whose church membership involves unusual circumstances may be admitted at the discretion of the elders. The Church purposes to celebrate the Lord's Supper every other month.

ARTICLE X: OFFICERS

A. General Statement

Jesus Christ alone is the Head of His Church (Col. 1:18). He has ordained that individual churches should be governed by Himself through officers whom He appoints, who are endowed by His Spirit with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work. Christ has ordained that local churches are to be administered by elders and deacons. Beside these two offices the Scriptures acknowledge no office which continues in the church today (Phil. 1:1; 1 Ti. 3:1-13).

B. General Prerequisites

1. All officers of this church must be members of it except as provided in Section H of this Article.
2. Any individual set apart to one of these offices must not only be able to wholeheartedly and conscientiously affirm his full agreement with the church's Statement of Faith and Constitution -- but also have the capacity to biblically defend them. If an elder should at any time radically move from these doctrinal positions, he would be under spiritual and moral obligation to immediately declare such to his fellow elders in an orderly manner. Depending upon the doctrine involved and his strength of conviction his fellow elders may request his resignation as an elder and possibly seek dismissal from the church per Article VII.F.1.c.
3. While we acknowledge the valuable gifts which God has given women and the valuable assistance they may render to the officers of the church (Rom. 16:1-6; Phil. 4:3; 1 Ti. 3:11), the Bible prohibits women from holding either the office of deacon or elder in the church (1 Co. 14:33b-35; 1 Ti. 2:8-15; 3:1-7). Women, therefore, shall not be nominated, elected, or appointed to either of these offices in the church. It is also contrary to Scripture for any woman to exercise headship or leadership in a formal meeting of the whole church either by leading in prayer, conducting the worship, reading the Scripture, leading the singing, administering the sacraments, or ministering the Word of God (1 Co. 14:33b-35; 1 Ti. 2:8-15). Since it is also a violation of the Scriptures for a woman to exercise authority over a man in spiritual things outside a

meeting of the whole church, no woman shall be appointed to a teaching or authoritative function in a ministry of the church where adult men would be regularly under her ministry. Nevertheless, we acknowledge and encourage the valuable gifts and assistance of women in the formal instruction of children and other women (Titus 2:3-5), in the informal instruction even of men (1 Co. 11:5; Acts 18:26), and in the service to fellow saints, and especially the benevolent ministries of the church (1 Ti. 3:11; 5:9-10).

C. Office of Elder

Those who have been called of God to rule and teach in the church are called elders, pastors, or overseers. These are three, interchangeable names designating one and the same office in a biblically functioning church (Acts 20:17, 28; Eph. 4:11, 12; Titus 1:5, 7). In other words, elders together 'pastor' or shepherd the flock by exercising spiritual oversight over the flock -- teaching, admonishing, nurturing, praying, and discipling.

1. Recognition of Elders

a. General Statement

The appointment of elders and deacons is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. However, He has ordained that each local church exercise the responsibility of recognizing those whom He is appointing to be elders and deacons in that particular church. Elders and deacons are appointed to office by the laying on of hands by the eldership (1 Ti. 4:14). This is an expression of approval for which the elders are responsible (1 Ti. 5:22).

Therefore, each officer must have the approval, not only of the church as a whole, but of the eldership in particular. The Lord's appointment of an individual to either of these offices is recognized by means of that individual's possession of those graces and gifts required by Scripture for the particular office and his own conviction that the Lord is calling him to minister in that office. The recognition of officers is a matter of such importance that it should never be dealt with without much prayerful waiting upon God, an honest perusal of the relevant passages of Scripture, and a frank evaluation of those who are being considered. Each member of the church has a

spiritual responsibility to be intelligently informed regarding these matters.

b. Calling

Anyone desiring the office of an elder must evidence to God's people the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications that are set forth in the Scriptures (1 Ti. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

c. Presentation

1). Since it is really God who makes men overseers by maturing them and burdening them with such a ministry, then it is the responsibility of the Church to recognize the men whom the Holy Spirit is appointing for pastoral function.

2). Any member of Providence Bible Church may present one of the male members for consideration as an Elder via a letter. This communication should focus on the individual's apparent conformity with the aforementioned Scriptural qualifications and a brief history of his service among the Body. This letter of recommendation is to be submitted to the existing Elder Board, and each person so presented will be considered seriously.

d. Evaluation

1). The Elders, by unanimous consent will decide whether the man suggested should be regarded as a true candidate for the office of Elder. In determining this, the Elders will contact the man himself in order to determine his assessment of God's will in this matter. If the man, under the Lord's conviction, desires the office, the Elders will then take a minimum of three months to get to know the candidate.

2). Following this time for spiritual evaluation, the Elders, by unanimous consent, may present the name of the candidate to the whole congregation for consideration. The entire Body will be given at least two weeks to express concerns or needed input to the Elders, personally.

3). After the Elders have acted upon the input of the congregation (if necessary), and if the Elders are in unanimous agreement that the individual has indeed been qualified by the grace of God for leadership within the Church, the Elders will affirm what God has already done in the man's life by setting him apart as an elder at Providence Bible Church. Should the elders be unable to conscientiously appoint him as an elder (1 Ti. 5:22), they shall inform each member of their reasons in an appropriate manner.

e. Appointment

Following the recognition of an elder there shall be a portion of a regular worship service set aside at which time the officer shall be appointed by the laying on of the hands of the eldership. This solemn act should always be accompanied by the prayers of the whole church (Acts 13:1-3). The laying on of the elders' hands shall signify their approval of an officer-elect.

2. Functioning of Elders

a. Authority

Because the authority of the elders of the church is human authority exercised in the house of God, it has both high prerogatives and important limitations:

- 1). It is divinely-delegated authority. Thus, elders are answerable to God for the exercise of this authority (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17). Therefore, elders are obligated to discharge all of the duties specified by God in the Scriptures (particularly in such passages as Acts 20:17, 28ff; 1 Pe. 5:1-4; and Heb. 13:17).
- 2). When they exercise authority requiring obedience to themselves, they must seek to gain the consciences of God's people through the ministry of the Word (Eph. 4:11c; 1 Ti. 3:2c; 2 Ti. 4:1-2; Heb. 13:17).
- 3). In major decisions of church life (such as those having to do with corrective discipline, recognition of officers, and the sale of a church building), the local church as a whole has a voice (Acts 6:2-6; 9:26; 1 Co.

5:4-5; 13; 2 Co. 2:6). Yet the elders' must provide definitive leadership to the church in the making of such decisions.

- 4). The authority of the elders is limited to the sphere of the local church. Thus, they will not require punishments for sin beyond those of biblical church discipline, will not invade the biblically-defined spheres of other divinely-ordained human authorities (husbands, fathers, civil rulers, and employers), and will not command God's people regarding matters not specified in Scripture except to order the house of God by the application of His Word (Mt. 22:21; Luke 12:13-14; Acts 20:28; 1 Pe. 5:3a; Rom. 13:1-7; Eph. 5:22-6:9; 1 Co. 7:25-28; 35-40).
- 5). The authority of elders is conditioned by the fact that they are themselves members of the local church. While elders are shepherds over the flock, they are also members of the flock. Therefore, each individual elder is entitled to the same privileges, is obligated by the same responsibilities, and is subject to the same discipline as are all the other members of the church. Thus, each individual elder is both under the oversight of his fellow elders and accountable to the church as a whole (Mt. 18:17; 23:9; 26:31; 2 Co. 11:19-20; Gal. 2:11; 3 Jn. 1, 9-10).
- 6). The authority of every elder (or pastor) is the same. Thus, every elder has equal rule in the church. Though gifts possessed and functions performed will vary from elder to elder, this diversity must not undermine real parity among the elders (Acts 20:28 (cp. 17); Gal 2:11; 1 Pe. 5:1-2; 1 Ti. 5:17).
- 7). Finally, the authority of the elders is very real authority. God's people are, therefore, required to submit when it is biblically exercised (Heb. 13:17; note also the Scriptural titles and functions of the office).

b. Decisions of the Elders.

1). General Statement

Decisions shall be reached after prayerful consideration only by the unanimous or majority vote of the Elders, as differentiated below, in a spirit of humility, each Elder regarding one another before himself. Therefore, in essence, whether the decision is one that necessitates a unanimous vote or a majority vote, the net result after all discussions are terminated and binding decisions have been made, the Elders must have a spirit of unanimity as to the direction the Church should take. Any violation of this spirit of unanimity must be considered a serious breach of Elder qualifications. If such behavior occurs more than once without genuine repentance this Elder must seek the re-approval of the Elders to continue in the office of Elder (Titus 3:10).

2). Unanimity of all Elders required

Whenever the matter to be considered concerns calling a member of the Vocational Staff, approving an Elder, Deacon, or Missionary (to be supported), an amendment to or modification of the Constitution, or a modification to indebtedness limitations, a quorum as it pertains to the vote shall consist of all of the Elders whether voting in person, or by telephone, to be later confirmed in writing, and must be unanimous.

3). Majority of all Elders required

All other decisions (other than those listed under the preceding unanimity paragraph), will be made on the basis of simple majority of Elders. Those Elders in the minority position, after being given an opportunity to defend their minority view from Scripture, will yield to the majority position of the Elders in the spirit of Philippians 2:3,

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for

your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.

This will thereby preserve the spirit of unanimity that the Elders must maintain to the Church congregation and the public, in general. Therefore, the minority Elder's must publicly support the decision of the majority of the Elders, in every situation. Any violation to this spirit of unanimity will be dealt with as outlined in the opening paragraph of this section.

4). Voting exclusions

Decisions by the Elders that pertain directly to any of the Elders, themselves (such as Church discipline or salary review, etc.), may be made (at the discretion of the majority of the other Elders) without the participation of the Elder in question (other than input required of him by the other Elders), in the discussions or the final decision of the Elders. Under no circumstances is any Elder allowed to influence other Elders or vote upon any issue involving him in a conflict of interest.

c. Duties

- 1). One crucial aspect of the elders' duties is personally overseeing the flock of God. Fulfillment of this duty shall include regularly and systematically meeting with each member of the church on at least an annual basis, except when physically impossible due to distance.
- 2). Subject to the limitations of this Constitution, all the activities and affairs of Providence Bible Church shall be exercised by or under the direction of the Elders, who are responsible for the shepherding and spiritual oversight of the Church membership. Without prejudice to such general powers but subject to the same limitations, it is hereby expressly declared that the Elders shall have the following powers in addition to the other powers enumerated in this Constitution.
 - To select and remove all the officers, agents, vocational pastors, deacons, employees and

staff and of Providence Bible Church, prescribe such duties for them as may not be inconsistent with law, or with this Constitution, fix the terms of their offices and their compensation.

- To make such disbursements from the funds and properties of Providence Bible Church as are required to fulfill its purposes, and generally to conduct, manage and control the activities and affairs of the Church and to make such rules and regulations therefore not inconsistent with law or with this Constitution, as they may deem best. The elders will not approve any expense greater than \$2000 without informing and seeking input and assent from the Church body.
- To establish policies, positions and practices for Providence Bible Church consistent with the purposes of the Church.
- To assist vocational teaching elders in the administration of the ordinances of Baptism and Communion.

d. Devotion

Elders will be maintained in material necessities and disentangled from the cares of another vocation according to their gifts, the needs and capability of the church, and the direction of Christ her Head (1 Ti. 5:17ff).

e. Plurality

Though a plurality of elders is the New Testament norm for every church, Scripture does not specify the number of elders each church should have, nor does it dictate the length of an elder's term of office. One truly called to this office is usually called to it for life. He is a gift of Christ to the church, and the gifts of God are without repentance. Only when an elder fails to meet the necessary scriptural qualifications for his office does he disqualify himself from being an elder.

3. Accountability and Removal of Elders

a. General Statement

The Elders shall serve an indefinite term. First and foremost, Elder accountability is unto God (1 Pe. 5:1-5). It is mandatory, however, that the Elders also be accountable to one another at all times. Any Elder may be removed from office if he becomes physically incapacitated, relocates to a different area and church, becomes spiritually unqualified, or his inability to serve is established in the minds of the remainder of the Elders.

b. Discipline of Elders

Any Elder may be disciplined according to Biblical principles, although no accusation against an Elder is to be taken seriously unless there are two or three witnesses (1 Ti. 5:19). When the confronted Elder 'continues to sin', he is to be rebuked by the other Elders before the whole assembly, that others may fear (1 Ti. 5:20). An Elder will be subject to scrutiny not only in the areas which might call for general Church discipline, but also as to his continued meeting of the Biblical qualifications for Eldership listed above. When an Elder ceases to meet those qualifications, he shall be asked by the Elders to step down for a time so that he may get his life in order in that area. Such a request by the other Elders shall be made only when they are in unanimous agreement. An Elder may also desire to be relieved from office either temporarily or permanently, if he feels unable to serve for any reason. The process of his possible reinstatement at a later date shall be governed by the attendant circumstances of his particular situation.

4. Vocational Elders

Though all elders are equal as to the authority of their office, not all elders possess qualifications warranting full financial support in the office. The Bible teaches that special ability in ruling the church and, more especially, in public teaching and preaching are gifts worthy of full financial support (Gal. 6:6; 1 Ti. 5:17; 1 Co. 9:1-14). Thus, before it undertakes his full support, the church must recognize that an elder or nominee to the eldership possesses special ministerial gifts and that he is

excelling in the employment of those gifts for the benefit of the church, in ways appropriate to his opportunities. Special caution should be exercised in giving full support to an elder for the following reasons:

- a. full support necessitates his removal from a secular vocation, which, in the interests of Christ's Kingdom and of his family, might be a more advantageous position for him to occupy;
 - b. a major portion of the church's financial stewardship is involved, for which its Head will hold it accountable; and
 - c. a fully supported elder has a greater influence upon the church, for good or ill. The provisions of this Section apply to any proportion of financial support required by an increase of ministry that would hinder an elder's full-time employment in a secular vocation.
5. Replacement of Vocational/Teaching Elder
- Should it become necessary to look outside the Church's leadership body of Elders for a vocational Teaching Elder, the following procedures shall be utilized:
- a. Unanimous Approval
A Vocational Teaching Elder must be unanimously approved by the Elders after the same careful examination required of any other Elder candidate. Before the final decision of the Board is made, the candidate must be available to preach and teach a minimum of two weekends. The Church body must also be given an opportunity to interact with the candidate so as to properly evaluate and express such to the Elders.
 - b. Qualifications
As an Elder, a vocational Teaching Elder must meet the qualifications set forth in 1 Ti. 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9, and 1 Pe. 5:1-3.
 - c. Accountability
A vocational Teaching Elder, being an Elder, will be accountable in every respect as any other Elder, and he shall be directly responsible to the Elders.

d. Termination

A vocational Teaching Elder shall remain in office for an indeterminate period subject to the following reservations:

- 1). A vocational Teaching Elder who intends to resign must provide at least one (1) month notice to the Elders, and will be compensated for a minimum of three (3) months beyond the date of the resignation.
- 2). The Elders have the right, for Biblical or providential reasons, to dismiss a vocational Teaching Elder upon giving him written notice of its intention to dismiss. In such occasion, the vocational Teaching will be compensated for a minimum of three (3) months from the date of the notice.

D. Office of Deacon

The word for 'deacon' means 'servant.' As such, deacons play a crucial role in the life of a healthy church. Specifically, deacons provide 'any kind of service that supplies the need of another person.' Being subject to the elders, deacons serve in the capacity of assisting the Elders / Pastors (who are assigned spiritual oversight) with administrative responsibilities, business affairs, and practical care of the church body.

Providence Bible Church does not recognize an office of 'deaconess.' We believe that the individuals referenced in 1Timoth 3:11³ are wives of Deacons and Elders who, like their husbands, also are to be of high moral character.

1. Requirements for Deacons

Any man set apart for the office of deacon must be able to wholeheartedly and conscientiously affirm his full agreement with the church's Statement of Faith and Constitution. If a deacon should at any time move from any of the church's doctrinal positions, he would be under spiritual and moral obligation to immediately declare such to the elders in an orderly manner. Depending upon the doctrine involved and

³ The Greek word used here is neither the word that could be translated 'deaconess,' nor the word that could be translated 'wives.' Rather, the word used is the general word for 'women.' Given the context, those women are most certainly the wives of Deacons and those of Elders.

his strength of conviction his fellow elders may request his resignation as a deacon and possibly seek dismissal from the church per Article VII.F.1.c.

2. Identification

With the elders leading and the unanimous approval of each candidate, the church shall set apart, according to its need, men who evidence the scriptural qualifications for that office (Acts 6:1-7; 1 Ti. 3:8-13). The number of deacons shall not be fixed.

a. Presentation and Evaluation

According to the needs of the church, Elders shall watch for potentially qualified men to serve as deacons. Such men shall be approached to determine whether they are interested in serving in this capacity. Elders must be in unanimous agreement about the character of the men whom they put forth as candidates for deacon. It is the clear mandate of Scripture that such men be of high character:

... men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine, or fond of sordid gain, but holding to the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience ... husbands of only one wife, and good managers of their children and their own households. (1Ti. 3:8-9, 12)

Further, such men should already have a proven reputation as servants in the church (1Ti. 3:10).

Deacon candidates shall be announced to the church. The church body will be afforded at least one month to communicate any concerns to the candidate himself and / or to the Elders.

b. Appointment

If there are no unanswered concerns, and the Elders believe that the candidate is willing and qualified to serve, they shall recognize the candidate as a Deacon during a Sunday morning worship service.

3. Functioning

Deacons are servants, not of buildings, and not even of people in the church exclusively, but they are servants of Jesus Christ and His people. Primarily, Deacons serve in the capacity of assisting the Elders / Pastors (who are assigned spiritual oversight) with administrative responsibilities, and practical care of the church body.

a. Authority

Deacons function under the authority of the Elders. They are neither autonomous nor equivalent to the leaders of the church, the Elders.

b. Decisions

Deacons may, at the Elders discretion, be provided opportunities to make decisions in the course of their service as needed.

c. Duties

Each Deacon shall have an area (or several areas) of responsibility as agreed upon by the Elders and fellow Deacons. The Deacons also bear the collective responsibility for the oversight and distribution of the benevolent fund (Acts 6:1-4). They shall consider all requests for financial assistance consistent with the following guidelines: The recipient must either be a member of Providence Bible Church, in good standing; or an individual or family in genuine need to whom we bear a Scriptural responsibility. The Deacons will be required to submit the individual's name, need, and amount requested to the Elders for affirmation.

4. Accountability and Removal of Deacons

There are no term-limits as to how long a deacon may serve. A deacon may step down from service at any time. The elders of the church must also watch over the deacons just as they do over the rest of the flock they shepherd. The elders must watch over the deacons' spiritual and moral lives, their service in the church, the attitude with which they approach such service, as well as the doctrine to which each deacon holds. All reasonable effort, as determined by the elders, shall be made in attempt to correct and retain a deacon before more

drastic measures are taken. If, in the unanimous judgment of the elders, a deacon is unwilling to correct his attitude, actions, or beliefs, he may be dismissed from service.

ARTICLE XI: CHURCH MEETINGS

A. The Annual Business Meeting

An annual business meeting of the church shall be held in January or February of each year. During this meeting, a report shall be given by the elders which shall contain an account of the membership of the church. The status of those whose membership involves unusual circumstances will be reviewed. All persons responsible for various ministries in the church shall give a report on the status of their respective ministry. A financial report for the previous year and the proposed budget for the coming year shall also be presented.

B. The Occasional Business Meetings

Church business meetings may be called by the elders. If an individual member or group of members desires to call a meeting the suggestion should be submitted to the elders who shall, in turn, make the proper announcement of the meeting. Every meeting at which business is to be transacted shall be announced at regular services for at least two (2) successive Sundays.

C. Voting

Membership in Providence Bible Church shall not vest in any member any proprietary rights in the Church but shall only entitle the member to vote on those matters submitted to the Church membership by the Elders. In these limited instances, voting privileges are restricted to members who have passed their eighteenth (18) birthday, and are not permitted to vote in absentia. Membership shall not be assignable or transferable. Three-fourths of the membership shall constitute a quorum. Decisions shall be arrived at by simple majority.

ARTICLE XII: TEACHING MINISTRY

A. General Statement

Teachers must understand the serious responsibilities they bear in instructing others in the Word of God (James 3:1). Consequently, the Elders will approve and periodically review all teachers.

B. Qualifications

The following qualifications are for Bible teachers of children, young people, and adults:

1. Must be a member of Providence Bible Church (See Article VII.D.3).
2. Must be spiritually mature.
3. Must understand and be in full agreement with the Statement of Faith (Article IV) and be submitted to the Church Constitution per Article VII.B.1-6.
4. Must be able to teach, especially in reference to handling the Scriptures accurately.

C. Policies

The following policies based upon either Scriptural mandate or Biblical wisdom must be observed:

1. Adult classes comprising both men and women will be taught by men (1 Ti. 2:11-12).
2. Older women will, formally and informally, teach the younger women to be godly ladies, loving wives, and caring mothers (Titus 2:3-5).
3. All teachers of pre-school age children shall be married couples or adult women.
4. Any male teacher of school-age children through the 6th grade classes will be assisted by his wife.
5. Young adult classes (7th grade and up) will be taught by men who may be assisted by their wives.

ARTICLE XIII: COUNSELING MINISTRY

A. General Statement

General counseling at Providence Bible Church will primarily be a function of the pulpit and podium.

B. Additional Counsel

From time to time there will be special need for crisis, premarital, preventative, or corrective counseling. In these special counseling

occasions, the goal of the counseling is to free people to enter into a deeper relationship with God, and to more effectively please Him through worship and service by helping them become more like the Lord. In a word, the goal is maturity: immediate obedience in specific situations and long-range character growth. Through biblical counseling, the counselee will be guided by the counselor in developing maturity by dealing with any immediate problem circumstances in a manner consistent with Scripture and by developing an inward character which conforms to the character (attitudes, beliefs, purposes) of Christ. Both the short-range and long-range objectives will be approached by attempting to transform the thinking patterns, renewing the mind of the counselee through appropriate biblical principles.

C. Policies

1. At no time will a counselor counsel a person of the opposite sex without a third party present.
2. Counsel is a privileged ministry of Providence Bible Church and is available to all members at no charge.
3. The frequency, length of appointments, and duration of counseling relationship is subject to the availability of resources and the discretion of the counselor.
4. If it becomes apparent that there is an unwillingness on the part of the counselee to change his or her thinking patterns in accordance to the Word of God; or if a pattern of unfaithfulness in worship attendance develops; or if there is an unwillingness to complete, in a timely manner, the designed assignments given by the counselor; counseling will be immediately suspended until which time the counselee can make the necessary adjustments.
5. Pre-marriage counseling is required of any couple desiring to be married by a pastor (elder) of Providence Bible Church. Counseling must be satisfactorily completed before an elder makes a commitment to conduct a wedding ceremony. This position will be maintained regardless of any planning done prior to or concurrent with the counseling (i.e. the setting of a wedding date, etc.).

ARTICLE XIV: MUSIC MINISTRY

Providence Bible Church believes that music in the Church service, as taught in Scripture, is one of the highest forms of worship and as such, should be used primarily to honor God as an expression of a believer's thanksgiving and testimony to Him. Because of the confusion generated in music by the spirit of this age, the following guidelines will be applied to the music ministry of the Church:

1. To be an acceptable offering to God, music must be the song of the redeemed heart.
2. The message (lyrics) of the music must be consistent with Bible truths.
3. The style of the musician must be one of worship and not one of sensuality; in other words, the music and its performance must call attention to God, not to the performer.
4. A high level of proficiency and quality will be maintained at all times consistent with the above mentioned parameters. As in everything we do, worship ought to be done with excellence to the glory of God.

ARTICLE XV: MISSIONARY SUPPORT

A. General Statement

We believe that the work of missions is 'the carrying of the message and work of Jesus Christ to others, especially of a different culture.' (Erickson) As such, missions is primarily evangelistic work and therefore to be primarily about the proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

B. Partnership and Stewardship

1. Like-mindedness
Financial support will be limited to those persons, programs, ministries or mission agencies that are substantially in agreement with our doctrinal statement, positions and policies, as well as our strong views concerning the authority of and accountability of all missionaries to the local Church. The Church preference will be to directly support those from our own Church membership who are sent out from among us in fulfillment of the great commission of Christ. However, we

will also consider supporting a candidate whose character and calling as a lifetime missionary has been affirmed by a sending church or agency, whose history of service manifests a proven faithfulness, who possess a high view of Scripture and sound theological training, and who endeavor to operate with a biblical approach to ministry (i.e. preaching the Word, discipleship, establishing churches etc.).

2. Eldership Agreement

All financial support of any ministry or missionary supported by Providence Bible Church needs the unanimous approval of the Elders together with the affirmation of the Church. The Elders must continually evaluate the Scriptural integrity of all supported ministries or missionaries and take appropriate actions.

ARTICLE XVI: COUNCILS AND COMMITTEES

A. General Statement

To promote efficient handling of Board matters, the Elders may appoint various councils and committees from within its membership, the staff, and from the Church at large. These councils and committees shall perform tasks solely in accordance with the duties and with powers specifically delegated by the Elders. The general functions of councils and committees are:

1. To bring considered recommendations to the Elders concerning ministries.
2. To provide a wider base of counsel to the Elders having the oversight of specific ministries.

B. Duration of Councils and Committees

All councils and committees shall exist for the period specified by the Elders.

ARTICLE XVII: CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY

A. Nature

This Constitution, as with any other non-inspired document, is not infallible. It does, however, reflect an earnest and sincere attempt to apply the Scriptures in ordering the life of this local church. Furthermore, we as members of this church, including the elders,

have solemnly committed ourselves to follow this Constitution in ordering the life of this church (see the Preamble). Therefore, the demands of the ninth commandment and the sanctity of truth in general require that the elders and all of the members of this church abide by our mutual commitment.

B. Deficiencies

Only when we must obey God rather than the provisions of this Constitution may its requirements be disregarded (Acts 5:29). If at any time a member of this church becomes aware that adherence to this Constitution would violate biblical principle, he should make this known to the elders. If the elders conclude that biblical principle requires disregarding a provision of this Constitution, they are obligated to communicate this together with the reason(s) for their conclusion to the church within one month at a duly called meeting of the church. Furthermore, relevant amendments to this Constitution must be submitted to the church and acted upon in accordance with the provisions of Section C within one year following this informational meeting. The failure of the elders to observe these requirements will constitute a legitimate reason for the calling of a special meeting by the members of the church in accordance with Article XI, Section B.

C. Amendments

Proposed amendments shall be distributed in written form to the membership at least four (4) weeks prior to a business meeting. Amendments to this Constitution may be adopted by the unanimous decision of the eldership.

ARTICLE XVIII: FACILITY USE

The facilities of Providence Bible Church, including, but not limited to the Sanctuary, Fellowship Room and other property owned by the Church, are for the exclusive use of its members for ministry purposes which are fully consistent with Biblical standards and principles. Any supplementary use shall be allowed only as specifically approved by the Elders. Under no circumstances shall any supplemental use be authorized, even if deemed charitable in nature, if inconsistent with the teachings of Christ and foundational Christian principles.

ARTICLE XIX: SETTLEMENT OF DISPUTES

In any dispute arising between Providence Bible Church members, pastors, or general staff employees pertaining to any matters of the Church Bylaws (spiritual teaching, practices, policies or positions), staff counseling, Church finances, title to property purchased with Church contributions, or Church discipline, the dispute shall be resolved by the Elders of the Church. A decision shall be reached after prayerful consideration in a spirit of humility, with each Elder regarding one another before himself.

ARTICLE XX: RECORDS AND REPORTS

A. Records

Providence Bible Church shall maintain adequate and correct accounts, books, and records of its business and properties. All such books, records and accounts shall be kept at its principal location in the State of Colorado, or with the appropriate Elder.

B. Financial Integrity

Providence Bible Church purposes to operate with the utmost financial integrity, by means of numerous checks and balances. Toward that goal, we employ the following practices:

We utilize the services of an offsite, independent bookkeeper who is *not* a member of our church. This provides complete anonymity on giving.⁴ In processing the offering for deposit, multiple deacons count the cash only, placing checks discreetly into an envelope. The bookkeeper then processes the offering in full and makes the deposit.

We have a limited number of check-signers and credit card users. These individuals must be unanimously approved by the Leadership (Elders *and* Deacons) and have a set credit limit. These responsibilities may be revoked by a majority vote of the Leadership.

⁴ Contributions to PBC are considered as sensitive and private. The Bookkeeper will not disclose individual's names and contribution amounts to anyone except to the contributor (i.e. year-end giving statements). Exceptions to this policy must be approved by the elders and the contributor.

The Bookkeeper generates Financial Reports as follows:

Account Activity – *weekly*, allowing us to monitor all expenditures immediately

Profit and Loss (P&L) and Transaction Detail by Account – *quarterly*, allowing the Leadership (Elders *and* Deacons) to monitor budget overages and to make necessary adjustments in a timely manner

Budget vs. Actual / Proposed Budget – *annually*, allowing the Leadership and the Membership a line-item review of both previous and upcoming year's budgets

Church Leaders and Members may request reports for review at any time.

We seek to maintain the utmost transparency* in our annual Budgeting process. During our Annual Meeting, we conduct a line-item review of the previous year's Budget and propose a Budget for the following year. Members review, evaluate, and dialogue on these matters. The Leadership considers concerns raised and recommendations suggested and presents a finalized budget.

* Expenditures of a sensitive nature may be held in confidence if they are agreed to by the entire Leadership.

ARTICLE XXI: INDEMNIFICATION OF OFFICERS

A. Indemnification

The Elders may choose to indemnify and advance the church-related expenses of any church officer, employee, or agent.

B. Conditions

Subject to the provisions of paragraph C. of this section, the church shall indemnify any elder or deacon, or former elder or deacon, of the church against claims, liabilities, expenses, and costs necessarily incurred by him in the defense, compromise, or settlement of any action, suit or proceeding, civil or criminal, in which such person is made a party by reason of being or having been an elder or deacon, to the extent not otherwise compensated, indemnified or reimbursed by insurance, if:

1. The conduct of the elder or deacon was in good faith;
2. The elder or deacon reasonably believed that his conduct was in the best interests of the church, or at least not opposed to its best interests; and
3. In the case of any criminal proceeding, the elder or deacon had no reasonable cause to believe that his conduct was unlawful.

C. Exclusions

The church may not indemnify an elder or deacon regarding a proceeding brought against him by or in the right of the church, in which he was adjudged liable to the church, or where the elder or deacon is charged with receiving an improper personal benefit and he is adjudged liable on that basis.

ARTICLE XXII: DISSOLUTION

Upon the dissolution of Providence Bible Church, the Elders shall, after paying or making provisions for the payment of all liabilities of the Church, dispose of all assets of the Church exclusively for the purposes of the Church in such manner or to such organization or organizations organized and operated exclusively for religious purposes, and which affirm the beliefs mentioned in the Doctrinal Statement, and shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 (or corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law).