



**THE CONSTITUTION, STATEMENT OF FAITH,
AND CHURCH COVENANT FOR
MERCY HILL CHURCH**

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CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

PREAMBLE

Since it pleased Almighty God, by his Holy Spirit, to call some of his servants to unite here in Port Austin, Michigan, under the name Mercy Hill Church to worship God and to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ, we, the members of Mercy Hill Church adopt this constitution and bylaws as our articles of governance, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of Jesus Christ and bring him glory, as revealed in the Holy Bible and articulated in the Statement of Faith and Covenant of this church.

ARTICLE 1—NAME

- 1.1. This church shall be known as: Mercy Hill Church. A Michigan Ecclesiastical Corporation, situation in Port Austin, Michigan.

ARTICLE 2—PURPOSE

- 2.1. This church exists by the grace of God and for the glory of God, which shall be the ultimate purpose in all its activities.
- 2.2. This church glorifies God by loving him and obeying his commands through:
 - worshipping him;
 - equipping the saints through Bible instruction and study;
 - proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching and personal evangelism, and any other means consistent with the teachings of the Bible;
 - encouraging, supporting, and participating in local, domestic, and international missions work;
 - administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper;
 - encouraging biblical fellowship among believers;
 - serving other individuals, families, and churches by providing for physical, emotional, and spiritual needs;
 - and encouraging fellow churches to biblical faithfulness and purity.

ARTICLE 3—AFFILIATION

- 3.1. Mercy Hill Church operates as an independent church with its own governance structure. To further its purposes, however, the church may affiliate with any like-minded churches, associations, or denominations.

ARTICLE 4—ARTICLES OF FAITH

- 4.1. Our Statement of Faith, based on the historic New Hampshire Confession of 1853, highlights and summarizes beliefs we deem as essential to membership of this local body and faithfulness to our Lord. Along with this, we joyfully stand alongside our brothers and sisters in Christ throughout the ages in affirming the Apostles' Creed (2nd Century), the Nicene Creed (325 and 381), the London Confession (1689), and the Baptist Faith and Message (2000).
- 4.2. Furthermore, we affirm the Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy (1978), the Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (1987), and the Nashville Statement on Biblical Sexuality (2017).
- 4.3. Our church Covenant is equal parts promise, summary of expectations, ethical statements, and biblical standards. In it we summarize how God intends for us to live together as citizens of his kingdom. Our acceptance of this document follows the practice of believers throughout the centuries who have pledged to God and one another to live out the gospel in community.

- 4.4 Our Statement of Faith and Covenant do not exhaust the extent of what we believe and how we live. The Bible itself is the sole and final source of all that we believe and practice. We do believe, however, that our Statement of Faith and Covenant accurately represent the teachings of the Bible and, therefore, are binding upon all members. Both our Statement of Faith and church Covenant are incorporated as addendums to this Constitution and Bylaws.

ARTICLE 5—MEMBERSHIP

Section 1—Qualifications

Members of this church shall be believers in Jesus Christ who:

- 5.1.1. give evidence of regeneration;
- 5.1.2. have been baptized as believers in obedience to Christ;
- 5.1.3. hold the doctrines of our church as expressed in the statement of faith; and
- 5.1.4. promise in writing to keep the commitments expressed in the church covenant.

Section 2—Admission

- 5.2.1. An applicant shall be received as a member of the church upon the recommendation of the elders and the subsequent agreement of the majority of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting.

Section 3—Duties and Privileges

Members shall be expected to participate actively in the life of the church by:

- 5.3.1. regularly attending its Lord's Day meetings;
- 5.3.2. faithfully observing its ordinances, namely, baptism and the Lord's Supper;
- 5.3.3. submitting to its discipline and instruction;
- 5.3.4. attending its members' meetings;
- 5.3.5. voting on the church's governing documents (constitution, statement of faith, and covenant) and on all other matters submitted to the congregation at a members' meeting.
- 5.3.6. contributing to the ministry of the church consistent with the gifts, time, and resources each has received from God.
- 5.3.7. No person who is not a member shall lead any ministry or hold any office of the church.

Section 4—Members' Meeting Responsibilities

The church, duly assembled in a members' meeting, shall be responsible to:

- 5.4.1. elect and remove elders, deacons, and other officers;
- 5.4.2. receive applicants into membership;
- 5.4.3. recognize that membership has been terminated by death, apostasy, or voluntary resignation;
- 5.4.4. exercise church discipline;
- 5.4.5. approve an annual budget;
- 5.4.6. hear reports from the elders and, from time to time, the various deacons; and,
- 5.4.7. take any other action it deems necessary or desirable.

Section 5—On Church Discipline

- 5.5.1. Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of unrepentant conduct contrary to the principles of Scripture, and so opposing the welfare of the church, may be subject to the admonition of the elders and the discipline of the church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15–17, 1 Corinthians 5, and other Scriptures.

- 5.5.2. Church discipline, then, should ordinarily be contemplated after individual private admonition has failed.
- 5.5.3. Church discipline can include admonition by the elders or congregation, removal from office, and excommunication (see Matthew 18:15–17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14–15; 1 Timothy 5:19–20; 1 Corinthians 5:4–5).
- 5.5.4. The purpose of such discipline should be for:
- the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the person disciplined (see Proverbs 15:5; 29:15; 1 Corinthians 4:14; Ephesians 6:4; 1 Timothy 3:4–5; Hebrews 12:1–11; Psalm 119:115; 141:5; Proverbs 17:10; 25:12; 27:5; Ecclesiastes 7:5; Matthew 7:26–27; 18:15–17; Luke 17:3; Acts 2:40; 1 Corinthians 5:5; Galatians 6:1–5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14–15; 1 Timothy 1:20; Titus 1:13–14; James 1:22);
 - the instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to them (see Proverbs 13:20; Romans 15:14; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 15:33; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:14 [note this is written to the whole church, not just to leaders]; 1 Timothy 5:20; Titus 1:11; Hebrews 10:24–25);
 - the purity of the church as a whole (see 1 Corinthians 5:6–7; 2 Corinthians 13:10; Ephesians 5:27; 2 John 10; Jude 24; Revelation 21:2);
 - the church’s corporate witness to non-Christians (see Proverbs 28:7; Matthew 5:13–16; John 13:35; Acts 5:1–14; Ephesians 5:11; 1 Timothy 3:7; 2 Peter 2:2; 1 John 3:10); and,
 - supremely, for the glory of God by reflecting his holy character (see Deuteronomy 5:11; 1 Kings 11:2; 2 Chronicles 19:2; Ezra 6:21; Nehemiah 9:2; Isaiah 52:11; Ezekiel 36:20; Matthew 5:16; John 15:8; 18:17, 25; Romans 2:24; 15:5–6; 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1; Ephesians 1:4; 5:27; 1 Peter 2:12).

Section 6—Termination

- 5.6.1. The church shall recognize the termination of a person’s membership following his or her death or apostasy, and may do so following his or her voluntary resignation with intent to join another gospel-preaching church.
- 5.6.2. The church shall have authority to refuse a member’s voluntary resignation or transfer of membership to another church, either for the purpose of proceeding with church discipline, or for any other reason the church deems necessary or prudent.
- 5.6.3. A member shall be removed from membership as a matter of church discipline ordinarily, but not necessarily, upon the recommendation of the elders and the later agreement of at least two-thirds of the members present and voting on the question at any members’ meeting.

ARTICLE 6—MEETINGS

Section 1—Worship

- 6.1.1. The church shall meet together for public worship each Lord’s Day, and at other times throughout the week as the church may determine.

Section 2—Members’ Meetings

- 6.2.1. The church shall hold a regular members’ meeting at least every quarter, without displacing the regular gathering of the church on the Lord’s Day.
- 6.2.2. The elders, whenever they deem it necessary, or within thirty days of receiving a written request signed by ten percent of the membership, shall call a special members’ meeting.
- 6.2.3. No members’ meeting shall be held unless the date, time, and place of the meeting has been announced at every public meeting of the church for at least a week immediately before the members’ meeting in question.

- 6.2.4. An elder designated by the board of elders shall preside as moderator at all members' meetings, but shall have no vote, unless the members are equally divided on a question.
- 6.2.5. Members' meetings shall proceed in reasonable order, and the members present shall constitute a quorum to do business. Motions shall be adopted by a majority vote of the members present and voting on the question, except on matters otherwise provided for in this constitution.

ARTICLE 7 – GOVERNMENT

Section 1 – Summary

- 7.1.1. The biblical offices in the church shall be elders, and deacons, but final earthly authority is vested in the assembled congregation.

Section 2 – Elders

- 7.2.1. Subject to the will of the congregation, the elders shall oversee the ministry, resources, legal, business, and facilities of the church.
- 7.2.2. The board of elders shall be composed of men who satisfy the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 and who shall carry out their duties in accordance with 1 Peter 5:1-4.
- 7.2.3. Elders shall be recognized as follows: The elders may present the name of a nominee (or nominees) to the church at any regular members' meeting. For at least a month, the church shall consider whether the nominee is (or nominees are) qualified. Any member intending to vote against a nominee should express his or her objection to at least one elder as early as possible before the vote. Once at least a month has passed, the elders may move the nomination(s) to a vote at a regular members' meeting. The members shall vote on nominees one at a time. The moderator or his delegates shall count the votes, and any nominee immediately shall become an elder who receives the approval of at least three-quarters of the members present and voting on his nomination. In due haste after the vote, the church shall publicly recognize and set apart all such newly approved elders.
- 7.2.4. In accordance with 1 Timothy 2:12 and 3:2, women shall not serve as elders.
- 7.2.5. With the exception of the preaching elder (also called the lead pastor) and associate pastors, elders shall be reaffirmed by vote of the church one year after they are approved as elders, and triennially after the first year.
- 7.2.6. No elder shall hold the office of deacon during his tenure.
- 7.2.7. The board of elders shall choose its chairman and other officers. In accordance with the nonprofit corporation laws of Michigan, the board shall serve as the board of trustees of the corporation, and the elders shall designate the lead pastor or another elder to serve as the president of the corporation.
- 7.2.8. The elders shall, in keeping with Scripture (especially Acts 6:1-6; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 5:17; Titus 1:5-9; James 5:14; and 1 Peter 5:1-5), take responsibility to shepherd God's flock by devoting themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. They shall have particular authority to:
 - 7.2.9. plan and oversee worship services;
 - 7.2.10. oversee the ordinances, namely baptism and the Lord's Supper;
 - 7.2.11. examine and instruct prospective members;
 - 7.2.12. oversee the process of church discipline;
 - 7.2.13. examine and recommend candidates for all offices and positions;
 - 7.2.14. oversee the work of deacons, and all other agents of the church;
 - 7.2.15. give final oversight, when necessary, to the hiring and termination of non-elder church staff, as ordinarily conducted by the lead pastor; and

- 7.2.16. take any other action which shall be necessary and proper for faithfully overseeing and shepherding the church.
- 7.2.17. Annually, after consulting with the deacons, and members of the church, the elders shall present to the church an itemized budget. This budget shall be presented for discussion at a specially called meeting and moved to a vote on the budget as a whole at the following members' meeting. No money shall be solicited by or on behalf of the church or any of its ministries without the approval of the elders.
- 7.2.18. An elder shall be removed from office upon the vote of two-thirds of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions in Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Timothy 5:17-21.

Section 3—The Lead Pastor

- 7.3.1. Primary responsibility for preaching and teaching the Scriptures in public meetings of the church will be vested in the lead pastor. As defined below, and in accordance with the ecclesiastical corporation laws of Michigan, the elders shall designate the lead pastor or another elder to serve as the president of the corporation. If the lead pastor is absent or incapacitated, the elders shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which may be delegated to someone biblically qualified to perform such duties.
- 7.3.2. The lead pastor shall be selected as follows: The elders shall present the name of one nominee to the position of preaching elder at a regular members meeting. For at least a month, the church shall consider the nominee's gifts in preaching and teaching, his commitment to minister personally to the members of this church, and his wholehearted assent to the statement of faith and church covenant. Any member intending to vote against a nominee should express his or her objection to at least one elder as early as possible before the vote. Once at least a month has passed, the elders may move the nomination to a vote at a regular members' meeting. The moderator or his delegates shall count the votes, and if the nominee receives the approval of at least three-quarters of the members present and voting on his nomination, he shall immediately be the preaching elder (and, if he is not yet an elder and member, also an elder and member). In a reasonable time after the vote, the church shall publicly recognize and set apart the lead pastor. Cf. Art. 7, Sec. 4, Cl. 2 (selection process for associate pastor).
- 7.3.3. The lead pastor shall meet all the qualifications and hold all the rights and responsibilities of a church member. He shall meet all the qualifications and hold all the duties and responsibilities of an elder. In terms of formal authority, there shall be no distinction between an elder and a preaching elder.
- 7.3.4. The lead pastor shall not be subject to any term limit.
- 7.3.5. The lead pastor shall be removed from office upon the vote of two-thirds of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions in Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Timothy 5:17-21.

Section 4—Associate Pastors

- 7.4.1. The church may call additional pastors whose relationship to the preaching elder (or lead pastor) is that of associate. Other pastoral responsibilities may be vested in one or more associate pastors.
- 7.4.2. An associate pastor shall be selected in the same manner as the lead pastor. See Art. 7, Sec. 3, Cl. 2.
- 7.4.3. An associate pastor shall meet all the qualifications and hold all the rights and responsibilities of a church member. He shall meet all the qualifications and hold all the duties and responsibilities of an elder. In terms of formal authority, there shall be no distinction between an elder and an associate pastor.

- 7.4.4. An associate pastor shall not be subject to any term limit.
- 7.4.5. An associate pastor shall be removed from office upon the vote of two-thirds of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions in Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Timothy 5:17-21.

Section 5—Deacons

- 7.5.1. Particular service to the church shall be provided by deacons, who will vary in number depending on the needs of the church, and who shall satisfy the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
- 7.5.2. The deacons shall not meet together regularly as a body. Each diaconate position shall serve a particular need of the church, and shall be created or dissolved upon the recommendation of the elders and the later agreement of a majority of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting.
- 7.5.3. Deacons shall be recognized as follows: The elders may present the name of a nominee (or nominees) to the church at any regular members' meeting. For at least a month, the church shall consider whether the nominee is (or nominees are) qualified. Any member intending to vote against a nominee should express his or her objection to at least one elder as early as possible before the vote. Once at least a month has passed, the elders may move the nomination(s) to a vote at a regular members' meeting. The members shall vote on nominees one at a time. The moderator or his delegates shall count the votes, and any nominee immediately shall become a deacon who receives the approval of at least two-thirds of the members present and voting on the nomination. In due haste after the vote, the church shall publicly recognize and set apart all such newly approved deacons.
- 7.5.4. Deacons shall be elected to a renewable term of one year.
- 7.5.5. In keeping with the principles in Acts 6:1-6, deacons shall not exercise spiritual authority, but shall enable the elders to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word, work to maintain the unity of the church, and care for the physical needs of the church.
- 7.5.6. The church may recognize deacons to take responsibility to:
 - 7.5.7. care for the temporal needs of members,
 - 7.5.8. attend to the accommodations for public worship, and
 - 7.5.9. encourage, support, and mobilize those able to help others and those with gifts of administration.
- 7.5.10. The deacons shall receive, hold, and disburse, upon approval from two elders, a fund for benevolence, reporting on its use to the elders at their request, and reporting to the church only its total receipts and total disbursements.
- 7.5.11. The deacons, with the agreement of the elders, may establish unpaid administrative positions or committees of members to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities in the church.
- 7.5.12. A deacon may be removed from office upon the recommendation of the elders and the later vote of a majority of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting.

ARTICLE 8—ADMINISTRATION

Section 1—President

- 8.1.1. The elders' designee, whether the lead pastor or another elder, shall serve as president of the corporation, assuming all its responsibilities and other responsibilities delegated by the board of elders. The president shall have general supervision and direction of the business and affairs of the church. The president shall recuse himself from any board discussion and vote regarding his duties, responsibilities, and compensation.

The president or chairman of the board of elders shall execute any necessary documents on behalf of the church, except where that responsibility is expressly delegated by the board to some other officer or agent of the church.

Section 2—Clerk

- 8.2.1. The clerk shall record the minutes of all regular and special members' meetings of the church. In compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of Michigan, the clerk shall serve as the secretary of the corporation.
- 8.2.2 The clerk shall be a member of the church. The clerk shall not be an elder.
- 8.2.2. The clerk shall be selected to a renewable term of one year upon the recommendation of the elders and the later agreement of a majority of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting.
- 8.2.3. The clerk may be removed from office by a majority vote of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting.

Section 3—Treasurer

- 8.3.1. The treasurer shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in the banks, financial institutions, or depositories held by the church. The treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church. The treasurer shall provide to the elders at least once a year, or whenever the elders may require it, an account of all financial transactions since the last complete account and of the financial condition of the church. The treasurer shall also present reports of the account balances, revenues, and expenses of the church at regular members' meetings.
- 8.3.2. The treasurer shall be selected to a renewable term of one year upon the recommendation of the elders and the later agreement of a majority of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting.
- 8.3.3. The treasurer shall be a member of the church. No elder or paid staff member of the church may serve as treasurer.
- 8.3.4. The treasurer shall be removed from office upon the recommendation of the elders and the later vote of a majority of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting.

ARTICLE 9—AMENDMENTS

- 9.1. The statement of faith or church covenant shall be amended upon the recommendation of the elders and the agreement of three-quarters of the members voting on the question at any regular members' meeting, provided the amendment was presented by the elders in writing at a previous regular members' meeting, and was announced at every public meeting of the church during the two weeks immediately before the vote.
- 9.2. This constitution shall be amended upon the recommendation of the elders and the agreement of two-thirds of the members voting on the question at any regular members' meeting, provided the amendment was presented by the elders in writing at a previous regular members' meeting, and was announced at every public meeting of the church during the two weeks immediately before the vote.

ARTICLE 10—DISPUTE RESOLUTION

- 10.1. Believing that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian church (see, e.g., Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 6:1-8), the church shall urge its members to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblically based principles, without resorting to the civil courts.
- 10.2. In the case of alleged criminal behavior, it may be appropriate to resolve conflict in the criminal courts, not least because such alleged criminal behavior may in some cases legally be required to be reported to the government authorities (see Romans 13:3-4.)
- 10.3. Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the church shall encourage members to use biblical principles and avoid lawsuits to resolve disputes among themselves and with those outside the church—including believers and unbelievers, and individuals and corporations. The elders may adopt policies and procedures to encourage the church to live up to these aspirations.

ARTICLE 11—INDEMNIFICATION

- 11.1. **Mandatory:** If a legal claim or criminal allegation is made against a person because he or she is or was a director, officer, employee, or agent of the church, the church shall provide indemnification against liability and costs incurred in defending against the claim if a majority of the elders determine that the person acted (a) in good faith, (b) with the care an ordinarily prudent person in a similar position would exercise under similar circumstances, and (c) in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the church, and (d) the person had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful.
- 11.2. **Permissive:** With the unanimous decision of the elders, the church also may indemnify any person who acted in good faith and reasonably believed that his or her conduct was in the church's best interest and not unlawful.
- 11.3. **Determinations:** If a quorum of the elders is not available for an indemnification determination because of the number of elders seeking indemnification, the requisite determination may be made by the membership or by special legal counsel appointed by the membership.

ARTICLE 12—DISSOLUTION

- 12.1. In the event of the dissolution of this church, all of its debts, when possible, shall be fully satisfied. None of its assets or holdings shall be divided among the members or other individuals, but shall be irrevocably designated, as approved by a simple majority of the members present at a members' meeting, to one or more religious organizations which meet the qualifications described in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code and which are in agreement with the letter and spirit of the Statement of Faith of this church. Any such assets not so disposed of shall be disposed of exclusively for such exempt purposes by a court of competent jurisdiction where the principal office of the corporation is then located.

STATEMENT OF FAITH

Introduction

From the time of the Apostles to today, Christians have laid out their beliefs in brief, definitive statements. As those who know God, we believe it necessary to set forth in a concise fashion the cornerstone truths of our church as guided by Scripture.

Our Statement of Faith, based on the historic New Hampshire Confession of 1853, highlights and summarizes beliefs we deem as essential to membership of this local body and faithfulness to our Lord. All who join our church are required to affirm this Statement of Faith and are responsible for believing and living in accordance with it.

I. The Scriptures

We believe the Holy Bible was written by people who were divinely inspired, and that it is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction. God is its author, salvation is its purpose, and truth, without any mixture of error, is its content. Scripture reveals the principles by which God will judge us. Therefore, it is now, and will be to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union and the supreme standard for evaluating all human conduct, creeds, and opinions.

II. The True God

We believe there is one and only one living and true God—an infinite, intelligent Spirit. His name is the LORD, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth. He is inexpressibly glorious in holiness and is worthy of all possible honor, confidence, and love. In the unity of the Godhead there are three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. They are equal in every divine perfection, and they carry out distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.

III. Humanity and the Fall

We believe humanity is the special creation of God, made in his own image. God created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. The gift of marriage consists of the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime, and this gift models the way God relates to His people. God created the human race in holiness under his law. By voluntary transgression, however, humanity fell from that holy and happy state. As a result, all people are now sinners, not by external compulsion but by choice. They by nature entirely lack the holiness that is required by the law of God and are actively inclined to evil. Therefore, they are under just condemnation to a sentence of eternal ruin, without defense or excuse.

IV. The Way of Salvation

We believe the salvation of God's people is completely by grace, through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God. By the appointment of the Father, he freely took to himself our nature but without sin. He honored the divine law by his personal obedience and made a full atonement for our sins by his substitutionary death, satisfying God's wrath. He rose from the dead and is now enthroned in heaven. Jesus, the Son, unites in his wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfections and, as such, is qualified in every way to be a suitable, compassionate, and all-sufficient Savior.

V. Justification

We believe the great gospel blessing that Christ secures to those who believe in him is justification. Justification includes the pardon of sin, righteous standing before God and his people, and the promise of eternal life founded on principles of righteousness. It is not given because of any works of righteousness we have done but only through faith in the Redeemer's blood. By virtue of this faith his perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us by God. Justification immediately brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God and secures every other blessing we need for time and eternity.

VI. The Freeness of Salvation

We believe the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel. It is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a heartfelt, penitent, and obedient faith. Preventing this salvation is every sinner's inherent depravity and rejection of the gospel, a rejection that aggravates a sinner's condemnation.

VII. Grace in Regeneration

We believe sinners must be regenerated, or born again, in order to be saved. Regeneration consists of God's gift of a holy inclination to the mind. It is accomplished in a way that is beyond our comprehension. It is carried out by the power of the Holy Spirit using divine truth to obtain our voluntary obedience to the gospel. The proper evidence of regeneration appears in the holy fruits of repentance, faith, and newness of life.

VIII. Repentance and Faith

We believe repentance and faith are sacred duties as well as inseparable graces. They are produced in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God, who convinces us of our guilt, danger, helplessness, and the way of salvation by Christ. And they consist of turning to God with genuine sorrow, confession, and a petition for mercy; receiving heartily the Lord Jesus Christ as Prophet, Priest and King; and relying on him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior.

IX. God's Purpose of Grace

We believe election is the eternal purpose of God according to which he graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners. Election is perfectly consistent with human free agency and includes all the means necessary to achieve God's purpose. It is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, which is infinitely free, wise, holy, and unchangeable. Election completely rules out boasting and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God, and the active imitation of his free mercy. It encourages the greatest possible exercise of human responsibility. The election of individuals to life may be confirmed by its effects in everyone who truly believes the gospel. Election is the foundation of Christian assurance, and confirming our election deserves our greatest diligence.

X. Sanctification

We believe sanctification is the process by which we are made partakers of God's holiness, according to his purpose. Sanctification is a progressive work. It begins in regeneration and continues in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit and by God's appointed means. These means include the word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, prayer, and the oversight and fellowship of the visible church.

XI. The Perseverance of Saints

We believe all genuine believers endure to the end. Their persevering obedience to Christ and attachment to his people are the primary marks distinguishing them from superficial professors. A special providence watches over their welfare, and they are kept by the power of God through faith to salvation.

XII. The Harmony of the Law and the Gospel

We believe the law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of his moral governance. It is holy, just, and good. Fallen human beings are unable to fulfill the precepts of the law, which the Scriptures attribute entirely to their love of sin. A chief purpose of the gospel is to deliver people from this love and to restore them through a mediator to a sincere obedience to the holy law. The visible church's means of grace share this great purpose.

XIII. A Gospel Church

We believe a visible church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, joined together by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel. A visible church observes the ordinances of Christ, submits to his laws, and exercises the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by his word. The only scriptural officers of the church are elders (also called overseers or pastors) and deacons, whose qualifications and duties are defined in the epistles to Timothy and to Titus.

XIV. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water into the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is a solemn and beautiful emblem that declares our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior as well as our union with him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life. Baptism is a prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and the Lord's Supper. We likewise believe that the Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby the members of the church, following earnest self-examination, use bread and the cup in a sacred manner to commemorate together the dying love of Christ. The ordinances belong to the gathered church, marking off believers from unbelievers and making the church visible on earth.

XV. The Lord's Day

We believe the first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and points to the rest that awaits the people of God. It should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the lordship of Jesus Christ.

XVI. Civil Government

We believe civil government exists by divine appointment for the benefit and good order of human society. Government officials are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored, and obeyed. The principle exception is for matters contrary to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the Prince of the kings of the earth.

XVII. The Righteous and the Wicked

We believe there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked. Only those who are justified by faith in the name of the Lord Jesus and sanctified by the Spirit of our God are truly righteous in his judgment. In contrast, all those who continue in impenitence and unbelief are wicked in his sight and under the curse. This distinction among people holds both at death and afterward.

XVIII. The World to Come

We believe the end of the world is approaching. At the last day Christ will descend from heaven and raise the dead from the grave to final retribution. A public separation will then take place, in which the wicked will be justly assigned to endless punishment and the righteous to endless joy. This judgment will determine forever on principles of righteousness the final state of people in heaven or hell.

CHURCH COVENANT

Introduction

Our church covenant summarizes how God intends for us to live together as citizens of his kingdom. All who join our church are required to affirm this covenant and are responsible for believing and living in accordance with it. Our acceptance of this document follows the practice of believers throughout the centuries who have pledged to God and one another to live out the gospel in community.

Covenant

We have been brought by God's grace to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have given ourselves to him and affirmed one another as citizens of his kingdom through baptism and the Lord's Supper. Relying on his gracious aid, we do now solemnly and joyfully affirm our church covenant with each other.

We will worship and enjoy God as our supreme treasure by loving him and living for his glory in all that we do. We will pursue God through the regular practice of spiritual disciplines and live holy lives in this world, denying ungodliness, and seeking to reflect the holy character of our Lord.

We will walk together in love as members of Christ's body, caring for each other, watching over each other, and encouraging and admonishing one another as occasion requires. We will not forsake the church's gatherings and we will faithfully pray for one another. We will rejoice at each others' happiness and bear each others' burdens and sorrows. We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace.

We will work together to maintain a faithful gospel witness in our worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines. We will contribute cheerfully to the expenses of the church, the needs of our neighbors, and the spread of the gospel around the world.

We will endeavor to lead those in our care in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, as well as to seek the salvation of our family and friends. We will seek to advance the gospel both to our neighborhoods and the nations through evangelism and missions.

If we leave this congregation, we will join another gospel-preaching church as soon as possible where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

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