

## **BYLAWS OF GOLD COUNTRY BAPTIST CHURCH**

**ARTICLE I – NAME:** The name of this church is Gold Country Baptist Church, hereinafter referred to as “this church.”

**ARTICLE II - FORM OF THIS CHURCH:** This church shall be a perpetual non-profit corporation organized under the laws of the State of California for exclusively religious purposes as defined by Scripture.

**ARTICLE III - LOCATION:** The office for the transaction of business of this church shall be located at 3800 North Shingle Road, Shingle Springs, California.

### **ARTICLE IV - PURPOSE:**

This church exists by the grace of God, for the glory of God, which shall be the ultimate purpose in all its activities. (Ephesians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 10:31)

**ARTICLE V – GUIDING PRINCIPLES:** This church shall seek to glorify God by:

- a. The Worship of God (Psalm 34:1-3; John 4:22-24; Revelation 4:8-11)
- b. Pursuing, emphasizing, and maintaining a high view of God and His Word. (Deut. 6:5; 2 Timothy 3:16)
- c. God-centered prayer (Psalm 115:1, 25:11, 75:9; 1 Chronicles 29:11-16; Jeremiah 14:7, 21; Daniel 9:18-19; Matthew 6:9-13)
- d. Preaching and teaching the whole counsel of God.(2 Timothy 4:1-2; Acts 20:27; Romans 10:17)
- e. Loving God and obeying His commands. (John 14:15; 1 John 5:2-3)
- f. Equipping the body of Christ to do the work of ministry. (Ephesians 4:11-16; Colossians 1:28)
- g. Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through personal evangelism by making disciples in our community and in all the nations. (Matthew 5:16; 28:19-20; 1 Peter 3:15; Acts 1:8)
- h. Mutual edification of the body of Christ through discipleship, godly fellowship, ministering to the needs of others, and exhorting one another to live according to Biblical instruction and holy living. (Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:24-25; Ephesians 5:18-20; 1 Peter 4:10-11)

### **ARTICLE VI - GOVERNMENT:**

#### **SECTION 1: Governing Authority:**

The governing authority and head of this church is Jesus Christ alone (Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:15-18). As head of the church, Jesus Christ in His Word has given Elders to be the spiritual leaders of the local church (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Titus 1:5; Hebrews 13:7-8, 17; I Thessalonians 5:12; 1 Timothy 5:17). All the activities and affairs of the Corporation shall be exercised by or under the direction of the Board of Elders, who are responsible for shepherding and having oversight of the flock (1 Peter 5:1-4).

## **SECTION 2: Board of Elders:**

### **A. Responsibilities:**

The Board of Elders, as spiritual leaders, shall have the following responsibilities:

1. The Elders shall devote their time to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:4) by teaching and encouraging sound doctrine and godly character, and shepherding God's flock (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Titus 1:9).
2. The Elders shall have oversight of church ministries, staff, policies, practices and programs (I Thessalonians 5:12; Acts 20:17, 28; Hebrews 13:7, 17; 1 Peter 5:1-3; 1 Timothy 5:17; Acts 15; 1 Peter 5:1-5; Ephesians 4:11-16). The Elders shall conduct, manage, and govern the activities and affairs of the church by the principles of God's Word. The Elders may also delegate responsibilities to Deacons or other qualified servants as necessary to fulfill their priorities (Acts 6:2-4).
3. Because unity and harmony must be modeled by the spiritual leadership, the Elders by prayerful consideration with humility, are to be unanimous in all decisions (1 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 1:27, 2:2-5; Ephesians 4:3-6; Romans 15:5-6).
4. The Elders may select a chairman.
5. The Elders shall consider all applications for church membership.
6. The Elders shall consider all matters of church discipline according to Scriptural guidelines as stated in Article VII, Section 2 D - church discipline (Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:12-13; Galatians 6:1).
7. The Elders shall select and remove all the officers, agents, pastors, staff, and employees of this church, prescribing duties and fixing the terms of their offices and their compensation. The congregation shall participate in the nominations and affirmation of candidates for the offices of Elders or Deacons, as specified by Article VI, Section D; and Article X, Section 1. Every officer, staff, or employee shall affirm their agreement with this church's Statement of Faith (see Article XVIII) and these bylaws and shall conduct themselves in a manner that is consistent therewith.
8. The Elders shall have fiduciary responsibility for the finances and all properties of this church and shall manage and disburse funds as required to fulfill the purposes of this church as consistent with the Scriptures, with law, and with these bylaws, as they deem best. The congregation's vote of affirmation shall be involved for acquisition or sale of real property, for incurring indebtedness, as specified by Article IX, Section 2.5.
9. The Elders may receive financial remuneration or support from the church (1 Timothy 5:17-18; 1 Corinthians 9:7-14; Galatians 6:6) or they may decline compensation (1 Corinthians 9:14-18; cf. 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:8; Acts 20:33-34). Any person receiving compensation directly or indirectly from this church shall not be in a position to determine the nature or amount of their compensation.

**B. Qualification:** Elders shall be godly men who have been set apart by the Holy Spirit, and show evidence of the divine qualifications listed in the Scriptures (I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:1-4).

**C. Number:** There shall be a plurality of Elders (Acts 14:23, Titus 1:5).

**D. Nomination And Selection Of Elders:**

1. Recommendations to fill the office of Elder may be submitted by the congregation to the Elders for consideration.
2. The Elders shall consider prospective nominees and evaluate their qualifications and character by Scripture (1 Timothy 3, Titus 1), examining with much care and prayer to discern whom God has set apart for service (cf. 1 Timothy 3:10; Acts 1:24, 13:2-3, 14:23).
3. A list of candidates unanimously approved by the Elders shall be posted at least two weeks prior to a congregational meeting to allow adequate evaluation of the candidates so as not to appoint any man inappropriately or hastily (1 Timothy 5:22).
4. New candidates shall be presented to the congregation for affirmation of the decision of the Elders (cf. Acts 15:6, 22).
5. Newly affirmed Elders shall be appointed publicly to office.
6. Each Elder shall serve until the next annual meeting and must be reaffirmed each year (cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, Hebrews 13:7, 1 Timothy 5:17).

**E. Removal and Resignation of Elders:**

Any Elder may resign at any time upon giving written notice to the Board of Elders. He may by unanimous agreement of the other Elders be removed from office at any meeting of the Board of Elders if he is found to be physically or mentally incapacitated or spiritually unqualified (according to pertinent Scripture, including 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9), after a thorough investigation by the Elders (at the sole discretion of the Board of Elders), in accord with the procedures prescribed by pertinent Scripture, including Matthew 18:15-18; 1 Timothy 5:19 and Galatians 6:1-2. When an Elder is removed because of sin that is deemed sufficient to disqualify him from shepherding, and if he refuses to repent from that sin, the removal shall be accompanied by a public rebuke, and notice shall be made before the church and the congregation thereof at a regularly scheduled worship service as prescribed in 1 Timothy 5:20.

**ARTICLE VII - MEMBERSHIP:**

**SECTION 1. Membership**

For the purpose of this document, the term 'church members' shall refer to such persons who have been accepted into the fellowship, though such persons are not 'corporate members' as defined by Section 5056 of the California Nonprofit Corporation Law. All rights which would otherwise vest in the corporate members shall vest in the Board of Elders [per Article VI, Section 2.A]. Those admitted to church membership do not constitute a legislative body, can not pass resolutions binding upon the Corporation, nor shall they have any equity in the real property of the Corporation, or rights to vote on its disposal. Said property of the Corporation is dedicated to religious and charitable purposes as outlined in the Articles of Incorporation.

## **SECTION 2. Church Membership**

### **A. Qualifications:**

To qualify for membership in this church, a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration, who has been baptized in obedience to Christ (Matthew 28:19-20) following his or her repentance (Acts 2:38), and who wholeheartedly believes in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible. Each member must agree to submit to the teaching of Scripture as expressed in our Statement of Faith (see Article XVIII) and must promise to keep the commitments expressed in the Church Covenant. The Elders shall be responsible for determining each person's qualification for membership. In making this determination, they may rely on a person's profession of faith, or such other evidence, as the Elders deem appropriate.

### **B. The Privilege and Responsibilities:**

The responsibilities of the members of this church are centered in the person of Jesus Christ. We have been called together to unite in submission to Christ and His teachings and to express His life. Each member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of this church, consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God, and shall endeavor, by the aid of the Holy Spirit:

1. To walk together in Christian love and to maintain the unity of the believers.
2. To sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines.
3. To contribute cheerfully and willingly to the support of its ministry.
4. To not forsake the assembling together with other believers.
5. To submit to the leadership of this congregation and be subject to its discipline.
6. To exercise spiritual gifts in Christian service.

Only church members have the privilege to:

- a. Serve as officers, teachers, members of committees and/or other positions of responsibility within this church. (Elders may make temporary exceptions to the church membership requirement).
- b. Vote on church matters as submitted by the Board of Elders in accordance to Article IX / Section 2.

### **C. Membership Records:**

This church shall maintain membership records containing the name and address of each member, date received into membership and date of termination of membership. Active absent status may be maintained for missionaries, students, those serving in the military and those in special situations as determined by the Elders.

### **D. Church Discipline:**

1. The threefold purpose of church discipline is to glorify God by maintaining purity in the local church (1 Corinthians 5:6, 9-12), to edify believers by deterring sin (1 Timothy 5:20), and to restore the offending believer by calling him or her to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct (Galatians 6:1).

2. Members of this church and all other professing Christians who regularly attend or fellowship with this church who err in doctrine, or who engage in conduct that violates Scripture, shall be subject to church discipline, including dismissal according to Matthew 18:15-18. Before such dismissal, however:
  - a. it shall be the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of the erring individual's heresy or misconduct to warn and correct such erring individual in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration (Matt 18:12-15; Galatians 6:1). If the erring individual does not heed this warning, then;
  - b. the warning member shall again go to the erring individual, seeking his or her repentance, but accompanied by one or two individuals who shall confirm that the sin has occurred or is continuing to occur, and/or that the erring individual has been appropriately confronted and has refused to repent (Matthew 18:16). The first and second warnings may occur with no specified time interval. If the erring individual still refuses to heed this warning, then;
  - c. it shall be brought to the attention of the Board of Elders (Matthew 18:17a). If the Board of Elders determines—after thorough investigation in accord with the procedures prescribed by pertinent Scripture, including Matthew 18:15-18 and 1 Timothy 5:19—that there is corroborating evidence that the erring individual has sinned or is continuing to sin, that he or she has been appropriately confronted, and that he or she has refused to repent, then the Elders shall inform the church and the congregation thereof at a regularly scheduled worship service in order that the church may call the erring individual to repentance. If the erring individual demonstrates repentance, then notice to that effect may be given at a regularly scheduled worship service. If, however, the erring individual does not repent in response to the church in its collective call to repentance, then;
  - d. he or she shall be publicly dismissed from the fellowship and/or membership of the church and the congregation thereof at a regularly scheduled worship service (Matthew 18:17b). If the erring individual, after such dismissal, heeds the warning, demonstrates repentance, and requests reinstatement before the Board of Elders, then he or she shall be publicly restored to all the rights, duties, privileges, and responsibilities of fellowship and/or membership.
3. At the discretion of the Elders, any situation involving false doctrine or divisive or egregious behavior of a member or attendee which may compromise the physical or spiritual safety and well-being of the congregation (Romans 16:17; Titus 1:10-11, 3:10-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, 9-12), the Elders reserve the right to notify any persons not to be present on church premises and/or church functions until such a period of time that is deemed necessary by the Elders, and /or proceed directly to the third or fourth stage of church discipline as defined by the previous two paragraphs.

4. The members of this church, and all other professing Christians who regularly attend or fellowship with this church, agree that there shall be no appeal to any court because of the dismissal or because of public statements to the congregation at the third or fourth stages of church discipline. Members who are under discipline by the church as defined in the previous paragraphs, forfeit and waive the right to resign from this church.

### **Section 7 – Termination of Membership**

Church membership shall be terminated when:

1. A member unites with another church unless dual membership is approved by the Elders.
2. A member in good standing voluntarily requests withdrawal from the membership roll, unless undergoing discipline process above [Matthew 18:12-18, see #4 below if the member is not attending any church].
3. A member's discipline process does not result in restoration
4. A member is voluntarily absent from regularly attending this church's worship services over the course of one (1) year, except where providentially hindered (by work or health, etc.) or unless active absent status has been granted per Article VII, Sec. 2.C. If a member for other reasons is not regularly attending any church for consecutive weeks or months, the member will be sought out and encouraged to be in a church, and if necessary, elders may ask our church to encourage the absent member to be restored to fellowship before terminating their membership, in the spirit of Hebrews 10:24-25, Galatians 6:1-2, and Matthew 18:12-13.

### **ARTICLE VIII – ORDINANCES:**

This church shall regularly observe the ordinances of Baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper as commanded by the Lord Jesus Christ for believers (Matthew 28:19; Luke 22:19-20; and 1 Corinthians 11:23-26).

### **ARTICLE IX - MEETINGS:**

#### **Section 1 – Worship:**

Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day, and may be held throughout the week as the Elders determine.

#### **Section 2 – Members Meetings:**

1. In every meeting together, members shall act in that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.
2. Membership in this church shall not vest in any member any proprietary rights in the Corporation, but shall entitle the member to vote at a meeting of the members on those matters that the Board of Elders chooses to submit to the church membership for affirmation. In such cases, voting privileges are restricted to members present who are in good standing, who are not under any disciplinary action.

3. Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those members present. All votes shall be tallied based on the number of votes cast by members present.
4. An Elder designated by the Elders shall preside as moderator at all members' meetings of the church. The Elders shall see that the stated meetings of the church are regularly held and that required reports are submitted to the church by the responsible members.
5. A regular annual meeting of the church members shall be held at the church each year. At the regular annual meeting, the members shall consider reports of the affairs of the church, and transact other business as the Elders determine, including a vote of affirmation for Elders, Deacons, and other officers as determined by the Elders. Acquisition or sale of real property or incurring of indebtedness relating to church properties shall also require a vote of affirmation at regular or special members' meetings.
6. Notification and pertinent information shall be made available at least two weeks prior to meetings.
7. At any regular or special members' meeting, officers may be elected, positions filled, or business conducted so long as all relevant constitutional requirements have been met.
8. Those affirmed may immediately take office.
9. Special business meetings may be called as required by the Elders.
10. These Bylaws may be amended and new or additional Bylaws may be made at any time by unanimous approval by the Board of Elders. All changes shall be presented to the members for a vote of affirmation per Article IX, Section 2.5-2.7 (Acts 15:6, 22).

#### **ARTICLE X - DEACONS:**

The Deacons are recognized servants who shall aid the Elders so that the Elders may be devoted to prayer and the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:1-7; I Tim. 3:8-10, 12-13; Phil. 1:1). These officers shall aid in the physical and spiritual care of the church, and perform other duties under the direction of the Board of Elders. Deacons and Elders shall work together in a collaborative fashion to effectively meet the needs of the congregation.

#### **Section 1 – Nomination and Selection of Deacons**

1. Recommendations to fill the office of Deacon may be submitted by the congregation to the Elders for consideration (cf. Acts 6:3, 5-6).
2. The Elders shall consider prospective nominees and evaluate their qualifications and character by Scripture (1 Timothy 3), examining with much care and prayer to discern whom God has set apart for service (1 Timothy 3:10; cf. Acts 1:24, 13:2-3, 14:23).
3. A list of candidates unanimously approved by the Elders shall be posted at least two weeks prior to a congregational meeting to allow adequate evaluation of the candidates (1 Timothy 3:10) so as not to appoint any man inappropriately or hastily (1 Timothy 5:22).
4. New candidates shall be presented to the congregation for affirmation of the decision of the Elders (cf. Acts 15:6, 22).

5. Newly affirmed Deacons shall be appointed publicly to office.
6. Each Deacon shall serve until the next annual meeting and must be reaffirmed each year (1 Timothy 3:13, cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:11-13).

**Section 2 – Qualifications:** They shall be godly men who have been set apart by the Holy Spirit, and show evidence of the divine qualifications listed in Scripture (I Timothy 3:8-10, 12-13; cf. Acts 6:3). They must be church members and have demonstrated concern for the Lord's people and the Lord's work.

**Section 3 – Removal and Resignation:** Any Deacon may resign at any time upon giving written notice to the Board of Elders. He may be removed from office at any meeting of the Board of Elders if he is found to be physically or mentally incapacitated or spiritually unqualified (according to pertinent Scripture, including 1 Timothy 3:8-10, 12-13; cf. Acts 6:3), after a thorough investigation by the Elders (at the sole discretion of the Elders), in accord with the procedures prescribed by pertinent Scripture, including Matthew 18:15-18 and Galatians 6:1-2.

**Section 3 – Deacons Meetings:** The Deacons may elect a chairman, and meet as needed in order to coordinate their service responsibilities. They shall maintain communication with the congregation and with the Board of Elders as to the needs of the church.

**Section 4 - Number:** There shall be a plurality of Deacons (cf. Acts 6:3; Philippians 1:1).

#### **ARTICLE XI – OTHER OFFICERS:**

Elders may appoint officers qualified by 1 Timothy 3 as the business of the Corporation may require and may remove officers, by unanimous decision of Elder Board. Officers may also resign in writing to the Elders.

##### **Section 1 – Office of Corporation Secretary**

- a. The Corporation Secretary shall keep, or cause to be kept at the principle office of the Corporation, a book of minutes of all meetings of church members, and any other meetings where recording of business transactions are appropriate. The book of minutes shall be made available to any member of the congregation upon request.
- b. The Corporation Secretary shall give, or cause to be given, notice of all the congregational meetings and any committees thereof required by these Bylaws or by law to be given, and shall have other powers and perform other duties as prescribed by the Elders.
- c. The Corporation Secretary shall keep, or cause to be kept at the principle office of the Corporation, a church membership register, or a duplicated membership register, showing the names of the members and their addresses.

##### **Section 2. Office of Corporation Treasurer**

- a. The Treasurer shall assist the Elders to ensure the stewardship of the physical and financial resources of the Corporation, “taking precaution that no one should discredit us in our administration... for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men” (2 Cor. 8:20-21; cf. 1 Cor. 4:1-2).



- b. The Treasurer shall ensure that all financial activities and transactions are consistent with these Bylaws as well as the California Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law.
- c. The Treasurer shall keep and maintain, or cause to be kept and maintained, adequate and correct accounts of the properties and business transactions of the Corporation. The books of account shall at all reasonable times be open to inspection by any Elder as provided in the California Nonprofit Religious Corporation Law. A summary of monthly income and expenses shall be made available to any member.
- d. The Treasurer shall deposit, or cause to be deposited, all monies and other valuables in the name and to the credit of the Corporation with such depositories as may be designated by the Board of Elders. The Treasurer shall disburse, or cause to be disbursed, the funds of the Corporation as may be ordered by the Board of Elders, shall render, or cause to be rendered, to the Chairman and the Elders, whenever they request it, an account of all the transactions and of the financial condition of the Corporation, and shall have other powers and perform other duties as may be prescribed by the Board of Elders. The financial records shall be available at all times for verification or review as deemed necessary by the Board of Elders. The person conducting such work shall prepare and sign a statement of its findings and present it to the Board of Elders.

#### **ARTICLE XII – BIBLICAL FINANCIAL STEWARDSHIP:**

This church shall follow the principles of Scripture in all areas of financial stewardship. The ministry of this church is the Lord's work, and shall be supported by the Lord's people who appropriate His resources through faith (Hebrews 11; Philippians 4:19) and prayer (Luke 11:9-10; James 4:3) and give to the ministry of this church. Full expression of the church's financial needs shall be made to the congregation. As God has established this work, we shall look to Him to maintain it. In our giving, "Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver" (2 Corinthians 9:7). The New Testament principles of stewardship (Luke 16:10-12; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2, 7) shall be used as the principles of our giving (2 Corinthians 8 & 9; Acts 20:35; Luke 6:38).

#### **ARTICLE XIII - CHURCH STAFF PASTORS:**

**Section 1. Staff Pastors:** The Pastors shall be Elders and shall perform the duties of an Elder described in Article VI, Section 2 and other duties as directed by the Board of Elders (1 Timothy 5:17-18). The Pastors shall arrange for and/or conduct all regular and special services of the church. In the absence of the Pastors, the Board of Elders shall be responsible to arrange for all regular and special services of the church.

**Section 2. Pastor-Teacher:** The Pastor-Teacher shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the ministry of preaching and teaching. The primary responsibility of the pastor-teacher as undershepherd is to use his gifts and abilities to prepare God's people for the work of ministry (Ephesians 4:11-13; 1 Timothy 4:13, 2 Timothy 4:1-2). He shall be an ex officio member of all boards, committees, and auxiliary organizations of the church, and shall have general oversight of the spiritual welfare of the church.

**Section 3. Selection and Call:** The Board of Elders shall select a candidate. Upon approval by the Board of Elders he shall be presented to the congregation for affirmation.

**Section 4. Term of Service:** He shall remain in office for an indefinite term and shall not be subject to the annual re-affirmation requirement.

**Section 5. Resignation:** When a pastor resigns, thirty days notice shall be given in writing to the Board of Elders, unless waived.

**Section 6. Termination:** If the other Elders unanimously discern that the services of a pastor should be terminated (following the biblical principles in Article VI, Section 2.E), they shall give him thirty days written notice before dismissal.

#### **ARTICLE XIV - ORDINATION, LICENSING, AND COMMISSIONING:**

**Section 1. Ordination:** Ordination refers to the public appointing of a man to the ministry based on unanimous recognition by the Board of Elders of his call to the ministry, preparation as a shepherd, and qualification to serve. Ordination shall be conferred for life, so long as he continues to manifest the qualifications of the office.

**Section 2. Licensing:** A license may be issued by the Board of Elders and given in recognition of a man's call to pastoral ministry. Its aim is to allow a man to perform the ecclesiastical duties and functions of the church. Licenses may be granted for a specified period of time and may be reissued or revoked at the discretion of the Board of Elders.

**Section 3. Commissioning:** Where appropriate, a member may be commissioned by the Board of Elders for ministry. This authorization continues as long as the opportunity to minister remains in effect and as long as he or she maintains ministry qualifications.

#### **ARTICLE XV - DISPUTE RESOLUTION:**

The Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with others both inside and outside the church, therefore the church shall require its members to resolve conflict according to biblically based principles (Romans 12:17-21, Matthew 5:23-25; Mark 11:25; Matthew 18:15-20; Galatians 6:1-2; 1 Corinthians 6:1-8). In any dispute arising among church members, pastors, or staff pertaining to any matter of the church's teaching, practices, finances or property, the dispute shall be resolved by the Board of Elders. After prayerful consideration, in a spirit of humility, with each regarding one another before himself and striving to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Philippians 2:3-11; Ephesians 4:1-3), a decision shall be reached by the Elders.

#### **ARTICLE XVI - DISSOLUTION:**

This Corporation does not contemplate pecuniary gain to the members thereof, and is organized solely for non-profit purposes. Therefore, if this Corporation is dissolved, all assets shall be given to an organization of similar purpose which has a tax exempt status at such time.

## **ARTICLE XVII – Statement of Faith on Marriage, Sexuality, and Sanctity of Life:**

We teach the term “marriage” has only one meaning and that is marriage sanctioned by God which joins one man and one woman, as created by God, in a single, exclusive union (Matt. 19:4-9), in a public, formal and officially recognized covenant (Mal. 2:14, Prov. 2:17), to picture Christ and His bride, the church (Eph. 5:22-33). We teach God designed sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other (Heb. 13:4), and that departures from God's design are sinful, including adultery, fornication, homosexual or bisexual or transsexual conduct, incest, pornography, etc. (1 Thess 4:3-8; Matt. 5:28; Rom. 1:24–32; 1 Cor. 5:1, 6:9-10; Lev. 18:1–30; Deut. 22:5). We teach while these and other sins are offensive to God, there is redemption and forgiveness through Jesus Christ for all who confess and forsake their sin to follow Christ, and we teach every forgiven sinner "in Christ" is a "new creation" (1 Cor. 6:9–11; 2 Cor. 5:17; Acts 3:19-20; Pr. 28:13; Ps. 103:3, 12; Col. 2:13–14, 3:5-10).

We teach that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female, and that these two distinct, complementary sexes/genders together reflect the image and nature of God, and this biblical and biological design is not to be rejected (Gen. 1:26-27). We teach the dignity and sanctity of all human life, including the pre-born, the aged, the physically or mentally challenged, and every other stage or condition from conception through natural death (Gen. 9:6; Ps. 139:13-16). We teach every person as created in God's image must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity, and we teach that hate or harassment of individuals is to be repudiated as contrary to Scripture (Jas. 3:9-10, 2:8-9). We teach that the faithful proclamation of the Scripture, including the call to repentance for sin, does not constitute hate speech, or hateful and harassing behavior, but is instead a fundamental part of our loving mission to the world (Lev. 19:17-18; Matt. 28:16–20; Acts 20:27; 2 Cor. 5:11–20; 2 Tim. 4:1–2).

*Other doctrinal standards ("What We Believe" and "What We Teach") and policies and practice of our church in relation to them are available through our church office.*

## **ARTICLE XVIII: ADOPTION**

This Constitution was adopted in October, 1980.

This Constitution was amended in October, 1995.

This Constitution was amended in December, 2008 (purpose statement, elders, deacons)

This Constitution was amended in December, 2016 (XVII Statement)

This Constitution was amended in November, 2023 (IX.2.5 omit “last quarter of year”)