

# Discover Church

## *Forest, Virginia* **Constitution and Bylaws**

**January 2008**

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# PREAMBLE

The purpose of this document is threefold:

First, this document is a public record clearly stating the name, purpose, position, Articles of Faith, government, policies and the procedures of this church.

Second, this document is for the preservation of this church. This constitution is a blockade that acts as the first line of defense against those who want to harm this sacred institution. This document systematically identifies what Discover Church believes to be true according to its interpretation of the Word of God.

Third, this document is a practical guide to aid the leadership of this church as they attempt to govern their flock in a decent and orderly manner.

This church endeavors to be a church of the Lord Jesus Christ, as described, established and mandated by the New Testament. Therefore, this constitution is not meant to supersede the Word of God, it is simply a systematic review of the truths found in the Bible concerning the purpose, governance and operation of the local church. When a conflict or ambiguity exists with regard to this document, deference is to be given to the Bible to resolve the conflict or ambiguity. With this document we shall, by God's grace, endeavor to properly practice Biblical Christianity.

## **SECTION ONE**

### ***Name***

The name of this congregation shall be called Discover Church.

## **SECTION TWO**

### ***Church Founding***

The reason to start Discover Church in this area known as Forest Virginia was founded on two points.

First, through fellowship with Michael Zea, the pastor, Darren Holland, felt called by God to use the gifts he has been given to equip other Christians for godly living by teaching them verse by verse through Scripture. Both Darren and Michael felt this to be a lost art in the church today, which is evident in the lack of biblical understanding by God's people. The Word of God is what changes people's lives and therefore this church believes that teaching God's Word is one of its fundamental responsibilities.

Second, the community was hungry for a church that would allow different age groups to worship comfortably in a non-traditional setting. Families and singles alike desired contemporary praise and worship that fit their time and era.

With that, Discover Church was created. This is a church that desires to reach an ever changing world and understands that its methodology must also change if it is to have an impact in its community. Additionally, Discover Church believes the Bible to be relevant for **all times** and believes it is **the only standard** to be taught for life and godliness.

Therefore, Discover Church had its first service on April 23, 2006. It met in the Forest Recreational Center in Forest Virginia and had 17 people attend.

## SECTION THREE

### *Position*

This is a non-denominational (independent) church (see Articles of Faith) subject only to Jesus Christ as the Head of the church, which operates as a tax exempt organization meant to engage in religious, charitable and educational purposes. Any cooperation, fellowship or partnership with other churches, associations, schools or mission agencies is entirely voluntary.

## SECTION FOUR

### *Why does this church exist?*

Discover Church is here in this community to teach, equip, and empower God's people with the faithful verse-by-verse teaching of The Scriptures. We believe the teaching of God's Word is the highest form of worship, and it alone, through the Holy Spirit, is what will change our lives.

*"All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." - 2 Timothy 3:16-17*

*"For the word of God is living and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart." - Hebrews 4:12*

Even though we do offer a worship service that might be recognized as more casual than some, we don't believe it should be watered down in order to make everyone comfortable. We do not exist to be a theater, or any other means of entertainment, but a place where believers are challenged to live out their faith, thereby glorifying His Name and making Him known to a world that is in desperate need of a Savior.

Furthermore, Discover Church aims to be a Light in the community, by demonstrating the Love of God through acts of service, meeting needs, and sharing the gospel of Jesus Christ.

## **SECTION FIVE**

### ***Articles of Faith***

#### **Article 1: *The Scriptures***

We believe the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments as originally written were verbally inspired (God-breathed) and penned by Spirit-controlled men. The Bible is without error, infallible and is the final authority in faith and life. We believe the Word of God to be the true center of Christian union and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions shall be tried.

Psalms 19:7-11, Prov. 30:5-6, John 10:34-35, Romans 15:4, 2 Tim. 3:16-17, 2 Pet. 1:19-21.

#### **Article 2: *The Trinity***

We believe there is one, and only one, living and true God, an infinite, intelligent Spirit, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth. He is inexpressibly glorious in holiness, and worthy of all possible honor, confidence and love. We believe that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, yet having one nature. The Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, are equal in all the divine attributes and execute distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of creation and redemption.

Ex. 20:2-3, Deut. 6:4, Matt. 28:18-20, 1 Cor. 8:6; 2 Cor. 13:14, Rev. 4:11.  
Christ is called God (John 1:1, Rom 9:5, Titus 2:13, 1 John 5:20)  
Holy Spirit is called God (Acts 5:3-9, 2 Cor 3:17 (Lord))

#### **Article 3: *God the Father***

We believe God the Father is an infinite, eternal, all powerful, all knowing Spirit, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth.

Gen. 1:1, Psalm 139:7-10, Isaiah 46:9, Romans 11:33, Ephesians 4:6, 1 Timothy 1:17, Revelation 19:6.

#### **Article 4: *God the Son – Jesus Christ***

We believe God chose His only begotten Son to be the mediator between God and man, the Prophet, Priest and King, Head and Savior of the church, the heir of all things, the Judge of the world. He, being very and eternal God, the brightness of the Father's glory, equal with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit. He also made the world and upholds and governs all things, took upon Him man's nature, with all the essential and common infirmities thereof, yet without sin.

Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit in a miraculous manner, born of Mary, a virgin, as no other man was ever born or can ever be born of woman. Jesus was born with two perfect and yet distinct natures, human and divine, inseparably joined together in one person without conversion, composition, or confusion, yet one and therefore He is both the Son of God and God the Son.

Jesus lived a life of absolute sinlessness, and in His death made a full and sacrificial atonement for our sins, dying not as a martyr, but as a voluntary substitute in the sinners' place. We believe Jesus rose bodily on the third day and ascended into heaven where He now sits at the right hand of the Father as our High Priest, interceding and preparing a place for us.

Ps 2:6, Isa. 7:14, Matt 1:18-25, 28:6-7, Mark 16:6, 19, Luke 1:33-35, 24:2-6, 24:39, 51, John 1:14, 34, 5:22, 27, 20:27, Acts 1:9-11, 3:22, Rom. 8:3, 9:5, 1 Cor. 15:4, Gal. 4:4, Eph. 1:20-23, Col. 1:16-18, 1 Tim. 2:5, Heb 2:14, 16-18, 4:15, 5:5-6, 9, 8:6, 12:2, 1 Pet. 1:19-20, 1 John 2:1, 4:14-16, Rev. 3:21.

### **Article 5: *God the Holy Spirit***

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a divine person, equal with God the Father and God the Son, and is of the same nature. He was active in the creation and in His relation to the unbelieving world. He convicts of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; and He bears witness to the Truth of the Gospel in preaching and testimony. The Holy Spirit is the agent in the New Birth who indwells, fills, seals, guides, teaches, comforts, witnesses, sanctifies and helps the believer conform to the image of Christ. He is also the giver of spiritual gifts that He distributed according to His will. The Holy Spirit's primary ministry is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ.

Gen. 1:1-2, Matt. 28:19, Mark 1:8, Luke 1:35, Luke 24:49, John 1:33, 3:5-6, 14:16-17, 14:26, 16:8-15, Acts 5:30-32, 11:16, Rom. 8:14-16, 26, 27, 12:6-8, 1 Cor. 12-14, Eph. 1:13-14, 5:18, Heb. 2:4, 9:14, 1 Pet. 4:10.

### **Article 6: *Angels***

We believe in the existence of angels who were created by God to serve Him and bring honor and glory to His name. Angels who have chosen to follow God are ministers for Him on behalf of those who have trusted in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior.

Ps 91:11, 103:20, Col. 1:16, Heb. 1:14, 1 Peter 1:12, Rev. 19:16-20.

Sadly, some angels chose to follow Satan when he rose up against God. These "fallen angels" are now called demons and some are presently functioning in Satan's counterfeit system as rulers of darkness. Followers of Jesus are instructed and empowered to resist these agents of evil through the armor of God and His Word.

## **Article 7: *Satan and His Demons***

We believe that angels were created by God to worship, serve and honor Him. But Lucifer, a high ranking angel, chose to rebel against God. With great pride he desired to be equal and even above Almighty God and was cast down from heaven with a great host of other angels. Lucifer is now referred to as Satan and the fallen angels are now referred to as demons.

We believe Satan, the “god of this age” and “the prince of the power of the air,” is currently the power of all darkness and evil. We hold him to be man’s great tempter, the enemy of God, the accuser of the saints, the author of all false religions and the chief power behind the present apostasy in our world. He is the lord of the antichrist and of all the followers of darkness who are destined for final defeat at the hand of God’s Son and for the judgment of the eternal Lake of Fire, a place prepared for Satan and his angels.

Psa. 34:7, Isa. 14:12-15, Zech. 3:1-2, Matt. 4:1-11, Matthew 17:18, 2 Cor. 4:4, Eph. 2:2, 6:11-13, 2 Thess. 2:9-10, 1 Timothy 4:1-2, Heb. 1:14, 2:14, 1 Peter 5:8-9, 2 Pet. 2:4, Jude 6, Rev. 12:7-9, 19:16-20, 20:10.

## **Article 8: *Creation***

We believe in the Genesis account of creation. We believe that account is to be accepted literally, not allegorically or figuratively. Also, we believe man was created directly in God’s own image and after His own likeness. Man’s creation was not a matter of evolution or evolutionary change of species, or development through periods of time from lower to higher form. In addition, we believe that all animal and vegetable life was also created directly by God, and that His established law was that each of these should bring forth only “after their own kind”.

Genesis 1, John 1:3, Hebrews 11:3, Revelation 10:6.

## **Article 9: *Man and His Fall***

We accept the Genesis account of the creation of man. Man came by direct creation of God and not from any previously existing form of life, and not by evolution. We believe that man was created in innocence under the law of his maker, but by voluntary transgression fell from his sinless state. Consequently, humankind are now sinners by nature and by choice, and therefore under just condemnation to eternal judgment and separation from God in a place called hell without defense or excuse.

Gen. 1:27, 3:1-6, 24, Isaiah 53:6, Romans 1:18, 32, 3:10-23, 5:12-19.

## **Article 10: *The Atonement for Sin***



We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace. Jesus, God's own Son, submitted to the Father and freely took upon man's nature, yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and by His death made a full and vicarious atonement for our sins. Jesus' atonement consisted not in setting up an example by His death as a martyr, but was a voluntary substitution of Himself in the sinner's place, "the just dying for the unjust". "Who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness – by whose stripes you were healed." Jesus is in every way qualified to be a suitable, compassionate and all-sufficient Savior.

2 Cor. 5:21, Eph. 2:8-9, Phil. 2:8, Heb. 7:25, 12:2, 1 Peter 2:24, 3:18, 1 John 2:2.

### **Article 11: *Salvation***

We believe the Scriptures teach that Christ died for the whole world and that salvation of sinners is divinely initiated, wholly of grace, and accomplished only through the mediatorial work of the Son of God. We believe that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth but his own inherent wickedness and voluntary rejection of the Gospel.

We believe that repentance and faith are solemn obligations and inseparable graces, brought about in our souls by the Spirit of God. Being deeply convicted of our guilt, helplessness, and the judgment to come, and realizing the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with genuine repentance, confessing our sin and receiving the Lord Jesus as our personal Savior. When a person receives Christ as his personal Lord and Savior, he is born again, regenerated by the power of the Holy Spirit and becomes the recipient of a new nature.

We believe that Christ secures salvation to all who put their trust in Him. Romans 3:24 states, *being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus*. Our justification, includes the pardon of sin, and the gift of eternal life on principles of Christ's righteousness. It is not given to us because of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood. Jesus Christ's righteousness is given to us. 2 Corinthians 5:21 states, *He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*.

Isa. 53:4-7, Isa. 53:11, Zech. 13:1, John 3:16, John 10:28-29, Acts 13:39, Acts 15:11, Acts 16:31, Rom. 3:24-25, 5:1, 9, 8:1; 8:35-39, 1 Cor. 15:3-4, Eph. 2:8, Phil. 1:6, 2:7-8, Heb. 2:14, 1 John 4:10, Jude 1.

### **Article 12: *The New Birth***

We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be born again and that the new birth is a new creation in Christ Jesus. Salvation is instantaneous and not a process. In the

new birth, the one dead in trespasses and in sins is made a partaker of the divine nature and receives eternal life, the free gift of God.

The new birth is brought about in a manner above our comprehension, not by culture, character, nor by the will of man, but solely by the power of the Holy Spirit. Evidence of the new birth appears in the fruits of repentance and faith, the newness of life and our voluntary obedience to the Word of God.

John 3:3, 6-8, Acts 16:30-33, Rom. 6:23, 2 Cor. 5:17, 19, Eph. 2:1, Col. 2:13, 2 Pet. 1:4, 1 John 5:1.

### **Article 13: *Eternal Security***

We believe all people who have exercised personal faith in the Lord Jesus Christ are completely pardoned and justified (declared righteous) and in possession of eternal life, which is eternally secure. We believe that all who are **truly “born again”** are regenerated by the Holy Spirit and are kept by God the Father for Jesus Christ.

The new birth is a one-time event just as physical birth is a one-time event. Eternal security is not based on how a person acts or feels towards God; the doctrine of eternal security is founded on justification. When a person trusts in the Lord Jesus Christ to save him he is justified by the blood of Christ, and saved from the wrath of God through Christ (Romans 4:25; 5:8-10). We are saved by God's grace, not by our works; therefore we cannot possibly keep our salvation by our works.

If by a persons words or actions they seem to have walked away from the Christian life, according to 1 Jn 2:19, this reveals they were never saved in the first place.

John 3:16, 36, 4:13-14, 5:24, 6:40, 51, 10:27-29, 11:25-26, 14:16, Rom 8:35-39, 2 Cor. 1:21-22, 5:5, Eph. 1:7, 13-14, Phil. 1:6, 2 Tim. 1:12, 1 Peter 1:3-5, 1 John 3:9, 5:11-13, Jude 24.

### **Article 14: *The Eternal State of the Saved and Unsav***

We believe there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked. People who trust in Jesus Christ as their personal Savior are justified (declared righteous) in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, sanctified by the Spirit of God and are made righteous in His sight. But everyone who continues in sin and unbelief are in God's sight wicked and remain under the curse of sin.

We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men. The souls of the redeemed (Christians) are, at death, absent from the body and present with the Lord where they consciously await the first resurrection, when the inner man and the outer man (the body) are reunited forever glorified with the Lord in Heaven. The souls of the unbelievers after death remain in conscious misery until the second resurrection, when the inner man and outer man are reunited, they shall appear before the Great White Throne Judgment. After the Great White Throne Judgment all unbelievers will be cast in the Lake of Fire,

not to be annihilated, but to suffer everlasting conscious punishment for their sins. The chief sin being the rejection of Jesus as their personal Savior.

Gen. 18:23, Prov. 14:32, Mal. 3:18, Matt. 25:34-41, 46, Luke 16:19-31, John 5:28-29, 8:21, Rom. 6:23, 2 Cor. 5:8-10, Phil. 1:23.

### **Article 15: *The Local Church***

We believe that a local church is a congregation of believers, associated by a covenant of faith and fellowship of the Gospel. They observe the ordinances of Christ, govern by His laws and exercise the gifts, rights and privileges invested in them by His Word.

There are two offices in the local church – elders (also called bishops or pastors) and deacons. The qualifications, claims and duties for elders and deacons are clearly defined in the Scriptures.

We hold that the local church has the absolute right of self-government, free from interference of any hierarchy, of any individuals or organizations, and that the one and only superintendent is Christ, through the Holy Spirit. We do believe it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other in contending for the faith and for the furtherance of the Gospel. But each local church has the right to judge the measure and method of its cooperation with other churches. On all matters of membership, policy, government, discipline and benevolence, the will of the local church is final.

Acts 2:41-47, 20:17-31, Eph. 1:22-23, 4:11-13, 5:23-24, Col. 1:18.

### **Article 16: *Baptism and the Lord's Supper***

We believe that Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water, done in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit. We hold that baptism is one of the two ordinances that Christ gave to the local church. Baptism should only be performed on a person who has given a clear testimony of faith in the crucified, buried and risen Savior Jesus Christ. As Christ died, was buried and rose again, Christian baptism pictures the believer's death, burial and resurrection to a new life in Christ.

We believe the Lord's Supper is the second ordinance given to the church by the Lord Jesus Christ. Communion is the commemoration of Christ's death and a celebration of His risen life. The bread represents His body that was broken for us, and the juice represents His blood that was shed for us. Believers, before partaking of these elements, are called upon to examine themselves, "for he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body."

In summary, we believe the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper were given by the Lord to the local church. Therefore, only believers are permitted to take part in the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. We are commanded to do these ordinances until our Lord returns.

Matt. 3:16, 28:19-20, John 3:23, Acts 8:36-39, Rom. 6:3-5, Matt 26:26-28, 1 Cor. 11:23-28.

### **Article 17: *Giving***

We believe God's method of financing His earthly work, which includes the work of the local church, its ministries, pastors, and its mission, is by the offerings of His people. Thus we believe that every Christian, as a steward of God, is responsible to support his local church financially, as God has blessed them. We understand that God is pleased when His children rally together and joyfully give to His church, its ministers and its ministries, "for God loves a cheerful giver". We believe that a Christian relinquishes all rights to direct the use of their offering once the gift has been made to the church.

Prov. 3:9-10, Acts 2:45, 4:34-37, 11:27-30, 1 Cor.16:2, 2 Cor. 8:1-9:7, Eph. 4:28, 1 Tim. 5:17-18, 1 John 3:17,

### **Article 18: *Missions***

We believe this church shall be a missionary in spirit and practice; meaning, we will be involved in missions at home and support those abroad. We believe that the command to give the Gospel to the world is clear and unmistakable and the Great Commission was given to every Christian and local church. Support for missionaries or mission projects shall be upon the approval of the Elder Board. This church also believes that giving to missions must be secondary to first providing for itself. The local church cannot support others unless it can first provide for itself.

Matt. 28:18-20, Mark 16:15, John 20:21, Rom. 10:13-15.

### **Article 19: *The Body of Christ***

We believe the Scriptures teach that the "Church which is His body" is the entire company of believers in Christ.

1 Cor. 12:12-13, 27, Eph. 1:22-23, 4:12, 5:23, Col 1:18, 24.

### **Article 20: *Marriage***

We believe that the home was the first institution God provided for man. We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture. Scripture teaches that Christians should only marry Christians and sex before or outside of marriage is a destructive sin. We believe that God hates divorce and intends marriage to last until one of the spouses dies.

Because God has ordained marriage and defined it as the covenant relationship between a man, a woman, and Himself, we will only recognize marriages between a biological man and a biological woman. Further, the pastor and staff of Discover Church shall only participate in weddings and celebrate marriages between one man and one woman. Finally, the facilities and property of Discover Church shall only host weddings between one man and one woman.

Gen. 2:18-24, Mal. 2:14-16, Matt. 19:1-9, Mark 10:9, Rom. 1:18-27, 7:1-3, Eph. 5:22-23, 1 Cor 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb 13:4

## **Article 21: Gender, and Sexuality**

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female, according to His will. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, and use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God.

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of Discover Church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to those that attend, its members, and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by Discover Church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by this Statement on Marriage, and Gender and Sexuality.

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of Discover Church.

Gen. 1:26-27, 2:24, 19:5,13, Lev. 18:1-30, Rom. 1:26-29, 1 Cor. 5:1; 6:9-11, 1 Thess. 4:1-8, Heb.13:4. Matt. 5:16, 15:18-20, Phil. 2:14-16; 1 Thess. 5:22 Acts 3:19-21, Rom 10:9-10, Mark 12:28-31, Luke 6:31

## **Article 22: Sanctity of Human Life**

We believe that all human life is sacred from fertilization throughout the entire natural human life; that human beings are created in God's image and, as such are to be protected; that the weak, vulnerable, infirm, handicapped, pre-born, and needy deserve our respect and our care.

Gen. 1:26, 9:6, Psalm 51:5, 82:3-4, 139:13-16, Jer. 1:5, Luke 1:41.

### **Article 23: *Civil Government***

We believe that civil government is of divine appointment for the interests and good order of human society. Governing officials are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored and obeyed, except in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Ex 18:21-22, Dan 3:17-18, Matt. 10:28, 22:19-21, Jn 19:10-11, Acts 4:18-20, 5:27-29, 23:5, Rom. 13:1-7, Titus 3:1, 1 Pet 2:13-17

### **Article 24: *Future Events***

We believe in the “Blessed Hope,” the personal, imminent appearance of the Lord Jesus Christ to rapture all believers of the Church before the Great Tribulation. *For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.* (1 Thess. 4:16-17).

Jn 14:1-3, 1 Cor. 15:51-52, 2 Thess. 2:1-2, Titus 2:13, 1 John 3:2.

We believe that every saved person of the Church Age will appear at the Judgment Seat of Christ to be judged by the Lord in regard to his service and receive rewards according to his works.

Matt. 6:2-4, Rom. 14:10, 1 Cor. 3:11-15, 2 Cor. 5:10.

We believe that the Tribulation Period and the Battle of Armageddon will culminate in the glorious Second Coming of Jesus Christ to establish a physical, earthly, millennial reign. Christ will literally rule on the earth from the throne of David for a thousand years. At the close of the millennium Satan will be loosed, the nations will revolt, and Satan will be eternally cast into the Lake of Fire.

We believe the Great White Throne Judgment will follow the Millennium period and will be a final judgment on unbelievers. After the unbelievers are judged and their names are not found written in the Book of Life they will be cast into the Lake of Fire – which is the second death. The righteous will worship and serve God forever.

Isaiah 9:6-7, Isa. 11, Zech. 14, Dan. 7-12.

Matt. 22:8-14, Matt. 24, Mark 13, Luke 1:32, 33, Luke 21, John 14:1-4, Acts 1:11, 2:29-36, 1 Cor. 15:20-53, Phil. 3:20-21, 1 Thess. 4:13-18, 2 Thess. 1:6-12, Rev. 6, Rev. 12-22.

## SECTION SIX

### *Officers*

#### A. Elders

We believe the church should be committed to the teachings of the Bible. No other authority or tradition is to guide the means, faith or structure of the Lord Jesus Christ's church. With this important fact in mind, God's people must realize that within the New Testament model of church organization, authority for leadership is not granted to:

- An individual pastor.
- Nor is the authority for leadership of the church given to deacons.
- Likewise, democratic rule by the congregation is not the biblical model for local church government.

Instead, the Scripture gives the authority for the leadership of the local church to a plurality of leaders called "elders" (bishops, pastors, overseers). These elders will be appointed by the pastor and other elders who are serving at that present time.

#### **Here are just a few of the references stating this truth:**

Acts 14:23 – When they had appointed **elders** for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.

Acts 15:6 – The apostles and the **elders** came together to look into this matter.

Acts 16:4 – Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees which had been decided upon by the apostles and **elders** who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe.

Acts 20:17 – From Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called to him the **elders** of the church.

I Timothy 5:17 – The **elders** who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.

Titus 1:5 – For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint **elders** in every city as I directed you.

James 5:14 – Is anyone among you sick? *Then* he must call for the **elders** of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.

I Peter 5:1 – Therefore, I exhort the **elders** among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed.

Acts 20:28 – Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you **overseers**, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.

Phil 1:1 - Paul and Timothy, bond-servants of Christ Jesus. To all the saints in Christ Jesus who are in Philippi, including the **overseers** and deacons

I Peter 5:2 – Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as **overseers**, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly.

## 1. Description of Elders:

These leaders are known by three titles, each of which reveals a separate aspect of their function.

- They are first called “**elders.**” An elder (Greek “presbuteros”) is a godly leader, whose wisdom and maturity are respected by God’s people.
- Next, these are men who give oversight. That is, they are “**overseers**” (Greek “episkapos”). An overseer is a person who is a good manager of resources and guardian of people.
- Finally, these leaders are called “shepherds,” which is also translated as “**pastors**” (Greek “Poimain”). This word refers to the role of caring for and leading the flock.

### All three titles are used in 1 Peter 5:1-2

Therefore, I exhort the **elders** (Greek “presbuteros”) among you, as *your* fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, **shepherd** (Greek “Poimain”) the flock of God among you, exercising **oversight** (Greek “episkapos”) not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to *the will of God*; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness

### Basically, an elder’s assignment falls into four major categories.

First, these men are given both the responsibility and authority to skillfully and lovingly **lead the flock** (Acts 20:28; 1 Thess. 5:12; Heb. 13:17). Elders are God’s stewards (Titus 1:7), or household managers. A steward is officially responsible to oversee his master’s servants, property, and his finances. Elders are responsible to God for the local church. They are to lead in practical matters (Acts 11:29-30). They are to lead in matters of doctrine (Acts 15; 16:4). As authoritative figures (Heb. 13:17), they are also to guide in matters of discipline and character

Second, they are to **feed the flock** (1 Thess. 5:12, 1 Tim. 3:2, 5:17, Titus 1:9), offering accurate and insightful teaching of the Scripture.



Third, they are to **care for the flock** (Acts 20:35, Heb. 13:17, James 5:14-15). This care is shown in the love, concern, prayers, ministry and skilled management of church resources.

Finally, they are to **protect the flock**. A major part of the elder's work is to protect the local church from false teachers, from harmful influences and wrong beliefs (Acts 15:6; 20:17-31, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:2-3).

Elders do not form a separate "clergy class" of Christians. Instead, the elders, some of whom fill church vocational roles, others non-vocational roles, are brothers with the people, always seeking God's best for the members of the church. (Acts 14:23, 2 Cor. 8:16-19, Titus 1:5).

The New Testament clearly teaches that the church is to be lead by plurality of godly men. Men who choose to be an elder must meet specific moral and spiritual qualifications before they serve (1 Tim. 3:1-7). They must be motivated and empowered by the Holy Spirit to do their work (Acts 20:28).

## **2. Qualifications of Elders:**

Each elder must have a "calling" from God to this office. The qualifications for an elder are described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. He must be:

- a. Blameless as a steward of God; above reproach (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:6-7);
- b. Husband of one wife; a one-woman man (1 Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6);
- c. Temperate, sober, vigilant (1 Tim. 3:2);
- d. Sober-minded, prudent (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:8);
- e. Of good behavior; orderly, respectable (1 Tim. 3:2);
- f. Given to hospitality (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:8);
- g. Able to teach; he can exhort believers and refute false teaching (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:9);
- h. Not given to much wine (1 Tim. 3:3, Titus 1:7);
- i. Not violent; not antagonistic or quarrelsome (1 Tim. 3:3, Titus 1:7);
- j. Gentle, patient, moderate (1 Tim. 3:3);
- k. Peaceable, not a brawler; uncontentious (1 Tim. 3:3, Titus 1:7);
- l. Not a lover of money (1 Tim. 3:3, Titus 1:7);

- m. Manages his house well. His children believe; not accused of rebellion to himself or God (1 Tim. 3:4, Titus 1:6);
- n. Not a new convert or immature believer (1 Tim. 3:6);
- o. Has a good report or reputation with people outside the church (1 Tim. 3:7);
- p. Not self-willed (Titus 1:7);
- q. Lover of what is good (Titus 1:8);
- r. Just, fair (Titus 1:8);
- s. Holy, devout (Titus 1:8);
- t. Self-controlled (Titus 1:8).

The only additional qualification a man must meet to be considered for the eldership is length of time in church. This is to be determined on a case-by-case basis by the current residing Elder Board. The Scripture does not give any age limits or any educational requirements for the office of an elder.

### **3. Duties of Elders:**

The Elder Board has the authority, according to the Bible, to oversee all the spiritual and administrative activities of the church, unless specifically stated otherwise in this constitution.

The Elder Board is ultimately responsible for the ministries of the church, visiting members, caring and praying for the sick, preparing the ordinances, and equipping the saints for the work of the ministry.

The Elder Board shall have supervision over all legal and fiscal affairs of the church.

- a. The Elders shall not enjoin the church to any organization without a 100% unified vote of the board.
- b. The Elder Board shall have the authority to control the expenditures of the budget.
  - The Elder Board shall keep accurate financial records for the church.
  - The Elder Board shall maintain the membership rolls (if membership is enacted)
  - The Elder Board shall oversee all paid and volunteer workers.

- The Elder Board shall approve all potential elders, deacons and church staff.
- The Elder Board is able to delegate their authority to others who are qualified for leadership of a church ministry.

God's Word says the local church is to be governed by elders, and they are responsible for the spiritual welfare of the body. Therefore, the Elder Board needs the prayers, support (1 Tim. 5:17-18) and assent of members (Heb. 13:17). This church is called by God to honor their Elder Board and to protect them against false accusations (1 Tim. 5:19). Finally, if an elder falls into sin, and continues in sin, he must be publicly rebuked (1 Tim. 5:20).

#### **4. Selection of Elders:**

The steps for selecting an elder are:

Step One - A man should express his desire to become an elder to the Elder Board (1 Tim. 3:1).

Step Two - The candidate must complete and submit an Elder Questionnaire to the Elder Board.

Step Three - The Elder Board should examine the potential elder's calling and qualifications. The appointment of a man to serve as an elder is a solemn and serious matter (1 Tim. 5:21-22). Therefore, the Elder Board shall earnestly, without any haste, bias or partiality, seek God's will with regard to the potential elder's appointment to the Elder Board.

Step Four - If the Elder Board agrees with the potential elder that he is truly called and meets the biblical qualifications then the Elder Board will vote on this matter and must have a 100% unified vote in order for this man to be affirmed as an additional elder.

Step Five - If the affirmation vote is favorable then the new elder is brought before the congregation where the elders lay hands on him, and pray for his new ministry of overseeing the flock of God (1 Tim. 5:17-25).

#### **5. Operation of Elders**

- a. The Board of Elders shall consist of godly **men** from the church membership.
- b. There will not be a set minimum or maximum number of Elders.
- c. The Board of Elders shall be made up of both salaried pastors and laymen.
- d. A man appointed to the Elder Board by the church can serve as long as he desires, functions properly in the office, and remains biblically qualified.

Any elder can be removed from office if he becomes incapacitated, spiritually unqualified or his inability to serve is established in the minds of the remainder of the Elder Board. For an elder to be removed from office, there must be a unified vote of the elder board.

- e. The Board of Elders shall meet (also call or virtual) as they deem it necessary to discuss and oversee the business of the church.
- f. The Elder Board shall appoint a Chairman, Vice-Chairman and a Secretary as the size of the congregation increases.  
Neither the Senior Pastor nor a staff pastor can hold any of these positions.

## **6. Senior Pastor**

### **a. Description and Duties**

“Senior Pastor” is not a phrase used in Scripture, but is a title used in this document to identify a unique elder. The Senior Pastor has two primary responsibilities: preaching/teaching the Word and providing leadership to the other elders on the Elder Board. He is called to skillfully use the Bible to grow faith in believer’s lives. And, he is to guide the other elders in the difficult task of equipping the saints to do the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:11).

In addition to his two primary responsibilities of preaching/teaching the Word and leading and advising the other elders, the Senior Pastor has other responsibilities, which include:

- Seeking godly leadership, vision, goal setting, and direction for the church.
- Arranging the public and regular services of the church.
- Administering the two ordinances of the church.
- Overseeing the paid and volunteer staff ministering at the church.
- Conducting weddings and funerals.
- The Senior Pastor shall be an “official member” of any and all church committees

### **b. Qualifications**

In addition to the biblical qualifications listed under the heading “Elders” from 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, a man desiring the office of Senior Pastor must:

1. Be able to show a history of spiritual maturity and leadership from previous ministries (2 Tim. 2:2, James 3:13-18).
2. Demonstrate a servant attitude, a passion for ministry and a mind to work (Phil. 2, Gal. 5:22-23, Neh. 4:6). He must avoid trends and new doctrines (2 Tim. 1:13, 2:16, 3:13-17).
3. Preach and teach in a biblical and applicable manner (2 Tim 3:16-17). He must seek to minimize any dependence on human wisdom, personality and man-made methods for accomplishing the work of the Lord.
4. Love God supremely and love others as himself (Luke 10:27).
5. Feel a definite call to shepherd the flock of God.
6. Seek in his entire ministry to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and to promote loyalty to Him before seeking loyalty for church, denomination or self (Col. 1:18).
7. Subscribe to the church's Constitution/Bylaws, Covenant and Statements of Faith.

c. Selection

Senior Pastor candidates shall be selected by the elder board and with their unified choosing, a maximum of 5 men or women from the Active membership.

This group will seek candidates, pray for the Lord's leading, and then determine which candidates to interview. Candidates will then be interviewed by conference calls, surveys, and when possible face to face meetings. All interviews will include at least two members of this Search Committee. If after the interview process a potential candidate is discovered, the Search Committee will investigate the candidates references, past/present ministries, send for sermon tapes, books or papers he has written concerning doctrine and ministry, and ask for a copy of college and seminary transcripts. If after the investigation process the candidate is deemed worthy of a formal meeting, all elders must be present to conduct the formal interview. Others involved in the pastoral search may also attend but it is not essential.

When the elder board has unanimously recognized God's leadership toward a Senior Pastor candidate, they will invite the man and his family to officially candidate for the position of Senior Pastor. The Sunday should be well advertised and all members should be encouraged to attend. After the potential pastor candidates, the Board of Elders will meet to seek a vote of affirmation for the candidate. The members are encouraged to voice their opinion of the candidate to the elders. There must be a 100% unified vote of the elder board to call the pastor.

The Senior Pastor's salary, benefits and moving expenses shall be set by the Elder Board at the time of his call and shall be annually reviewed by the Elder Board

thereafter. He shall remain in office an indefinite period of time subject to the following reservations:

1. If the Elder Board is in 100% unanimous agreement (excluding the Senior Pastor) with the decision to remove the Senior Pastor from his position, they have the authority to dismiss him from his position. The Elder Board is to give him one month's notice of its intention to dismiss him, unless the dismissal is for immorality reasons. The Elder Board shall determine any and all severance compensation for the Senior Pastor.
2. If the Senior Pastor chooses to resign for his own reasons he must give a one-month's written notice to the Elder Board. If his resignation is accepted, the Elder Board must immediately notify the church of his resignation on the following Sunday morning.

The time limit of a Senior Pastor's resignation or dismissal is subject to a lesser time if both the Senior Pastor and the Elder Board by mutual agreement provide otherwise.

## **7. Staff Pastors**

As shepherds of the flock, the elders are responsible to appoint other leaders with complimentary spiritual gifts, talents and personalities, to undertake areas and aspects of the ministry that cannot be filled by the Senior Pastor. This will require a 100% unified vote.

The Elder Board will determine the description, duties, selection and qualifications of all Pastoral staff personnel. The Elder Board will set a staff pastor's salary, benefits and moving expenses at the time of his call.

Staff Pastors shall remain in office an indefinite period of time subject to the following reservations:

1. If the Elder Board is in 100% unanimous agreement (Not including the staff pastor in question) with the decision to remove the Staff Pastor from his position, they have the authority to dismiss him. The Elder Board is to give him one month's notice of its intention to dismiss him, unless the dismissal is for immorality reasons. The Elder Board shall determine any and all severance compensation for the Staff Pastor.
2. If the Staff Pastor chooses to resign for his own reasons he must give a one-month's written notice to the Elder Board.

The time limit of a Staff Pastor's resignation or dismissal is subject to a lesser time if both the Staff Pastor and the Elder Board by mutual agreement provide otherwise.

Upon acceptance of a call, Staff Pastors and their wives shall be admitted to the Active membership roll. All permanent staff pastors shall be regularly examined by the Elder

Board to determine if they meet the qualifications (listed under Section Seven A 2) to serve on the Elder Board.

## **B. Deacons**

The other officer in the local church is called a Deacon (Greek “diakonos”) or literally a “servant”. The New Testament gives examples of both “appointed” servants in the church and of “unelected” servants who served the Lord in a general sense. The noun “diakonos” is used thirty times in the New Testament and in only three of those does it refer to a specifically appointed servant (Deacon) (Phil 1:1, 1 Tim. 3:8, 12). The word is generally used simply to denote one whom “ministers” or is a “servant.” The verb “diakoneo” is found twice in I Tim. 3:10, 13, and should be translated as the phrase, “let them minister as servants”.

### **1. Description of Deacons:**

In its original usage, the Greek word for Deacon, “diakonos,” was used of those who served the needs of others. Therefore we at Discover Church believe Deacons are to give their primary attention toward caring for the congregation’s physical welfare. Deacons have the honor of modeling, for the local church and the lost world, God’s compassion, kindness, mercy, and love. As the church compassionately cares for people’s needs, the world sees a visible display of Christ’s love, which will draw people to the Savior. Deacons are to be an example of commitment, unity and harmony in their service.

Many see Acts 6:1-7 as the description of the first Deacons. There is no evidence of this, but in its principle form, it is a good illustration. In this passage there are the Apostles whose focus in the church was on *prayer and the ministry of the word*, and therefore they needed people who would distribute food and *wait on tables*. Seven men were chosen who were *known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom* to handle this responsibility. With this, the spiritual and physical needs were met in the early church. This would be a good picture of the ministries of Elders and Deacons.

### **2. Qualifications of Deacons:**

Deacons must be faithful church attendees in good standing and possess the qualifications stated in 1 Timothy 3:8-10, 12-13. These qualifications are:

- a. A man worthy of respect (1 Tim. 3:8);
- b. Sincere (1 Tim. 3:8);
- c. Not indulging in much wine (1 Tim. 3:8);
- d. Not pursuing dishonest gain (1 Tim. 3:8);

- e. Holding to the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience (1 Tim. 3:9);
- f. Tested (1 Tim. 3:10);
- g. Above reproach (1 Tim. 3:10);
- h. Husband of one wife; a one-woman man (1 Tim. 3:12);
- i. Good managers of their children and their own households (1 Tim. 3:12).
- j. Women are to be worthy of respect (1 Tim 3:11)
- k. Women are not to be malicious talkers (1 Tim 3:11)
- l. Women are to be temperate (1 Tim 3:11)
- m. Women are to be trustworthy in everything (1 Tim 3:11)

### **3. Duties of Deacons:**

Scripture itself is vague about the specifics of *what* deacons are to do. God does not give us specific examples as He does with the Elders. We read a lot about what qualifies one to be a deacon, but little about how Deacons are to minister in the local church. That fact in itself teaches us much about God's view of church leadership. What someone *is* is the issue, more than what he *does*.

Deacons are to effectively and carefully administer the church's charitable activities. They are the collectors of funds, the distributors of relief and agents of mercy. They help the poor, the jobless, the sick, the widowed, the elderly, the homeless, the shut-in, and the disabled. They comfort, protect and encourage people and help to meet their needs. Although they do in many ways meet spiritual needs of those whom they serve, their primary service is related to physical needs. Specific duties include, but are not limited to:

- a. Service to the physical needs of the membership exhibiting the love and compassion of Christ. Specific attention is to be given to widows and widowers, the needy and the aged. Collection and administration of the benevolent fund is included.
- b. Assisting the Elder Board in the preparation and serving of the Lord's Supper and aiding people during baptism.
- c. Other such duties and responsibilities as determined by the Elder Board.

### **4. Selection of Deacons:**



- a. The Elder Board will determine when additional Deacons are needed
- b. Deacons will be chosen by the Elder Board from the church membership
- c. The Elder Board will interview these nominees and examine them to see if they meet the qualifications listed in 1 Tim. 3:8-13.
- d. After the interviewing and investigation processes are complete, the Elder Board will determine if they feel a candidate is qualified to serve as a Deacon. A unified vote is necessary.
- e. The Elders will pray and lay hands on the new deacons to set them apart for the Deacon ministry.

## **5. Operation of deacons**

- a. The Board of Deacons shall consist of godly men and women from the church membership.
- b. There will not be a set minimum or maximum number of Deacons.
- c. A man or woman appointed to the Deacon Board by the Elders can serve as long as they desire, function properly in the office, and remain biblically qualified.
- d. Any Deacon can be removed from office if he/she becomes incapacitated, spiritually unqualified or his inability to serve is established in the minds of the remainder of the Deacon Board. The Deacon Board will inform the Elders at the earliest possible time to inform them of these analysis and then the Elders will investigate to determine if such Deacon should be removed from office. A unified vote is necessary.
- e. The Board of Deacons shall meet no less than once a month.
- f. The Elder Board will select a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman and a secretary for the Deacon Board.

## **B. Other Leadership Positions in the Church**

To effectively govern the church the Elder Board may appoint various committees, "Ministry Teams" from within the membership to research, analyze, promote and perform certain ministry tasks. These committees shall exist for the period specified by the Elder Board and operate under its supervision.

## **SECTION SEVEN**

### ***Membership***

At the writing of this document, Discover Church does not have a membership role. We are more focused on faithful people who consider this their church home, those who attend on a regular basis and support what we stand for.

This does not mean that membership may not be necessary in the future.

**Those who desire to serve in ANY form of leadership or teaching capacity must still meet certain qualifications.**

1. The candidate must trust in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and let it be known by their actions.
2. Must consistently attend Sunday services.
3. The candidate must be interviewed by at least two elders and submit a written salvation testimony to be filed by the church.
4. The candidate must sign a statement that he or she has read, understands, supports and will not teach against the Constitution/Bylaws of Discover Church.

#### **A. Those who call Discover Church their home:**

1. Should be faithful to all worship services.

A Christian cannot be spiritually healthy if he or she does not attend church regularly. Church is where we praise and worship God, learn His Word, give our offerings, and use our gifts and fellowship with the saints.

2. Should be committed to spiritual growth and maturity.

We are called to make disciples, which simply means we are to train people how to live Christ-like. But discipleship can only take place when Christians have committed themselves to spiritual growth. In essence, growing in Christ is a choice.

2. Should be faithful to support their church financially.

The church has always been and will always be financed by its people. Jesus taught, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

3. Should actively minister by using their spiritual gifts and God-given talents.

The best reason a Christian can become one with a local church is to use his or her gifts in ministry. As Christians we are called to give our time, talents, and financial resources in service to others.

4. Should develop personal relationships with the other members in their church.

The Bible teaches that the church is the Body of Christ in the world. Christians are members of that Body. Therefore it is imperative that each member of the Body pursue healthy relationships, and respect and care for the other parts of the Body.

5. Should maintain a walk worthy of our calling as Christians.

The life of the church member should be increasingly characterized by love for God, fellow Christians, and enemies; by biblical morality; by spiritual wisdom and spiritual fruit.

## **B. Termination**

1. As a result of church discipline.

If possible, all people subject to termination will be interviewed before termination to see if termination can be avoided.

## **C. The Importance of Church Discipline**

Our Lord Jesus Christ states that it is the church's duty to discipline its members who choose to live in sin. According to Matthew 18:15-18 all church members are called to exercise church discipline or confront a brother or sister in sin, for we are all members of the body. Church discipline should be looked at as a positive activity that has five important purposes:

1. To maintain purity in the church by encouraging members to be obedient to biblical standards and godly practices (1 Cor. 5:6-7).
2. To restore the offending brother back into proper fellowship with his church and God (Matt 18:15, Gal. 6:1).
3. To motivate other church members not to live in sin and experience its destructiveness (1 Tim. 5:20; James 1:15).
4. To keep the church body focused on its purpose – to fulfill the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).
5. The ultimate purpose behind church discipline is to be obedient, and to glorify God (1 Cor. 10:31).

## **D. Process of Church Discipline**

- Step One - It is the duty of any member of the church who has knowledge of a sinning church member to privately rebuke, warn and correct the sinning member, praying that he would repent and ask forgiveness for his actions (Matt. 18:15).
- Step Two - If the sinning member does not repent of his sin the correcting member should confront the sinning member accompanied by one or two witnesses. Their purpose is to again rebuke, warn and correct the sinning member, praying that he would repent and ask forgiveness for his actions (Matt. 18:16).
- Step Three - If the sinning member still refuses to repent of his sin the matter should be brought before the Church (probably church leadership to inform the entire church). They will investigate the allegation brought by the witness against the sinning member. If the allegations are found to be true the Church will confront the sinning member and seek his immediate repentance and restoration. (Matt. 18:17).
- Step Four - If that final confrontation is unsuccessful, the elders will remove the sinning member from the church fellowship. They will instruct all church members not to fellowship with him but to pray for his repentance and restoration (1 Cor. 5; 1 Tim. 1:20; Titus 3:10; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14, 15).
- Step Five - A letter will be sent to the sinning member explaining to him (Biblically) why the Church has terminated his church fellowship and why he is unwelcome at all church services and activities. In addition, the letter will lovingly explain how the sinning believer can be restored back into the fellowship.

## **E. Restoration**

If a sinning member after his or her dismissal heeds the warning, demonstrates repentance and requests reinstatement, he or she will be publicly restored into the church.

## **SECTION NINE** ***Amendments***

This Constitution/Bylaws may be amended, adapted, or repealed by the unified vote or written consent of the church Elders.