

# **Constitution**

## **ARTICLE I: DEFINITION AND PURPOSE OF THIS CONSTITUTION**

This written document is a declaration of our beliefs and understanding of the Holy Scripture, as to our doctrinal beliefs, form of church government, organizational structure, and purposes as a body. It is vitally important for a church, if it is to glorify God and accomplish His purposes, that its people be in agreement with regard to doctrine, organizational structure and goals (1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:3, 13).

This is thus designed to be a statement of these things that it might promote a oneness of mind within our own ranks, and that those interested in becoming a part of this ministry might have a clear concept of our beliefs and objectives. This document is not a higher authority than the Word of God. Neither is it a higher authority than the authority that God Himself has invested in those believers He has appointed to lead in this local church (Heb. 13:17). It must be remembered that the local church itself is a living, growing, and flexible body subject ultimately to the authority of Jesus Christ alone as it is declared in the Word of God (Eph. 1:22; 4:12-16). As we grow in the Word, this document is therefore subject to amendment according to the provisions of Article XV. This document is, however, to be followed in all its parts as a protection to all until part or all is amended according to its provisions.

## **ARTICLE II: NAME**

The name of this local church shall be Northside Church of Albuquerque, New Mexico, Inc., a corporation under the laws of the state of New Mexico.

## **ARTICLE III: FOUNDATION, MISSION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES**

### **A. Foundation**

The foundation of this Church is the Lord Jesus Christ (I Corinthians 3:11), and its code of guidance in all its affairs, the Word of God, and this Church does here affirm its faith that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of Almighty God (Mark 13:31).

### **B. Our Mission**

The supreme mission of the church, and so also of every individual believer, is to glorify God and to serve Him forever (Eph. 3:21; Rom. 11:36; 1 Pet. 4:11). Therefore, if what we do as a church, or as individuals, cannot serve the glory of God, it should not be done.

### **C. Our Goals**

Our goal is to glorify God by worshiping Him, living a life that honors Him and by serving Him. Certain God-ordained goals are established in Scripture for the local church. These are basically set forth in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20, Acts 2:42).

#### **1. Equipping Believers**

Equipping the saints unto the work of the ministry in all its aspects as they grow in their spiritual maturity in the Lord is the second great goal of this church (Eph. 4:12-16; Col. 1:28-29, 2 Timothy 2:2, Titus 2:3-4).

#### **2. Evangelization of the Lost**

Reaching the lost with the gospel of Jesus Christ, both at home and abroad, is to be one of the goals of this church (Rom. 1:14-16; 1 Thess. 1:8; Acts 1:8).

## D. Our Objectives

### 1. Internal Objectives and Functions

**a. Instruction in the Word of God—Teaching:** To stand for the historic, fundamental truths of Scripture, and through Scripture, to equip the saints for service, and for the building up of the body of Christ for unity, knowledge of the Son of God, and maturity, measured by the stature of the fullness of Christ, and for protection against the deceitful scheming of Satan (Eph. 4:12-16)

**b. Worship:** To provide the means for developing and expressing meaningful worship in prayer, songs of praise, adoration, admonishment, singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord, and to administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper (Heb. 13:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; 1 Cor. 11:23-34; Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:42).

**c. Ministry:** To provide the means for developing and exercising spiritual gifts for the edification of the body and the evangelization of the lost (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Pet. 4:10-11).

**d. Fellowship:** To encourage and provide for means of developing meaningful relationships among believers – by expressions of sharing and caring for, and loving one another, warning, stimulating, and encouraging one another to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24-25; 13:1-2; Acts 2:42-47).

### 2. External Objectives and Functions

**a. Outreach:** To present the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who have never trusted in Jesus Christ as their Savior, and to encourage them to trust in Him (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; 1 Thess. 1:2-10).

**b. Holy Behavior:** To live holy lives in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation acting as salt and as lights in the world (Phil. 2:15; Matt. 5:13-14; 1 Pet. 2:11-15; Col. 4:5).

**c. Showing Mercy:** To do good to all men whenever there is the opportunity and the means to do so within biblical principles and precepts (Gal. 6:10; Luke 10:29-37).

Our **mission, goals and objectives** set forth our philosophy of the local church and its ministry. This, in turn, must form the foundation for our thinking and activities as a body of people. It directs us in what we ought to be doing. Anything which does not contribute to this philosophy of our mission, goals and objectives should then be either corrected, rejected or alleviated from the activities of the church.

## ARTICLE IV: DOCTRINE

Since the Word of God is foundational and absolutely essential to true spirituality, fellowship, spiritual sustenance, effectiveness in service and ministry, faith and doctrinal accuracy, we believe that the most important function of this local church, and its central thrust, is consistent teaching and study of the Word of God (1 Tim. 4:6-7).

The study of the Word of God is not **an end in itself**, but it is a high priority and a necessary channel for fellowship with God and thereby also of effective ministry to one another and to the world. It will not therefore, be bypassed or made secondary in the interest of social concerns, actions, or activities, but must be so promoted that the Word, and the teaching of the Word, become the pulse and heartbeat behind all church and non-church related activities or concerns (Psa. 119:1ff; 138:2; Heb 4:12; Rom. 15:4; 16:25-26; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Tim. 1:5; 4:1-16; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 4:1-3).

This local church shall thus function as an independent, evangelical church, committed to the fundamental, historic truths recorded in God's inerrant revelation—the Holy Scriptures. To hold positions within Northside Church, all overseers, ministerial staff, deacons, administrators, and teachers must wholeheartedly agree with the Doctrinal Statement, Article V, of this church.

## ARTICLE V: DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

### A. The Holy Scriptures

We teach that the Bible is God's written revelation to man, and thus the sixty six books of the Bible given to us by the Holy Spirit constitute the plenary (inspired equally in all parts) Word of God (1 Corinthians 2:7 14; 2 Peter 1:20 21).

We teach that the Word of God is an objective, propositional revelation (1 Thessalonians 2:13; 1 Corinthians 2:13),

verbally inspired in every word (2 Timothy 3:16), absolutely inerrant in the original documents, infallible, and God breathed. We teach the literal, grammatical historical interpretation of Scripture which affirms the belief that the opening chapters of Genesis present creation in six literal days (Genesis 1:31; Exodus 31:17).

We teach that the Bible constitutes the only infallible rule of faith and practice (Matthew 5:18; 24:35; John 10:35; 16:12 13; 17:17; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:15 17; Hebrews 4:12; 2 Peter 1:20 21).

We teach that God spoke in His written Word by a process of dual authorship. The Holy Spirit so superintended the human authors that, through their individual personalities and different styles of writing, they composed and recorded God's Word to man (2 Peter 1:20 21) without error in the whole or in the part (Matthew 5:18; 2 Timothy 3:16). We teach that, whereas there may be several applications of any given passage of Scripture, there is but one true interpretation. The meaning of Scripture is to be found as one diligently applies the literal grammatical historical method of interpretation under the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit (John 7:17; 16:12 15; 1 Corinthians 2:7 15; 1 John 2:20). It is the responsibility of believers to ascertain carefully the true intent and meaning of Scripture, recognizing that proper application is binding on all generations. Yet the truth of Scripture stands in judgment of men; never do men stand in judgment of it.

## **B. God**

We teach that there is but one living and true God (Deuteronomy 6:4; Isaiah 45:5 7; 1 Corinthians 8:4), an infinite, all knowing Spirit (John 4:24), perfect in all His attributes, one in essence, eternally existing in three Persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14)—each equally deserving worship and obedience.

### **God the Father**

We teach that God the Father, the first Person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things according to His own purpose and grace (Psalm 145:8 9; 1 Corinthians 8:6). He is the Creator of all things (Genesis 1:1 31; Ephesians 3:9). As the only absolute and omnipotent Ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption (Psalm 103:19; Romans 11:36). His fatherhood involves both His designation within the Trinity and His relationship with mankind. As Creator He is Father to all men (Ephesians 4:6), but He is spiritual Father only to believers (Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 6:18). He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass (Ephesians 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1 Chronicles 29:11). In His sovereignty He is neither author nor approver of sin (Habakkuk 1:13; John 8:38 47), nor does He abridge the accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (1 Peter 1:17). He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own (Ephesians 1:4 6); He saves from sin all who come to Him through Jesus Christ; He adopts as his own all those who come to Him; and He becomes, upon adoption, Father to His own (John 1:12; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:5; Hebrews 12:5 9).

### **God the Son**

We teach that Jesus Christ, the second Person of the Trinity, possesses all the divine excellencies, and in these He is coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father (John 10:30; 14:9).

We teach that God the Father created according to His own will, through His Son, Jesus Christ, by whom all things continue in existence and in operation (John 1:3; Colossians 1:15 17; Hebrews 1:2).

We teach that in the incarnation (God becoming man) Christ surrendered only the prerogatives of deity but nothing of the divine essence, either in degree or kind.

In His incarnation, the eternally existing second Person of the Trinity accepted all the essential characteristics of humanity and so became the God Man (Philippians 2:5 8; Colossians 2:9). We teach that Jesus Christ represents humanity and deity in indivisible oneness (Micah 5:2; John 5:23; 14:9 10; Colossians 2:9).

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ was virgin born (Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23, 25; Luke 1:26 35); that He was God incarnate (John 1:1, 14); and that the purpose of the incarnation was to reveal God, redeem men, and rule over God's kingdom (Psalm 2:7 9; Isaiah 9:6; John 1:29; Philippians 2:9 11; Hebrews 7:25 26; 1 Peter 1:18 19).

We teach that, in the incarnation, the second person of the Trinity laid aside His right to the full prerogatives of coexistence with God, and took on an existence appropriate to a servant while never divesting Himself of His divine

attributes (Philippians 2:5 8).

We teach that our Lord Jesus Christ accomplished our redemption through the shedding of His blood and sacrificial death on the cross and that His death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (John 10:15; Romans 3:24 25; 5:8; 1 Peter 2:24).

We teach that our justification is made sure by His literal, physical resurrection from the dead and that He is now ascended to the right hand of the Father, where He now mediates as our Advocate and High Priest (Matthew 28:6; Luke 24:38 39; Acts 2:30 31; Romans 4:25; 8:34; Hebrews 7:25; 9:24; 1 John 2:1).

We teach that in the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the grave, God confirmed the deity of His Son and gave proof that God has accepted the atoning work of Christ on the cross. Jesus' bodily resurrection is also the guarantee of a future resurrection life for all believers (John 5:26 29; 14:19; Romans 1:4; 4:25; 6:5 10; 1 Corinthians 15:20, 23).

We teach that Jesus Christ will return to receive the church, which is His Body, unto Himself at the rapture, and returning with His church in glory, will establish His millennial kingdom on earth (Acts 1:9 11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13 18; Revelation 20).

We teach that the Lord Jesus Christ is the One through whom God will judge all mankind (John 5:22 23):

- a. Believers (1 Corinthians 3:10 15; 2 Corinthians 5:10)
- b. Living inhabitants of the earth at His glorious return (Matthew 25:31 46).
- c. Unbelieving dead at the Great White Throne (Revelation 20:11 15).

As the Mediator between God and man (1 Timothy 2:5), the Head of His Body the church (Ephesians 1:22; 5:23; Colossians 1:18), and the coming universal King, who will reign on the throne of David (Isaiah 9:6; Luke 1:31 33), He is the final Judge of all who fail to place their trust in Him as Lord and Savior (Matthew 25:14 46; Acts 17:30 31). We teach that on the basis of the efficacy of the death of our Lord Jesus Christ, the believing sinner is freed from the punishment, the penalty, the power, and one day the very presence of sin; and that he is declared righteous, given eternal life, and adopted into the family of God (Romans 3:25; 5:8 9; 2 Corinthians 5:14 15; 1 Peter 2:24; 3:18).

### **God the Holy Spirit**

We teach that the Holy Spirit is a divine Person, eternal, underived, possessing all the attributes of personality and deity including intellect (1 Corinthians 2:10 13), emotions (Ephesians 4:30), will (1 Corinthians 12:11), eternity (Hebrews 9:14), omnipresence (Psalm 139:7 10), omniscience (Isaiah 40:13 14), omnipotence (Romans 15:13), and truthfulness (John 16:13). In all the divine attributes He is coequal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son (Matthew 28:19; Acts 5:3 4; 28:25 26; Isa 6:8-9; 1 Corinthians 12:4 6; 2 Corinthians 13:14; and Jeremiah 31:31 34 with Hebrews 10:15 17).

We teach that it is the work of the Holy Spirit to execute the divine will with relation to all mankind. We recognize His sovereign activity in creation (Genesis 1:2), the incarnation (Matthew 1:18), the written revelation (2 Peter 1:20 21), and the work of salvation (John 3:5 7).

We teach that the work of the Holy Spirit in this age began at Pentecost when He came from the Father as promised by Christ (John 14:16 17; 15:26) to initiate and complete the building of the Body of Christ, which is His church (1 Corinthians 12:13). The broad scope of His divine activity includes convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; glorifying the Lord Jesus Christ and transforming believers into the image of Christ (John 16:7 9; Acts 1:5; 2:4; Romans 8:29; 2 Corinthians 3:18; Ephesians 2:22).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the supernatural and sovereign Agent in regeneration, baptizing all believers into the Body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13). The Holy Spirit also indwells, sanctifies, instructs, empowers them for service, and seals them unto the day of redemption (Romans 8:9; 2 Corinthians 3:5-6; Ephesians 1:13).

We teach that the Holy Spirit is the divine Teacher, who guided the apostles and prophets into all truth as they committed to writing God's revelation, the Bible. Every believer possesses the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit from the moment of salvation, and it is the duty of all those born of the Spirit to be filled with (controlled by) the Spirit (John 16:13; Romans 8:9; Ephesians 5:18; 2 Peter 1:19 21; 1 John 2:20, 27).

We teach that the Holy Spirit administers spiritual gifts to the church. The Holy Spirit glorifies neither Himself nor His gifts by ostentatious displays, but He does glorify Christ by implementing His work of redeeming the lost and building up believers in the most holy faith (John 16:13-14; Acts 1:8; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 3:18).

We teach, in this respect, that God the Holy Spirit is sovereign in the bestowing of all His gifts for the perfecting of the saints. (1 Corinthians 12:11).

## **C. Man**

We teach that man was directly and immediately created by God in His image and likeness. Man was created free of sin with a rational nature, intelligence, volition, self determination, and moral responsibility to God (Genesis 2:7, 15-25; James 3:9).

We teach that God's intention in the creation of man was that man should glorify God, enjoy God's fellowship, live his life in the will of God, and by this accomplish God's purpose for man in the world (Isaiah 43:7; Colossians 1:16; Revelation 4:11).

We teach that in Adam's sin of disobedience to the revealed will and Word of God, man lost his innocence; incurred the penalty of spiritual and physical death; became subject to the wrath of God; and became inherently corrupt and utterly incapable of choosing or doing that which is acceptable to God apart from divine grace. With no recuperative powers to enable him to recover himself, man is hopelessly lost. Man's salvation is thereby wholly of God's grace through the redemptive work of our Lord Jesus Christ (Genesis 2:16-17; 3:1-19; John 3:36; Romans 3:23; 6:23; 1 Corinthians 2:14; Ephesians 2:1-3; 1 Timothy 2:13-14; 1 John 1:8).

We teach that because all men were in Adam, a nature corrupted by Adam's sin has been transmitted to all men of all ages, Jesus Christ being the only exception. All men are thus sinners by nature, by choice, and by divine declaration (Psalm 14:1-3; Jeremiah 17:9; John 3:19-20; Romans 3:9-18, 23; 5:10-12).

## **D. Salvation**

We teach that salvation is wholly of God by grace on the basis of the redemption of Jesus Christ, the merit of His shed blood, and not on the basis of human merit or works (John 1:12; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-10; 1 Peter 1:18-19).

### **Regeneration**

We teach that regeneration is a supernatural work of the Holy Spirit by which the divine nature and divine life are given (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5). It is instantaneous and is accomplished solely by the power of the Holy Spirit through the instrumentality of the Word of God (John 5:24), evidenced when the repentant sinner, as enabled by the Holy Spirit, responds in faith to the divine provision of salvation. Genuine regeneration is manifested by fruits worthy of repentance as demonstrated in righteous attitudes and conduct. Good works will be its proper evidence and fruit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Ephesians 2:10), and will be experienced to the extent that the believer submits to the control of the Holy Spirit in his life through faithful obedience to the Word of God (Ephesians 5:17-21; Philippians 2:12b; Colossians 3:16; 2 Peter 1:4-10). This obedience causes the believer to be increasingly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 3:18). Such a conformity is perfected in the believer's glorification at Christ's coming (Romans 8:17; 2 Peter 1:4; 1 John 3:2-3).

### **Election**

We teach that election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies (Romans 8:28-30; Ephesians 1:4-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; 2 Timothy 2:10; 1 Peter 1:1-2).

We teach that sovereign election does not contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11; John 3:18-19, 36; 5:40; 2 Thessalonians 2:10-12; Revelation 22:17). Nevertheless, since sovereign grace includes the means of receiving the gift of salvation as well as the gift itself, sovereign election will result in what God determines. All whom the Father calls to Himself will come in faith and all who come in faith the Father will receive (John 6:37-40, 44; Acts 13:48; James 4:8).

We teach that the unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part nor to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will, but is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy (Ephesians 1:4-7; Titus 3:4-7; 1 Peter 1:2).

We teach that election should not be looked upon as based merely on abstract sovereignty. God is truly sovereign but

He exercises this sovereignty in harmony with His other attributes, especially His omniscience, justice, holiness, wisdom, grace, and love (Romans 9:11-16). This sovereignty will always exalt the will of God in a manner totally consistent with His character as revealed in the life of our Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 11:25-28; 2 Timothy 1:9).

### **Justification**

We teach that justification before God is an act of God (Romans 8:33) by which He declares righteous those who, through faith in Christ, repent of their sins (Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; 3:19; 11:18; Romans 2:4; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Isaiah 55:6-7) and confess Him as sovereign Lord (Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 12:3; 2 Corinthians 4:5). This righteousness is apart from any virtue or work of man (Romans 3:20; 4:6) and involves the imputation of our sins to Christ (Colossians 2:14; 1 Peter 2:24) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to us (1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21). By this means God is enabled to "be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus" (Romans 3:26).

### **Sanctification**

We teach that every believer is sanctified (set apart) unto God by justification and is therefore declared to be holy and is therefore identified as a saint. This sanctification is positional and instantaneous and should not be confused with progressive sanctification. This sanctification has to do with the believer's standing, not his present walk or condition (Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 30; 6:11; 2 Thessalonians 2:13; Hebrews 2:11; 3:1; 10:10, 14; 13:12; 1 Peter 1:2).

We teach that there is also by the work of the Holy Spirit a progressive sanctification by which the state of the believer is brought closer to the standing the believer positionally enjoys through justification. Through obedience to the Word of God and the empowering of the Holy Spirit, the believer is able to live a life of increasing holiness in conformity to the will of God, becoming more and more like our Lord Jesus Christ (John 17:17,19; Romans 6:1-22; 2 Corinthians 3:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-4; 5:23).

In this respect, we teach that every saved person is involved in a daily conflict—the new creation in Christ doing battle against the flesh—but adequate provision is made for victory through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. The struggle nevertheless stays with the believer all through this earthly life and is never completely ended. All claims to the eradication of sin in this life are unscriptural. Eradication of sin is not possible, but the Holy Spirit does provide for victory over sin (Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 4:22-24; Philippians 3:12; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Peter 1:14-16).

### **Security**

We teach that all the redeemed once saved are kept by God's power and are thus secure in Christ forever (John 5:24; 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Romans 5:9-10; 8:1, 31-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-8; Ephesians 4:30; Hebrews 7:25; 13:5; 1 Peter 1:5; Jude 24).

We teach that it is the privilege of believers to rejoice in the assurance of their salvation through the testimony of God's Word, which, however, clearly forbids the use of Christian liberty as an occasion for sinful living and carnality (Romans 6:15-22; 13:13-14; Galatians 5:13, 25-26; Titus 2:11-14).

### **Separation**

We teach that separation from sin is clearly called for throughout the Old and New Testaments, and that the Scriptures clearly indicate that in the last days apostasy and worldliness shall increase (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-5).

We teach that out of deep gratitude for the undeserved grace of God granted to us and because our glorious God is so worthy of our total consecration, all the saved should live in such a manner as to demonstrate our adoring love to God and so as not to bring reproach upon our Lord and Savior. We also teach that separation from all religious apostasy and worldly and sinful practices is commanded of us by God (Romans 12:1-2, 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1 John 2:15-17; 2 John 9-11).

We teach that believers should be separated unto our Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thessalonians 1:11-12; Hebrews 12:1-2) and affirm that the Christian life is a life of obedient righteousness that reflects the teaching of the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:2-12) and a continual pursuit of holiness (Romans 12:1-2; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Hebrews 12:14; Titus 2:11-14; 1 John 3:1-10).

## **E. The Church**

We teach that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual Body, the church (1 Corinthians 12:12-13), the bride of Christ (2 Corinthians 11:2; Ephesians 5:23-32; Revelation 19:7-8), of which Christ is the Head (Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; Colossians 1:18).

We teach that the formation of the church, the Body of Christ, began on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:1-21, 38-47) and will be completed at the coming of Christ for His own at the rapture (1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18).

We teach that the church is thus a unique spiritual organism designed by Christ, made up of all born again believers in this present age (Ephesians 2:11-3:6). The church is distinct from Israel (1 Corinthians 10:32), a mystery not revealed until this age (Ephesians 3:1-6; 5:32).

We teach that the establishment and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament Scriptures (Acts 14:23, 27; 20:17, 28; Galatians 1:2; Philippians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1) and that the members of the one spiritual Body are directed to associate themselves together in local assemblies (1 Corinthians 11:18-20; Hebrews 10:25).

We teach that the one supreme authority for the church is Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3; Ephesians 1:22; Colossians 1:18) and that church leadership, gifts, order, discipline, and worship are all appointed through His sovereignty as found in the Scriptures. The biblically designated overseers serving under Christ and over the assembly are overseers (also called bishops, pastors, and pastor teachers; Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11) and deacons, both of whom must meet biblical qualifications (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5). We teach that these leaders lead or rule as servants of Christ (1 Timothy 5:17-22) and have His authority in directing the church. The congregation is to submit to their leadership (Hebrews 13:7, 17).

We teach the importance of discipleship (Matthew 28:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2), mutual accountability of all believers to each other (Matthew 18:5-14), as well as the need for discipline of sinning members of the congregation in accord with the standards of Scripture (Matthew 18:15-22; Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15; 1 Timothy 1:19-20; Titus 1:10-16; Proverbs 27:17).

We teach the autonomy of the local church, free from any external authority or control, with the right of self government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organizations (Titus 1:5). We teach that it is scriptural for true churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the faith. Each local church, however, through its overseers and their interpretation and application of Scripture, should be the sole judge of the measure and method of its cooperation. The overseers should determine all other matters of membership, policy, discipline, benevolence, and government as well (Acts 15:19-31; 20:28; 1 Corinthians 5:4-7, 13; 1 Peter 5:1-4).

We teach that the purpose of the church is to glorify God (Ephesians 3:21) by building itself up in the faith (Ephesians 4:13-16), by instruction of the Word (2 Timothy 2:2, 15; 3:16-17), by fellowship (Acts 2:47; 1 John 1:3), by keeping the ordinances (Luke 22:19; Acts 2:38-42) and by advancing and communicating the gospel to the entire world (Matthew 28:19; Acts 1:8; 2:42).

We teach the calling of all saints to the work of service (1 Corinthians 15:58; Ephesians 4:12; Revelation 22:12).

We teach the calling of all saints to be holy (1 Peter 1:16, Leviticus 11:44)

We teach the need of the church to cooperate with God as He accomplishes His purpose in the world. To that end, He gives the church spiritual gifts. First, He gives men chosen for the purpose of equipping the saints for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:7-12), and He also gives unique and special spiritual abilities to each member of the Body of Christ (Romans 12:5-8; 1 Peter 4:10-11).

We teach that two ordinances have been committed to the local church: baptism and the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:38-42). Christian baptism by immersion (Acts 8:36-39) is the solemn and beautiful testimony of a believer showing forth his faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, and his union with Him in death to sin and resurrection to a new life (Romans 6:1-11). It is also a sign of fellowship and identification with the visible Body of Christ (Acts 2:41-42).

We teach that the Lord's Supper is the commemoration and proclamation of His death until He comes, and should be always preceded by solemn self examination (1 Corinthians 11:28-32). We also teach that whereas the elements of Communion are only representative of the flesh and blood of Christ, the Lord's Supper is nevertheless an actual communion with the risen Christ who is present in a unique way, fellowshiping with His people (1 Corinthians 10:16).

## **F. Angels**

## **Holy Angels**

We teach that angels are created beings and are therefore not to be worshiped. Although they are a higher order of creation than man, they are created to serve God and to worship Him (Luke 2:9 14; Hebrews 1:6 7, 14; 2:6 7; Revelation 5:11 14; 19:10; 22:9).

## **Fallen Angels**

We teach that Satan is a created angel and the author of sin. He incurred the judgment of God by rebelling against his Creator (Isaiah 14:12 17; Ezekiel 28:11 19), by taking numerous angels with him in his fall (Matthew 25:41; Revelation 12:1 14), and by introducing sin into the human race by his temptation of Eve (Genesis 3:1 15).

We teach that Satan is the open and declared enemy of God and man (Isaiah 14:13 14; Matthew 4:1 11; Revelation 12:9 10); the prince of this world, who has been defeated through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ (Romans 16:20); and that he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire (Isaiah 14:12 17; Ezekiel 28:11 19; Matthew 25:41; Revelation 20:10).

## **G. How To Become a Christian**

Admit your sinful ways and desire to turn from them and be delivered from the judgment they bring (Romans 3:10, 23; Acts 3:19).

Acknowledge what Christ did for sinners on the cross, which was confirmed by His resurrection from the dead (Romans 5:8; John 11:25).

Receive Him as the only means of eternal life (Ephesians 2:8-9; John 1:12; 6:40).

Appropriate His rightful claim as Lord of your life (Romans 10:9).

Scripture teaches that one should "confess with his mouth" as well as "believe in his heart" (Rom 10:9). Placing one's faith in Christ is a personal commitment with God, but one should also make a public confession by notifying an Overseer in a church that confesses Christ alone as the means of salvation.

## **ARTICLE VI: GENERAL ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE**

The local church body is composed of one body with many members all of whom are in vital relationship with Jesus Christ, but the body also has "joints of supply," units of control, and unity, i.e., church leaders (Eph. 4:16). This together suggests body participation under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ with leadership direction, submission and authority in a two-directional manner.

First, the local government is invested in the body of believers who compose the local body under the headship of Jesus Christ according to the Word of God and the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 18:20; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:16; 5:21; Col. 1:18; 2:19).

Second, executive authority or leadership, however, as authorized by Scripture, in a Board of Overseers who lead the church and to whom the congregation is to submit under the headship of Christ. These men have the authority and responsibility to delegate to individuals, overseers or other boards (as a Board of Deacons and Administrative Board) authority and responsibility to carry out the business or ministry of the church in spiritual and physical (material) matters (Acts 20:28; 15:6; Eph. 4:11-12; Phil. 1:1; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:7, 17).

In using its delegated authority, and in making its decisions, the Board of Overseers must seek to be guided by the Scripture, and the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Acts 20:32; 6:2-5a; 11:22; 15:22; 2 Cor. 8:19).

In the event of the misuse of the delegated authority, the church has recourse to the principles as set forth in Articles VII, XII and XIV.

## **ARTICLE VII: OVERSEERS**

### **A. Qualifications**

Overseers shall be men whose lives are characterized by the qualities set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. These qualities can be categorized as:

- (1) They must **desire** the office of overseer and demonstrate spiritual leadership abilities among the flock.
- (2) They must be **able to teach** and use the Word of God with wisdom and patience.
- (3) They must be **lovers of God**. Men who take God and His Word seriously.
- (4) They must be **able to manage their household** in a biblical manner.
- (5) They must be able to spiritually manage their interpersonal relationships.
- (6) They must be men who are seeking to be controlled by Christ and His Word rather than by worldly and fleshly desires.
- (7) These men shall hold to the doctrinal statement of this Constitution in accord with the statements of Article V, and affirm agreement with the entire Constitution.

## **B. Authority**

The ministry of Northside Church shall be under the direction of the Lord Jesus Christ working in and through the Board of Overseers. The overseers will be the primary decision-making body within the church. However, it is critical that the overseers make decisions based on carefully assembled facts, scriptural insight, the individual and corporate leading by the Holy Spirit (Acts 6:5; 15:6, 22; Heb. 13:17; 1 Thess. 5:12-13).

The church is not a democracy or a government where the majority rules. Jesus Christ Himself is the Head and Ruler of the church. However, as seen in Article VI, the Lord Jesus leads and directs through both the body and the overseers.

## **C. Duties**

Because of external and internal Christian testimony to be promoted with the local body, the overseers must first and foremost exercise a personal spiritual walk which promotes self examination, maintain a servant-like quality in life, and serve with gentleness and humility in all that he does. Out of his biblical perspective, the overseer is to joyfully undertake the following duties:

- (1) Give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word.
- (2) Guard and protect the flock.
- (3) Oversee and provide spiritual direction for the activities and growth of the flock.
- (4) Aid in finding and developing gifted teachers of the Word (2 Tim. 2:2).
- (5) Warn and discipline as outlined in Article XII.
- (6) Support, encourage, counsel and lead in humility.
- (7) See to the appointment of deacons and administrators as provided for herein.
- (8) Provide guidance to the deacons and administrators as needed.
- (9) See to the oversight of the finances of the flock per Article XIII.
- (10) Pray for and encourage the sick.
- (11) Seek the Lord's will to interpret the Articles and provisions of this Constitution in the light of Scripture.
- (12) Make decisions and perform any other duties as situations within the church dictate, either directly or through proper and orderly delegation of overseers or persons as necessary.

The overseers shall strive to maintain open communication with the flock, both to discern needs, concerns and viewpoints, and to communicate information and decisions. This may be done through the Sunday bulletin, pulpit announcements, group or congregational meetings and discussions, and one-on-one personal contact (Acts 6:1-5; 11:22; 15:1, 6, 22; 16:2).

## **D. Appointment (General Principles)**

The Scriptures emphasize that overseers in the church are not appointed by men, but by God (Acts 20:28). The task of the people in the church then, should be to seek and discover God's direction and leading within the church body in the appointment of overseers.

The need for an additional overseer, paid or non-paid, may be recognized by either the overseers or other members of the church body. The overseers, in consultation with or in response to the request of body members, shall seek to discern the nature of the need and to follow God's leading in deciding if the need justifies the appointment of an overseer. Upon a decision by the Board of Overseers that a need does exist, the church will prayerfully and carefully seek God's direction in choosing the right man or men.

It is the purpose of Northside Church to base the selection process upon an orderly, proper sequence of events which will most easily facilitate the recognition of God's appointment of men to this ministry. The whole flock should be on the alert for men whose lives characterize the qualifications laid out in Scripture. Only qualified men will be

appointed. If no qualified men are available, or if men are unwilling to serve, who would otherwise be qualified, no appointment will be made. The church should wait on the Lord either to remove the need or to provide qualified men.

The Scriptures speak of two categories of overseers within a church body: non-paid overseers and paid overseers (1 Tim. 5:17-18). The following procedures outline the steps necessary to appoint overseers:

## **E. Appointment of Overseers**

When the need arises for a new overseer (either for a new position or to replace an overseer who has left the Board), the existing Board of Overseers should assume a guiding and directing role in the search for the right man. The specific nature of the need and the decision to seek a new overseer should be announced to the flock. The flock will be asked to suggest qualified men for the position based on the biblical criteria for overseers (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Tit. 1:6-9; Acts 14:23; 6:1f).

After a period of time and prayerful consideration, the overseers will meet to consider all the nominees as to their qualifications for the position. If the Board believes a man to be qualified, after they have considered the man's qualifications, a member of the Board will be appointed to approach each nominee to explain the specific nature of the need and to determine his willingness to serve (1 Tim. 5:22).

If the overseer nominee(s) signifies his understanding of the specific nature of the need and his willingness to serve, the board will announce this to the flock. A time and place will be announced for conducting a vote by the Board of Overseers (Acts 20:18). After the above steps are successfully completed, the appointment of the man as a overseer will be announced to the flock. The new overseer will be ordained by the Board of Overseers.

## **F. Tenure**

Overseers are appointed to an indefinite tenure consistent with their continued desire and ability to serve in this capacity. This must be evaluated and recognized by themselves and by the other overseers (Rom. 12:3-8). The removal of overseers from office shall be effected by personal resignation or by disciplinary actions in accordance with the provisions herein.

## **G. Voluntary Resignation**

An overseer may step down at any time he so chooses. The Overseer should prayerfully reflect on his decision and seek counsel from the Board before making a final decision.

## **H. Involuntary Dismissal**

Involuntary dismissal of any overseer, will be a disciplinary action of the Board of Overseers in accordance with the instruction provided in the By-Laws (1 Timothy 5:19-20; Galatians 6:1 and Matthew 18:15-18). The specific procedures for this are spelled out in Article XII with the following differences:

- (1) If the situation is such that it necessitates dismissal from office, the Board may suggest voluntary resignation by the person involved.
- (2) Once the processes detailed in Article XII have been carried out, the vote of the Board of Overseers is binding as to the dismissal of the overseer in question. The Board of Overseers may optionally address the congregation pertaining to any such actions taken, and may also optionally provide the dismissed Overseer a chance to speak in such a forum.

# **ARTICLE VIII: PASTOR-TEACHER & ASSOCIATE PASTORAL STAFF**

## **A. Pastor-Teacher**

The Pastor-teacher(s) plays a critical role in the growth, maturity, spirituality and effectiveness of the church. He is responsible for the quality and content of the teaching and counseling within the flock (Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Tim. 4:6-16). Northside Church recognizes that the Lord has given spiritual gifts to all believers and therefore does not expect the Pastor-teacher(s) to provide all the teaching, evangelism and counseling, etc., within the body (Rom. 12:3-8;

Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; 1 Pet. 4:10-11). Rather they are to equip the saints "for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12).

## **B. Pastor-teacher(s): Duties, Qualifications and Authority**

The duties, qualifications and authority of the Pastor-teacher(s) shall be the same as for overseers (Article VII), with the following additional duties:

- (1) Provide the majority of the teaching during worship services (1 Tim. 4:13).
- (2) Provide guidance, as needed, to the Board of Overseers concerning church business and spiritual concerns within the body.
- (3) Coordinate the administration of the ordinances (baptism and the Lord's Supper).

## **C. Pastor-teacher(s): Selection**

Upon recognition of the need for a new Pastor-teacher, the Board of Overseers will guide and direct the selection process. The attitude of the Board should be one of prayerful consideration and submission to the Lord, waiting on Him to fill the need with the right man. They should also be expectant, knowing that God will provide a person to fill the need.

The following procedure outlines the method Northside Church will follow in selecting a Pastor-teacher:

- (1) The Board of Overseers shall prayerfully seek to fill the position with someone from within the congregation.
- (2) If the position is not filled from within the congregation then the overseers shall seek someone outside.
- (3) The Overseers will carefully and prayerfully consider any resumes submitted. The resumes will be evaluated in light of the man's experience, interests, doctrinal beliefs, philosophy of the ministry and in light of the needs of the flock.
- (4) The Overseers will contact one or more men who appear to fill the needs of the church based on the resumes and other gathered information. The men may be invited to visit the church one or more times. These visit(s) should include time for the overseers to evaluate the man and his family, time for him to present the Word and time for him to evaluate the church and the community. Attendance of a man's family is not required on the first visit.
- (5) After each visit, the Overseers will prayerfully consider the candidate. During the process, they will seek input from the flock concerning the individual by means of written questionnaire. All questionnaires will be reviewed by the overseer board.
- (6) After evaluation of the candidate(s), the overseers will announce their recommendation to the flock. The overseers shall have a Church-wide period of prayer and fasting. During this period the Church body is encouraged to submit concerns and/or comments. At the end of this period, if there are no disqualifying concerns, the board of overseers will offer the position.
- (7) If the man turns down the offer, the above procedure will be repeated until a qualified man is hired.

## **D. Pastor-teacher(s): Tenure and Removal**

Tenure and removal of a Pastor-teacher will follow the same guidelines as outlined in Article IX.

## **E. Associate Pastoral Staff**

The need for paid associate pastoral staff to assist in meeting the needs of the flock may be recognized by any member of the church body or leadership. Such need must be agreed to by the Board of Overseers before action is taken.

The procedure for hiring associate pastoral staff members shall be the same as for a senior paid overseer. The senior paid overseer will automatically head the selection overseers for any associate staff.

All paid pastoral staff will look to the senior paid overseer for supervision of their duties and for periodic reviews of their performance. A written job description will be prepared for all paid staff members. This description will be prepared by the senior paid overseer in consultation with the Board of Overseers.

After appropriate consultation with the church leadership, a recommendation by the senior paid overseer will be sufficient for modifying the duties or redirecting the efforts of any paid staff member. Removal of any associate pastoral staff member shall follow the same guidelines as outlined herein.

## **F. Non-Pastoral Staff**

The hiring of baby sitters, janitorial services, secretary, etc., will be planned for and directed by the Board of Overseers.

Since the secretary will be working primarily for the Pastor-teacher, he will make the final decision, in consultation with the Board of Overseers, on who will fill the position.

## **ARTICLE IX: DEACONS**

### **A. Qualifications**

Deacons shall be men who desire to be servants of the local church body, who are able to serve, who meet all the qualifications of Scripture set forth in Acts 6:3 and 1 Timothy 3:8-12, and who are conscientiously and wholeheartedly in agreement with the Constitution of this church.

### **B. Duties**

In Acts 6:1-4, certain men were appointed to minister to the physical needs of the flock, to relieve the overseers so they would have more time to concentrate on prayer and on the Word. These were undoubtedly the first deacons and functioned as helpers to the leaders of the Jerusalem church. (These leaders were forerunners of the overseers in the New Testament church.)

Deacons shall be helpers of the overseers in ministering to the needs of the body, especially the physical needs (such as caring for the building and property), though they may serve in other capacities as their gifts and training allow. Their specific duties will be designated by the overseers according to the need of the church and a deacon's particular gifts, capacities and talents.

### **C. Appointment**

Deacons shall be appointed to serve as long as they are qualified and willing to serve and as long as a need for their ministry exists.

First Timothy 3:10 teaches that potential deacons are to be tested. The primary means of testing is time; time for the flock to evaluate a man's commitment to the Lord, his qualifications according to 1 Timothy 3:8-12, his doctrinal understanding and his willingness to serve the local body. The flock and the Board of Overseers should be on the alert to those men who demonstrate the qualifications of a deacon.

In the New Testament church, both the church leaders and the flock played an important role in choosing deacons (Acts 6:1-6). Deacons will be appointed as the need arises. However, only qualified and willing men will be appointed. If no qualified men are available, or if those qualified are unable or unwilling to serve, no appointment will be made. The church shall wait on the Lord to provide a qualified man or men to meet the need.

The following outlines the procedure Northside Church will follow in selecting deacons:

- (1) The Board of Overseers shall decide if the need for a deacon(s) exists.
- (2) When there is a need, then the Board shall notify the congregation of the need and ask them to recommend to the Board those men whom they believe meet the qualifications.
- (3) The Board of Overseers will review the names submitted to them along with any additional names of men they believe to be qualified.
- (4) Each name submitted will be carefully and prayerfully considered and reviewed according to their qualifications, gifts, the need, and the individual's willingness to serve.
- (5) The overseers will then appoint that man (men) whom they believe to be the most qualified to serve according to the specific needs and the qualifications.

### **D. Removal of Deacons**

#### **1. Voluntary**

A deacon may voluntarily step down from his position at any time he so chooses. The deacon should prayerfully reflect on his decision and seek counsel from the Board of Overseers before making a final decision.

## **2. Involuntary Dismissal**

Involuntary dismissal of a deacon shall be in accord with the procedures for church discipline outlined in Article XII. If the situation is such that it necessitates dismissal from office, the Board may suggest voluntary resignation by the person involved. If he refuses, the Board may remove him from office, but only after the principles for church discipline have been prayerfully considered and followed (Matt. 18:15-18).

## **ARTICLE X: CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

### **A. Union in the Universal Body of Christ**

At the time of personal faith in Jesus Christ, the believer is called into the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor. 1:2, 9; 12:12-13, 20; Col. 1:18), and joined into union with the universal body of Christ, the church, by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12-13; Col. 1:18).

### **B. Union With a Local Assembly of Believers**

There is another aspect of this fellowship into which the believer is joined. He is brought into the fellowship of fellow members of that body, other living believers on earth, that he might share and participate in the various blessings and ministries of the body of Christ. For this to occur properly, believers are to seek the fellowship of one another in a local body or assembly of believers to which they are to become responsible, a mini-flock, so to speak, of the greater and universal flock of God (1 Pet. 5:2-3; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1).

Believers in isolation, operating independently of other believers of a local assembly, is an idea contrary to Scripture. Scripture teaches that there are to be local assemblies of believers, united together by a common faith, by union in Christ, and the universal indwelling of the Holy Spirit, by common purposes, commitments and responsibilities, and with a common leadership of that specific body, independent in government from other local assemblies (Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Pet. 5:1-3; 1 Cor. 1:2; Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Thess. 5:12-13). The local church is to be a body of people allotted to the charge of overseers (1 Pet. 5:1-3; 1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 10:14-15; 1 Pet. 4:8-10; 1 Cor. 12:20-27), and subject to the discipline of that body or assembly (1 Cor. 5:2; 1 Thess. 5:14 [admonish the unruly], 2 Thess. 3:6, 14; 1 Tim. 5:20).

This of necessity implies more than a loose relationship of a believer or believers to a particular body or assembly. It involves a tie, an involvement, a commitment, responsibility and submission to both the leadership and to each other.

### **C. Church Membership**

The Scriptures contain neither a mandate for nor a command against an official membership roll. In Acts, we see that believers were added to the church in Jerusalem; however, this serves primarily to show the growth in the early church (Acts 2:47; 9:31; 16:5). These people were devoting themselves to a local assembly and its leadership for teaching, leadership, fellowship and worship (Acts 2:42). There were also letters of commendation or acceptance written on behalf of both men and women to be welcomed and accepted into the fellowship or various assemblies. These letters commended believers to other assemblies regarding their faithfulness and ministry and thus they were not a transfer of membership by letter (Rom. 16:1-2; 1 Cor. 16:10; Col. 4:10; 2 Cor. 3:1; 8:16-24).

The emphasis of these Scriptures is that every believer become identified and committed to a specific local assembly of believers following the leading and direction of God. This commitment is revealed by their attitude, faith, attendance, involvement, giving and submission to that assembly. Thus a membership roll cannot, in and of itself, serve as the sole means of commitment a believer has to a local body.

Northside Church does have a membership roll to aid in conducting business in an orderly manner and to provide legal protection in important, yet potentially controversial church decisions (such as discipline, Article XI). An individual's decision to be placed on the membership roll should flow from their commitment to the church. The individual should remember that being on the membership role has no merit or value so far as his spiritual maturity or growth is concerned. It is, however, an important tool in helping the church function smoothly.

#### D. Procedure for Membership

Any individual who confesses the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior and is scripturally baptized is qualified and eligible for membership in Northside Church. The church will not solicit anyone to become a member and thus will respect the privacy and personal initiative of the individual in this matter. Anyone who desires to become a member should contact one of the overseers and request membership. The board of Overseers will meet with the individual to discuss this decision. If the individual meets the qualifications for membership, he/she will be placed on the roll and will be acknowledged before the flock as a new member.

### **E. Membership Roll**

The overseers will review the membership roll annually. Members may be removed from the roll by the member's choice, by church discipline (Article XII), or by noninvolvement with the body. If an individual appears to no longer be involved with the church, an overseer(s) will meet with the person to verify their membership status. No individual will be removed from the roll without being contacted by an overseer.

## **ARTICLE XI: CORRECTIVE CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

We believe in the responsibility and necessity of church discipline as clearly outlined in Scripture. It is a very difficult area and hard to practice. Nevertheless, church discipline has the divine authority of Scripture and is vital to the purity of the church. In church discipline, the following matters must be carefully understood and applied.

### **A. The Pattern and Basis for Discipline**

The discipline of the church is first patterned after the fact that the Lord Himself disciplines His children (Heb. 12:6) and, as a father delegates part of the discipline of the children to the wife, so the Lord has delegated the discipline of the church family to the church itself.

Discipline is further based on the holy character of God (1 Pet. 1:16; Heb. 12:11). The pattern of God's holiness, his desire for the church to be holy, set apart unto Him, is an important reason for the necessity of church discipline. The church is therefore to clean out the leaven of malice and wickedness from its ranks (1 Cor. 5:6-8). A failure to discipline in a church today evidences a lack of awareness of the holiness of God.

Church discipline must be patterned after and based on the divine commands of Scripture. We have numerous passages which both command and give us biblical directives on the how, when and where of church discipline. Again, a failure to exercise this responsibility demonstrates a lack of obedience and belief in the authority of the Bible (1 Cor. 5:1-13; Matt. 18:17-18; Titus 3:10; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; 1 Tim. 5:20; Gal. 6:1).

A final basis for the necessity of church discipline is the testimony of the church in the world. The world observes the behavior and life of the church. When the church acts no differently than the world it loses its credibility and authenticity (1 Pet. 2:11-18; 3:8-16; 4:1-4).

### **B. The Purposes of Church Discipline**

- (1) Concern for the glory of God and the testimony of the flock.
- (2) The restoration and building up of the sinning believer.
- (3) The winning of a soul to Christ (if only a professing Christian).
- (4) The purity of the local body and its protection from moral and doctrinally impure influences, knowing a little leaven can leaven the entire lump (1 Cor. 5:6-7).

Such goals automatically govern the spirit in which all disciplinary action is to be given. Thus:

- (1) It must be done in the spirit of humility, gentleness and patience, looking to yourself lest you too be tempted (Gal. 6:1-2; 2 Tim. 2:24-25).
- (2) Those who walk disorderly are to be admonished, warned, and appealed to in love (1 Thess 5:14-15; 1 Tim. 5:1-2; Eph. 4:15; 2 Tim. 4:2). This admonishing, etc., is not restricted to the leaders but may be done by any member (1 Thess. 5:14).
- (3) If there is no response in repentance and obedience, then members are to withhold intimate fellowship until there is obedience (2 Thess. 3:6, 14). This is to indicate to the offender that his action has caused a rupture in the harmony of the body. Its goal is restoration and the person is still to be counted as a brother (2 Thess. 3:14-15).

(4) If the person persists after admonition and withdrawal of intimate fellowship, the final step is rejection or excommunication (Titus 3:10; Matt. 18:17b), accompanied by public rebuke before all (1 Tim. 5:20). Examples of church discipline are found in Scripture. The Corinthian believers were to be "gathered together" in order to take action against the offending brother (1 Cor. 2:6). We also find that it was the whole church in Rome and in Thessalonica who were to take action with regard to the unruly and schismatic and not just a few (2 Thess. 3:6-15; Rom. 16:17).

(5) Finally, discipline in the name of our Lord always includes a readiness to forgive. The many or majority who discipline must also be ready and eager to forgive, comfort, and reaffirm their love to the sinning person (2 Cor. 2:6-8).

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

### **1. When it is to be Practiced**

Great care must be exercised here. Scripture does not warrant the exercise of church discipline for an individual or a church's pet taboos or peeves. According to Scripture, there are five categories which warrant church discipline. These are:

- a. Difficulties between members (Matt. 18:15-17).
- b. Divisiveness. People causing divisions in the church (Rom. 16:17-18; Titus 3:9-11).
- c. Disorderly conduct. Conduct clearly out of line with the prescribed commands of Scripture (2 Thess. 3:6-15).
- d. Sins of the type mentioned in 1 Corinthians 5: incest, immorality, covetousness, idolatry, abusive speech, drunkenness, and swindling (1 Cor. 5:1, 11).
- e. False teaching. Erroneous teaching and views which concern the fundamentals of the faith, not lesser differences of interpretation (1 Tim. 1:20; 2 Tim. 2:17-18; also implied in Rev. 2:14—16; Phil. 3:2-3, 15-19; Rom. 16:17-18). The key concerns here are: (a) the holy character of God, (b) the testimony of the flock, (c) the effect upon the unity and purity of the flock, and (d) the edification and restoration of the individual.

### **2. How it is to be Practiced**

Scriptural procedure here is clear and specific steps are prescribed. They are as follows:

- a. Recognize the offense. Caution—one must be sure it is an offense which calls for discipline. Again, the Word is our criterion.
- b. Seek private correction and/or reconciliation with the offender (Matt. 18:15). This is when the problem involves two believers. The one offended or the one who recognizes the offense is to go privately and try to rectify the problem. If this fails, he is to take witnesses, preferably spiritual leaders, so that if it has to be brought before the whole church it can be firmly proven or established (Matt. 18:16-17).
- c. Seek reconciliation through the spiritual leadership if the problem involves an offense that is against the whole body, or is a threat to its unity. Initiatory action following the concept of Galatians 6:1 should be taken by the mature spiritual leaders of the church rather than by just one person. "You who are spiritual" in Galatians 6:1 is plural meaning literally, "you, the spiritual ones ..." These initial contacts provide opportunity for loving admonition, correction and forgiveness. On the other hand, if these first steps are not heeded, it constitutes a warning that further action will be taken and gives occasion for serious rebuke (2 Tim. 4:2; 1 Thess. 5:12-14; Titus 2:15; 3:10).
- d. Seek reconciliation through the whole body. If further action is necessary, it is to be taken before the whole church (Matt. 18:17). This action may result in more severe action. Any action taken must be approved by a majority vote of the Board of Overseers.

In essence then, this is the action of the Lord carrying out discipline through the action of the whole body through the leadership of the overseers or the spiritually mature (1 Cor. 5:4 "in the name of our Lord Jesus, when you are assembled, ... with the power of our Lord Jesus ..."). Similar heavenly authority is seen in the ratification of this disciplinary action as spelled out in Matthew 18:18-19).

## **ARTICLE XII: FINANCES**

Believers are to give financially from an attitude of commitment to the Lord (2 Cor. 8:1-6). It is the policy of Northside Church to keep the congregation informed of financial needs by means of the weekly bulletin, announcements from the pulpit, or other means as necessary. This will not include individual solicitation of members to taking of financial pledges. The purpose of this information is not to coerce or pressure anyone into

giving, but rather to provide avenues for giving as the Lord provides. Each believer is to give according to their ability with a cheerful heart (2 Cor. 9:7).

Because giving is done unto the Lord, it is critical that the local church handle the finances given with care and wisdom both for the glory of the Lord and for the testimony of the church (2 Cor. 8:20-21). With this view in mind, the following outlines the policies of handling financial decisions:

(1) All paid staff shall be paid a salary commensurate to their duties and abilities (1 Tim. 5:17-18; Gal. 6:6-7; 1 Cor. 9:6-11).

(2) All gifts given as a designated gift will be used as designated so long as those designations are in accord with biblical principles and applicable laws of the land governing such gifts. If any special gifts are given with the directions to use it in whatever area has the greatest need, the board of Overseers will decide how that gift will be used. All other gifts will go into the general fund. Wherever possible, gifts that can not be used as designated will be returned to the giver, who may choose to re-designate their use.

(3) The local church has the privilege and responsibility to provide financial support for those in service for the Lord (missionaries, seminary students, etc. [Phil. 4:14-17; 2 Cor. 8:1-5]). Northside Church will support certain of those in service as the Lord leads and provides. All of these supported must hold a doctrinal view in agreement with the doctrinal statement presented in this Constitution. The Board of Overseers will determine by majority which people and ministries Northside Church will support.

(4) Depending on the amount of money involved, the senior paid overseer may make a financial decision by himself, or the Board of Overseers may make the decision, or the congregation must make the decision.

(5) On an annual basis, during the first quarter of the year, finance overseers will be appointed to examine the salaries of all paid salary members, the amount of support given to the persons and ministries supported in number 3 above, and the expenditure limits for the paid overseer(s) and Board of Overseers. This team shall consist of at least two overseers and the church treasurer. All recommendations concerning changes in these areas will first be presented to the Board of Overseers. The final decisions made by the Board of Overseers will be recorded in the written minutes of the overseers' meeting.

(6) In order to keep orderly records, a treasurer shall be appointed by the Board of Overseers. The treasurer shall keep all necessary books, write necessary checks to pay bills, prepare monthly financial statements and any other duties as prescribed by the Board of Overseers.

### **ARTICLE XIII: GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

Suggestions and proposals from the flock can be a vital and healthy avenue by which the leadership may minister to the rest of the flock. When handled scripturally, this type of communication edifies the body, ministers to the needs of the flock, helps preserve and promote unity within the church and brings glory to God.

Following the principles outlined above, any member of the flock who harbors a disagreement about any policy or procedure promoted by the church or its leadership, should as a first step, prayerfully and privately approach the leadership. This may be done through informal consultation with an overseer, by means of a signed letter to the Board, or meeting with the Board at the church member's request. It is recognized that these steps should be taken prior to public discussion of any issue so as to help the leadership minister to the body more effectively and to help avoid discord and disunity within the flock (Prov. 13:3; 16:27-28; 17:4).

The church leadership should seek to prayerfully accept and address any complaint thus presented and seek to resolve all problems in a manner which best promotes those benefits mentioned above (Prov. 16:21-24).

When these policies are not followed, causing factions and strife, it will be necessary to exercise church discipline to deal with the offending member as per Article XII (Titus 2:10-11).

### **ARTICLE XIV: AMENDMENTS**

- A. This Constitution may be amended when the need for change is recognized by the overseers.
- B. At the time such need for amendment is believed to be present, the overseers shall make provisional modification in light of Scripture, and all essential information on this matter shall be communicated to the congregation in written form, providing no less than two (2) weeks for study and response. A date will be proposed for acceptance of the revisions at a meeting of the Board of Overseers. All amendments to this Constitution must be approved by a three-fifths majority of the Board of Overseers.
- C. Article III.A, Article XV.B, and Article XV.C of this constitution shall not be repealed, amended nor revised .

**ARTICLE XV:  
DISSOLUTION AND DISPOSITION OF PROPERTY**

- A. The decision to dissolve or disband must be approved by a three-fourths majority vote of the Board of Overseers.
- B. In the event this church body is dissolved, disbands or ceases to function as a church for any reason, the title to all property both real and personal shall pass to and be vested in the Christian, non-profit organization(s) specified by a majority vote of the Board of Overseers.