

Constitution

ARTICLE I. Preamble

In accordance with the will of the Father, under our holy head, Jesus Christ, and in the power of the Holy Spirit, we, the membership of Heritage Baptist Church, hereby covenant ourselves under this triune God, to be a particular people for His glory and delight, in obedience to Holy Scripture and in devotion to the exaltation of the Son, who is Jesus Christ.

ARTICLE II. Name

First established in 1977, this gathering of the redeemed in Christ shall be known as Heritage Baptist Church of Lynchburg, Virginia. In accordance with the laws of this Commonwealth of Virginia, this church shall be organized as a Virginia Nonstock Corporation.

We, the members of Heritage Baptist Church, do hereby organize this assembly in accord with the Virginia State Corporation Commission and adopt this Constitution as our Articles of Governance, always to be interpreted to reflect the character of God and bring glory to Jesus Christ as revealed in the Holy Scripture.

ARTICLE III. Foundations

The foundation of this church is the Lord Jesus Christ and its code of guidance in all its affairs is Holy Scripture, the Bible, composed of both the Old Testament and the New Testament, and these alone are the revealed words of God.

The Mission, What We Believe, the Church Covenant, and the Articles of Governance contained in this document shall serve together as the guiding rule of our interpretation of these Holy Scriptures, the method of our organization, and the standards by which Jesus Christ shall be understood and worshiped.

The object of this Church, in accordance with Holy Scripture, shall be to worship God according to the teaching of His Word, to practice the precepts and examples of the Church of our Lord Jesus Christ as set forth in the New Testament, to sustain its ordinances and doctrines, and to preach and propagate among all the peoples of the earth the gospel of salvation, which is by personal confession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior.

In accordance with the will of God, and with respect to this nation and this Commonwealth of Virginia, this church shall abide by applicable governmental laws and ordinances, insofar that said laws and ordinances do not contradict or impede the higher allegiance that we owe to God according to Holy Scripture.

ARTICLE IV. Mission

It is the mission of Heritage Baptist Church to make followers of Jesus Christ by living the gospel life among the nations.

Jesus Christ is the head of the church, the object of our worship, the one to whom all glory is due, and the central theme of our message. People confessing Christ as Savior is the preeminent means by which God is glorified, and confession entails an active following of Christ in obedience and submission to the rule of Christ. It is the gospel proclaimed and the gospel lived out that serves as the primary witness to the realities of a living Christ. The scope of our mission is to live among and proclaim the gospel among every people, nation, ethnicity, and language group, so that they may follow Jesus Christ in eternal joy and worship.

ARTICLE V. What We Believe

A summary of our core beliefs is stated below in creed, confession, and doctrine. These concise statements are not the Word of God but are derived from the Word of God. We hereby covenant ourselves based on the Apostles' Creed and a modified version of the 1853 New Hampshire Confession of Faith, as well as a summary of doctrinal particulars as outlined herein:

Our Creed

We believe in God, the Father Almighty,
the Creator of heaven and earth,
and in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord:
Who was conceived of the Holy Spirit,
born of the Virgin Mary,
suffered under Pontius Pilate,
was crucified, died, and was buried.
He descended into *Hades*.*
The third day He arose again from the dead.
He ascended into heaven
and sits at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,
whence He shall come to judge the living and the dead.
We believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy *catholic*** church,
the communion of saints,
the forgiveness of sins,
the resurrection of the body,
and life everlasting.
Amen.

**The statement "descended into Hades" is a historically debated point on the scope and nature of Jesus descending into the place of death. We nonetheless hold that whatever perspective is embraced, that His work was fully completed on the cross.*

***The word "catholic" is a historical term that refers to the universal Christian church and is not equivalent to the Roman Catholic church.*

Our Confession

Of The Scriptures

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without any mixture of error for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us; and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried.

Of The True God

We believe that there is one, and only one, living and true God, an infinite, intelligent Spirit, whose name is Yahweh, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of Heaven and Earth; inexpressibly glorious in holiness, and worthy of all possible honor, confidence, and love; that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; equal in every divine perfection, and executing distinct but harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.

Of The Fall Of Man

We believe that Man was created in holiness, under the law of his Maker; but by voluntary transgression fell from that holy and happy state; in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, not by constraint but choice; being by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the law of God, positively inclined to evil; and therefore under just condemnation to eternal ruin, without defense or excuse.

Of The Way Of Salvation

We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace, through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God, who by the appointment of the Father, freely took upon Him our nature, yet without sin; honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and by His death made a full atonement for our sins; that having risen from the dead He is now exalted in heaven; and uniting in His wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfections, He is every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and an all-sufficient Savior.

Of Justification

We believe that the great gospel blessing which Christ secures to such as believe in Him is justification; that justification includes the pardon of sin, and the promise of eternal life on principles of righteousness; that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood; by virtue of which faith His perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us of God; that it brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity.

Of The Freeness Of Salvation

We believe that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel; that it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a cordial, penitent, and obedient faith; and that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth, but his own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the gospel; which rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation.

Of Grace In Regeneration

We believe that, in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again; that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind; that it is effected in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit, in connection with divine truth, so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel; and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance, faith, and newness of life.

Of Repentance And Faith

We believe that repentance and faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God; whereby being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger, and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ, we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet, Priest and King, and relying on Him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior.

Of God's Purpose Of Grace

We believe that election is the eternal purpose of God, according to which He graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners; that being perfectly consistent with the free agency of mankind, it comprehends all the means in connection with the end; that it is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, being infinitely free, wise, holy, and unchangeable; that it utterly excludes boasting, and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God, and active imitation of His free mercy; that it encourages the use of means in the highest degree; that it may be ascertained by its effects in all who truly believe the gospel; that it is the foundation of Christian assurance; and that to ascertain it with regard to ourselves demands and deserves the utmost diligence.

Of Sanctification

We believe that sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of His holiness; that it is a progressive work; that it is begun in regeneration; and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means – especially, the Word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer.

Of The Perseverance Of Saints

We believe that such only are real believers as endure unto the end; that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors; that a special Providence watches over their welfare; and that they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Of The Harmony Of The Law And The Gospel

We believe that the law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of His moral government; that it is holy, just, and good; and that the inability which the Scriptures ascribe to fallen men to fulfill its precepts arises entirely from their love of sin: to deliver them from which, and to restore them through a Mediator to unfeigned obedience to the holy law, is one great end of the gospel and of the means of grace connected with the establishment of the visible church.

Of A Gospel Church

We believe that a visible church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by His laws; and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word; and that its only scriptural officers are elders as pertains to governance and deacons as pertains to service.

Of Baptism And The Lord's Supper

We believe that Christian Baptism is the immersion in water of a believer into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; to show forth in a solemn and beautiful emblem, our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, with the effect of such faith being our death to sin and resurrection to a new life. We believe that by the Lord's Supper, believers, through the sacred use of bread and wine*, commemorate together the sacrificial love of Christ, preceded always by solemn self-examination. We believe these are the ordinances of the gathered church and are required for the obedient Christian life.

**The principle of worship in sacred Communion is the primary focus rather than the exact historic articles, therefore a form of bread and juice reflective of the fruit of the vine is sufficient application.*

Of The Christian Day of Worship

We believe that the first day of the week is the normative designation for the Lord's Day for corporate worship; and that it is to be kept sacred by the devout observance of all the means of grace**, both private and public; and by preparation for that rest that remains for the people of God.

***Prayer, the Word, the ordinances, etc.*

Of Civil Government

We believe that civil government is of Divine appointment, for the interests and good order of human society; and that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored, and obeyed; except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the Prince of the kings of the earth.

Of The Righteous And The Wicked

We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked; that such only as through faith are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and sanctified by the Spirit of our God, and are truly righteous in His esteem; while all such as continue in impenitence and unbelief are in His sight wicked, and under the curse; and this distinction holds among men both in and after death.

Of The World To Come

We believe that the end of the world is approaching; that at the last day Christ will descend from heaven and raise the dead from the grave to final retribution; that a solemn separation will then take place; that the wicked will be adjudged to endless punishment and the righteous to endless joy; and that this judgment will fix forever the final state of men in heaven or hell.

Doctrinal Particulars

At different junctures in history, particular doctrines of the Christian faith require added clarification in light of the systematic attacks on the substance, character, and application of Christian belief. These beliefs are so particular to the substance and the application of our faith, that we formally recognize them as being an inseparable entailment of our creed and confession. We hereby specify and clarify key doctrinal positions to safeguard a particular understanding of our creed and confession.

Concerning Scripture

We believe that God has revealed Himself to mankind both generally in creation and specially in the Holy Scriptures. All of God's created order is God's general revelation, by which He communicates His existence and work as Creator. Scripture is the product of God's special revelation, by which He communicates to mankind the truth about Himself that would have otherwise been eternally unknown: His nature, His character, His purpose for mankind, and His plan of redemption.

The Scriptures are the product of the verbal, plenary inspiration of God, resulting in the original autographs being inerrant, infallible, and authoritative. The Scriptures in their entirety, down to the very words of the original autographs, were given by divine inspiration and are sufficient for making known the will of God. Inspiration was that work whereby God gave us His Word by His Spirit, through human writers utilizing their distinct personalities and literary styles.

The inspiration of Scripture is attested to by Scripture itself, by Jesus Christ, and by the character of God. Since the character of God is absolutely true, trustworthy, and infallible, the Word of God is also absolutely true, trustworthy, and infallible. Those sixty-six books (thirty-nine in the Old Testament and twenty-seven in the New Testament) have their place in the Bible on the basis of their inspiration and authority. God also works in the illumination (making it understandable) and preservation (maintaining a trustworthy copy) of His Word. The Scriptures stand as our final standard and authority for human conduct, creed, and opinions.

Concerning the Trinity

We believe that God fundamentally exists as the divine Trinity. God's divine essence is invisible and immaterial as He is Spirit; His divine nature is undivided and indivisible. God exists in three eternal and coequal Persons in the one divine essence, known respectively as the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. God is living, self-existent, self-sufficient, eternal, infinite, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, wise, immutable, sovereign, incomprehensible, holy, righteous, just, true, faithful, good, long-suffering, gracious, merciful, and loving.

Concerning the Father

We believe that the Father is the decreeing authority, head, and first Person of the Trinity. He is first in role within the Trinity, but equal in divine essence with the Son and the Spirit, being no more nor less divine compared with the other persons of the Trinity. The Father and the Son display a particular relationship of affection that showcases a total harmony of purpose and being, with the Holy Spirit being the perfect expression of their will. From the Old Testament to the New Testament, the Father is the same God who is beheld in the face of Christ.

Concerning Jesus Christ

We believe that Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of the Father and the second Person of the Trinity. He is the eternal, pre-existent Son of God. He is truly God and truly man; equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit, in a perfect coexistent deity and humanity. Although pre-existent, Jesus took upon Himself full humanity while keeping His full deity, and became incarnate by miraculous conception and virgin birth. He lived a sinless human life, offered Himself as the atoning sacrifice by dying on the cross, and shed His blood, for the purpose of redeeming sinful men. He satisfied the wrath of God, being the full substitution and the sufficient atonement for the sins of men. He was buried and on the third day, He arose bodily from the dead. He later ascended bodily into Heaven where at the right hand of the Father, He now intercedes for those who believe in Him.

Concerning the Holy Spirit

We believe the Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity, equal with God the Father and God the Son, having the same divine nature and partaking of the same divine essence. The Holy Spirit actively ministered in the Old Testament through creation, revelation, and in a special, selective manner with mankind. The Holy Spirit actively ministered in the New Testament in all aspects of Christ's life, from His birth to His death and resurrection. The Holy Spirit now has a primary role in salvation as He calls, convicts, and regenerates the unbeliever. He indwells, baptizes, convicts, gifts, conforms, teaches, guides, assures, and prays for believers.

Concerning the Bride of Christ

The Church is the bride of Christ purchased with the blood of Christ by His death. We believe that the Church exists in two senses, namely, universal and local. In the universal sense, the Church consists of all those during this redemptive age after the cross who have been born of God's Spirit and have therefore been baptized into the body of Christ. In the local sense, a church is a redeemed, living assembly of baptized believers associated by a covenant of faith, organized by New Testament principles, assembling regularly together, led by qualified elders who are supported by qualified deacons, under the authority of God's Word and the Headship of Christ, and observing the ordinances. The ordinances are those commands of Christ given to the Church, specifically Baptism and the Lord's Supper. They are an act of obedience, not the conveyance of salvific grace.

Concerning Sin

We believe that sin and its effects were not a part of creation but entered creation early in the Genesis account. Sin is a failure to conform to the divine standard of (and/or the transgression of) God's law. Sin entered the created order when Adam and Eve chose to disobey God in the garden. All mankind has inherited original sin and guilt from Adam and all are wholly corrupted by sin in the totality of their being. The basis of ultimate and complete victory over sin is found in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Those who believe in Christ are justified from their sin, but sin is not dead in them until it is removed at their glorification.

Concerning the Nature of Salvation

We believe that because of sin, its results, and the character of God, all of mankind needs salvation. This salvation was sufficiently provided for through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ but efficiently applied to those who believe. Salvation is wholly the work of God's grace, God's mercy, and is completely apart from our works. All three persons of the Trinity are involved in salvation. The Father planned it, the Son obtained it, and the Spirit preserves it. The redeemed have

been converted and justified as God has made and declared them to be righteous, growing daily to be more like Christ. A saved person will be glorified in the New Creation.

The sinless Christ is the sinner's substitute, whereby reconciliation is made with God on his behalf, redemption is made from the slavery of sin, regeneration makes him alive, and adoption as a child into God's family has been accomplished with all its rights, privileges, and responsibilities. All this is possible through the atoning death of Christ. The benefits of His atoning death are for all who by faith assent to the facts of the gospel, exercise repentance toward God, and place their trust in Christ and His atoning work. This salvation is evidenced by one's relationship with God and His people, one's obedience to God through His Word, one's love for God's people, one's confession of Jesus, one's being made new, and one's works of righteousness. Salvation is secure as it is based in the very character, promises, power, and deeds of God so that the true believer will persevere until his glorification.

Concerning Mankind

We believe in a creator God of a created cosmos. We believe that mankind came into being through the creative act of God. Mankind is the crowning work of God's creation, in that he was created in God's image and was given dominion as coregents over all creation. The nature of mankind is material and immaterial. He fell from his original state of perfection through willful disobedience. As a result, his nature was corrupted, death was introduced to the world, and the sinful nature was passed down through him to all proceeding generations. As a result of original sin, mankind is spiritually dead in their sin and in need of salvation.

Concerning Marriage and Sexuality

We believe God created mankind male and female and that marriage was ordained by God at creation as the sacred union between one naturally born as a male/man and one naturally born as a female/woman. All sexual relations must therefore be reserved for that sacred union. Christian marriage is a representation of Christ's relationship to His church. We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a biological man and a biological woman who are married to each other (a natural sexual identity is one that is biologically male or female). We believe that God has commanded that no sexual activity be indulged outside of a marriage covenant between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of sexual impurity, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, pedophilia, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography, polygamy, any attempt to change one's sex, or disagreement with one's biological sex, is sinful and offensive to God.

Concerning the Marriage Covenant

We believe that marriage between a man and a woman was established by God in the beginning in order to ultimately image Christ and the Church. Therefore, we believe that marriage is a holy covenant that should be cherished and protected in order that the image of Christ and the Church may be displayed clearly and without blemish. We believe this image is rightly displayed when a husband loves his wife as Christ loves the Church and the wife responds to her husband's loving leadership in the same way the Church responds to Christ. Due to this holy image of marriage, we believe that God is grieved by the sin that results in divorce, as well as the dissolution of the marital covenant, permitting divorce only in specific circumstances. Likewise, remarriage after a divorce should be done only in accordance with the Scriptures and in transparency with the elders.

Concerning Creation

We believe that God, in His goodness, created the heavens and the earth out of nothing, including all life, by direct act, according to the Genesis account, and it was good, untainted by sin. We believe Scripture is the final authority in our understanding of creation, and we reject any system of thought that displaces God as the creator and final authority over the cosmos. The entirety of the universe is the product of the creative, intentional design of the God of the Bible. Mankind is created in the image and likeness of God, descendants of a literal Adam and Eve. God's creatorship means that He owns the earth and all its inhabitants. As stewards of both our lives and the earth, we value life and are accountable to Him for the way we invest our lives and treat His creation.

Concerning Roles of Men and Women in the Church

Men and women are equal in essence, dignity, and value, but are distinct by divine design. As part of God's good, created order, men and women are to have different yet complementary roles and responsibilities in the home and church. While the gift of leadership can reside in both men and women and can be exercised within various capacities of the local church, the office of elder is reserved for qualified men.

Concerning the Spiritual Realm

We believe in the existence of the spiritual realm, which consists of created personal beings referred to as angels. Angels were created by God to serve as special agents of His worship, as His special messengers of warning and hope, and as warriors fighting on behalf of God and His chosen people. Angels are unredeemable beings who ponder the wonder of God's choice to redeem the elect through the giving of His Son. We also believe that some angels rebelled alongside Satan against God's rule and were expelled from participation in the glory of God's presence. These beings are referred to in Scripture as demons. The demonic world with Satan at its head is organized to execute warfare against the design and purpose of God and is opposed to the followers of Jesus Christ. The extent of the influence of this demonic realm is limited in its scope and ability in that it finds itself in subjection to the power and authority of God Himself. While demon possession is a reality for those outside of Christ, believers in Christ cannot be possessed but can experience the spiritual oppression of the demonic realm. Those in Christ do not need to fear because their identity and security has been purchased by the blood of Christ. The diminishing of demonic influence in the life of believers in Christ is done through the normative means of grace – preaching of the Word, fellowship of the saints, participation in the ordinances, Scripture reading, prayer, and a life of holiness.

Concerning the End Times

We believe that the victory of Christ is assured. The return of Jesus will be physical and visible, and is imminent. He is returning for His Church and to earth to establish His Kingdom. We believe in the resurrection of the body, the final judgment, the eternal blessed state of the righteous in heaven, and the endless suffering of the unregenerate in Hell. In Christ's victory, sin is extinguished, death is defeated, and Satan is banished for eternity in the Lake of Fire. The victory of Christ culminates in a New Creation, a New Eden, a New Jerusalem, and the enjoyment of His presence forever.

ARTICLE VI. Church Covenant

Having been led, as we believe by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior, and, on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ, under the power of the Word of God, unto mission to make followers of Jesus Christ by living the gospel life among the nations.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this Church in knowledge, holiness, and unity; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute generously, cheerfully, and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of this church, and the spreading of the gospel through all nations.

We also engage to maintain rhythms of spiritual growth in our families and in our personal lives; to biblically love and disciple our children; to seek the salvation and spiritual growth of others; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our behavior; and to avoid all unbiblical words and actions that affect the unity of the body of Christ and hinder the advancement of His Kingdom.

We acknowledge the high regard of the local church in the Scriptures; therefore, if we should ever consider leaving this church, we would engage to do so in a healthy manner by conversing with the church Eldership. Should we remove from this place, we will, as soon as possible, unite with a healthy gospel church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant in accordance with the principles of God's Word.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to stir up one another to love and good works; to not neglect meeting together; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian compassion and courtesy in all things; to be slow to take offense but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the commands of our Savior to secure it without delay.

ARTICLE VII. Membership

Membership is a sacred covenant between the redeemed of a local church, whereby they voluntarily enter submission and accountability with one another for the sake of living out Christ in their individual lives and as a community. Membership is, therefore, a recognized covenant relationship with each individual fitted as a part of the larger whole, in mutual submission and accountability to the imperium of Christ.

Qualifications of Membership

The membership of this church shall consist of persons 18 years of age or older who have repented and believed in the Lord Jesus Christ as their Savior and have subsequently been baptized by immersion in this church or a church tradition of like faith and order. A member must believe the Apostles' Creed, agree to come under the governance of this Constitution (including its future revisions duly adopted by the membership) and the Eldership defined herein, and sign the Member

Covenant. The membership reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be a member. Upon completion of the new members' process, a prospective member may be accepted by vote of the membership. All members must have their primary domicile in Virginia, in or around the city of Lynchburg.

Removal of Membership

Membership may be removed as a result of:

- Death;
- Transfer to a church of like faith and order;
- Church discipline;
- An extended period of inactivity;
- Mutual agreement of church Eldership and the member.

Matters of Church Discipline

The threefold purpose of church discipline is to glorify God by maintaining purity in the local church, to edify believers by deterring sin, and to promote the spiritual welfare of the offending believer by calling him or her to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct.

The process of disciplining members shall be led by the elders. Any member in this process will be disciplined according to the specified process of Matthew 18:15–20, a process which has a distinct sequence. Discipline may include the removal from church membership and the instruction to abstain from participation in the Lord's Supper. Restoration to Christian fellowship will be made on the basis of biblical repentance. Restoration to membership will require recompletion of the membership process.

The scope of the mandate in Matthew 18:17 to "tell it to the church" shall be determined by the elders who serve on behalf of the church. The church discipline may be taken before the entire church according to the position of the individual or the nature of the offense. If the discipline is taken before the entire church body, the church body will be notified as to the action taken, but no vote will be taken. The person involved shall be asked to be present at the meeting.

The church Eldership reserves the right to refuse a request for withdrawal of one's membership if they are in the process of church discipline.

ARTICLE VIII. Church Governance

Membership

Under the authority of Jesus Christ and the Word of God, the membership of the church is the final authority within this local church. This authority is normally exercised through the election of elders to govern the church. However, the vote of the membership of this church, as provided in the Constitution, shall be required to effect the following actions:

- Adopt, amend, or repeal the Constitution of this church;
- Approve new members;
- Appoint vocational and non-vocational elders of the church;

- Approve the annual spending plan of the church;
- Approve the purchase, sale, and mortgaging of land;
- Accept, reject, or otherwise dispose of any matter submitted to the membership of the church by the Eldership;
- According to Article XI, Section C, call a special member meeting;
- According to Article IX, Section F, remove elders of the church.

Elders

The elders of the church are to lovingly govern, care for, and equip the membership to do the work of the ministry. Elders may appoint and remove deacons according to the needs of the church and according to the biblical requirements of deacons in 1 Timothy 3:8–13.

The leadership of the church shall be vested in the Eldership. The Eldership shall be composed of men only, both vocational and non-vocational elders, with the number of elders at any time determined by the Eldership in accordance with the needs of the ministry and the desire of qualified men in the church. The Eldership shall be composed of not less than three men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of elder set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:6–9.

The Eldership is responsible for governing the church, teaching the Word of God, praying for and tending to the flock of God in this church, and exercising authority in matters which are not the governing responsibility of the membership. The elders shall be equal in authority but may be specialized in function. The Eldership includes a functional hierarchy of different roles, responsibilities, and degrees of exercised leadership that is authorized by the Eldership in accordance with the Constitution.

The Eldership will function as the Board of Directors of the corporation.

ARTICLE IX. Eldership

A. Qualifications

The minimum qualifications for elders shall not be less than those listed in 1 Timothy 3:1–7 and Titus 1:6–9, including the requirement that they be men. In addition to the minimum qualifications given in Scripture, the elders must accept and adhere to this Constitution and be an actively involved member of Heritage Baptist Church.

B. Definitions

Elders - Elders are endowed with ecclesiastical authority to govern, guide, and protect the church. The Eldership shall comprise both vocational elders (staff elders) and non-vocational elders (lay elders) who hold different positions and degrees of responsibility within the Eldership.

- **Vocational Elders** - Staff elders are those who desire to devote their vocational energies to the service of God's people and who, upon confirmation of the membership, will receive financial remuneration from the church. Those confirmed by the membership to fill a pastoral capacity must meet the qualifications of an elder and will serve as members of the Eldership.

The term “pastor” is used within Heritage Baptist Church to describe those vocational elders who are charged with overseeing a particular domain of the ministry structure.

- **Senior Pastor** (Lead Staff Elder) - The senior pastor shall be an elder. The senior pastor shall perform the duties of an elder described in Article VIII and Article IX and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching, teaching, and the leadership of the elders. He shall be responsible for the oversight of the church’s public services, including preaching and the administration of the ordinances of Baptism and Communion, and performing such other duties as determined by the Eldership. The senior pastor shall have oversight of the supervision and evaluation of staff, the hiring and firing of support staff, and the business operations of the church. In the absence or incapacity of the senior pastor, the Eldership shall assume responsibility for his duties.
- **Executive Pastor** (Executive Staff Elder) - The executive pastor shall be an elder. One or more executive pastors may be appointed according to need. The executive pastor(s) shall perform the duties of an elder described in Article VIII and Article IX. The executive pastor(s) shall work closely with the senior pastor to oversee the general leadership of the organization of the church, the staff pastors, and the support staff. The role of executive pastor shall encompass the duties of a staff pastor in addition to the duties determined to be necessary by the senior pastor in accordance with the Eldership.
- **Staff Pastor** (Staff Elder) - The staff pastor shall be an elder. One or more staff pastors may be appointed according to need. The staff pastor(s) shall perform the duties of an elder described in Article VIII and Article IX. The staff pastor(s) shall work closely with the senior pastor and executive pastor(s) in the oversight of specifically assigned ministry areas. Additional responsibilities may be assigned by the senior pastor or executive pastor(s) in accordance with the Eldership.
- **Non-Vocational Elders** - Lay elders are those who desire to devote their volunteer energies to the service of God’s people by serving as members of the Eldership. Upon confirmation of the membership, they shall perform the duties of an elder described in Article VIII and Article IX. Lay elders are not employed by the church as staff members and do not receive financial remuneration from the church. Lay elders shall be subject to term limits.

C. Selection of Elders

Vocational Elders (Staff Elders) - A search committee will be appointed by the Eldership for each individual staff elder that needs to be hired. The search committee shall consist of at least five deacon-qualified church members in good standing, of whom one must be an elder and at least two must be women. The role of the search committee is to identify and vet potential candidates. The vetting process includes, but is not limited to, the evaluation of résumés, the contacting of references, conducting of a background check, and interviewing of potential candidates. Once a satisfactory candidate is found, he will be recommended to the Eldership for consideration.

The Eldership will interview and evaluate the potential candidate. The candidate will be made available to the membership in multiple settings and environments. Opportunities for observation of the candidate will include, but are not limited to, teaching of the Scriptures, doctrinal beliefs, and social interactions. The candidate, before he is recommended to the membership, shall be required to state to the Eldership his acceptance of and adherence to this Constitution. Once a satisfactory candidate is identified, the Eldership will vote to recommend the candidate to the membership to be installed as either lead elder, executive elder, or staff elder of the church.

Written and verbal public notice will be given to the membership on two Sundays immediately preceding the date of the member meeting for the vote by the membership. A two-thirds majority of the membership present at that member meeting shall be necessary to extend an invitation to Eldership, according to Article XI. After the invitation has been extended, a date for installation shall be set by the Eldership. The elder candidate shall complete the membership process before being installed as an elder.

Non-Vocational Elders (Lay Elders) - The Eldership will be responsible to identify and recommend a candidate for the position of lay elder based upon personal observation, expressed desire of the candidate, and input from both men and women who are deacon-qualified members. The candidate will be vetted through an elder training process to ensure that he meets the character qualifications of an elder and is equipped to function as an elder. The process includes, but is not limited to, a background check and interviews of both men and women who thoroughly know the candidate. Those desiring to be non-vocational elders must be active members of Heritage for no less than one year before consideration.

The Eldership will interview and evaluate the potential candidate. The candidate will be made available to the membership in multiple settings and environments. Opportunities for observation of the candidate will include, but are not limited to, teaching of the Scriptures, doctrinal beliefs, and social interactions. Once a satisfactory candidate is identified, the Eldership will vote to recommend the candidate to the membership to be installed as a lay elder.

Written and verbal public notice will be given to the membership on two Sundays immediately preceding the date of the meeting for the vote by the membership. A two-thirds majority of the membership present at that meeting shall be necessary to extend an invitation to Eldership. After the invitation has been extended, a date for installation shall be set by the Eldership.

Lay elders will serve for a three-year term upon affirmative vote by the membership of the church. An elder may serve two consecutive three-year terms. After the first three-year term, if the lay elder desires a second term then the Eldership must reconfirm by consensus; otherwise, an explanation of non-confirmation will be provided to the membership. Upon reconfirmation by the Eldership, the membership must then also reconfirm him by vote.

At the end of two consecutive three-year terms, there will be a mandatory hiatus of at least one year. At the end of a hiatus, if a previously qualified lay elder desires to reenter Eldership, the Eldership must reconfirm him by consensus and the membership must reconfirm him by vote.

D. Duties of the Eldership

The duties of the Eldership shall be to direct this church to fulfill Christ's purpose for His Church. Such duties shall include, but not be limited to prayer, ministry of the Word, ensuring doctrinal fidelity, conducting the worship services, administering the ordinances of Baptism and Communion, stewarding church resources, overseeing the deacons, guarding a biblical community through church membership and discipline, equipping the saints for the work of the ministry, shepherding care, and mobilizing the church for local and global missions. The Eldership shall organize itself however it determines to be best to achieve the mission of the church. When the Eldership speaks, it speaks with one voice.

E. Elder Meetings

The Eldership shall be led by an executive team composed of a combination of staff and lay elders. From among the staff elders, the senior pastor will act as the Chairman of the Eldership, and the executive pastor (or an appointed elder if the executive position has not been filled) will serve as the treasurer. From among the lay elders, a Vice-Chairman shall be appointed to serve. Meetings shall endeavor to remain focused on the primary responsibilities of the Eldership as delineated in Section D.

The elders must meet regularly, no less than once per quarter. Meetings of the Eldership may be held at any location and may be conducted by means of electronic communication through which the elders may simultaneously hear each other. Notice of any meeting of the Eldership will be given by appropriate and satisfactory means as determined by the Eldership. Meetings of the Eldership may be called by the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman, or at least three members of the Eldership.

A quorum for Eldership meetings shall be constituted by the presence of a majority of the elders. Meetings held within a twenty-four hour notice must have a quorum of two-thirds of the Eldership. In the absence of a quorum, those present may adjourn the meeting until a quorum is established. When a quorum is present, decisions shall be made by a majority vote of the elders in attendance. Only elders are eligible to vote, and proxy votes will not be accepted. An elder at a meeting is assumed to agree with the decisions made unless he votes against the decision. The Eldership can take any action allowed or required by law, the Articles of Incorporation, or this Constitution without holding a meeting, as long as a majority of the elders agree in writing.

F. Resignation/ Removal of an Elder

An elder shall continue in office until he resigns, is removed, or in the case of a non-vocational elder, his term limit expires. The membership must be notified of this change to the Eldership with accompanying rationale. An elder may be removed by a two-thirds majority vote of the Eldership or by a two-thirds majority vote of the membership at a Special Meeting (see Article XI). An elder shall give the church not less than thirty days' notice of intent to resign. The Eldership will determine appropriate severance for a vocational elder.

G. Church Officers

For legal purposes, the senior pastor shall serve as President. The Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer shall annually be appointed by the Eldership at the first meeting of the Eldership held after the annual meeting of the membership.

H. Compensation

Vocational elders shall be employees of the Church. Serving on the Eldership shall be a part of their job description, and therefore shall not receive any additional compensation for their services among the Eldership. Non-vocational elders shall receive no compensation for their services on the Eldership.

The wages and benefits of the vocational elders shall be approved by the non-vocational elders as part of the annual budget process. Any vocational elder involved in the process must recuse himself with regard to his own compensation.

I. Conflict of Interest

Members of the Eldership shall not use their position on the Eldership in ways that could be interpreted as a conflict of interest. Each elder shall disclose to the entire Eldership any conflict of interest in any matter under consideration by the Eldership. If, in the view of the elder or the Eldership, a conflict of interest exists, the elder shall recuse himself from the vote on said matter. The minutes of the meeting in which the decision is made shall reflect his recusal.

J. Rights of Inspection

The Eldership, by simple majority vote, shall have the right to determine who may inspect the books, records, and documents of the Church. Individual elders do not have sole approval authority. Approvals shall be noted and kept on record in meeting minutes. Use or abuse of this right will be subject to the accountability of the Eldership.

ARTICLE X. Deacons

Deacons are trusted servants of the church. The role of deacon is non-governing and is reserved for men and women who exemplify 1 Timothy 3:8–13. The church shall recognize men and women who desire to give themselves in service to the church, and who possess particular gifts of service and administration. They are trusted servants who are given responsibilities of care and stewardship under the governing headship of the Eldership. The deacons shall assist the elders in any service that shall support and promote the ministry of the Word, the facilitation of the ministries of the church, and the care for the congregation. The Eldership shall have the authority to appoint, remove, and organize the deacons according to what is determined to be best to achieve the mission of the church.

ARTICLE XI. Meetings

All public gatherings arranged under the auspices of this church shall be under the oversight of the Eldership.

A. Worship

A public, corporate worship service shall be held on Sundays, barring extenuating circumstances. The ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper shall be celebrated at regular intervals on Sundays and at such other times as the Eldership may determine. Other church services or gatherings may be approved by the Eldership for the advancement of the mission of the church.

B. Regular Member Meetings

Meetings of the membership shall be called by the Eldership at least twice per year. The first meeting of the fiscal year shall be considered the annual member meeting. Notification of the meeting must be made in writing and verbally at least ten days prior to the meeting. The vote of a majority of the membership present at the member meetings shall suffice to approve any business presented at the meetings except as specifically set forth herein.

C. Special Member Meetings

The Eldership may call for special meetings of the church membership at any time. Notification of the special meeting and the purpose thereof must be made in writing and verbally at least ten days prior to the special meeting.

During any called meeting of the membership, a member may call for a special meeting of the church for the purpose of voting on any of the items pertaining to congregational governance as listed in Article VIII. A simple majority of the members present at any called member meeting must vote to approve the call of the special meeting. Notification of the special meeting and the purpose thereof must be made in writing and verbally at least ten days prior to the special meeting. Elders are required to attend any such meeting, else forgo their rights to oversee that meeting. In the absence of all elders, the members may appoint a moderator to facilitate the meeting.

Outside of an elder-called member meeting, special meetings may be called by any member with not less than ten days' nor more than 60 days' notice to the church with a petition signed by 30% of the active voting members. When such a meeting is called, only the business on the petition will be discussed.

D. Voting Thresholds

A two-thirds majority of the membership present and voting at a meeting is required to:

- Adopt, amend, or repeal the Constitution of this church;
- Appoint vocational and non-vocational elders of the church;
- As specified in Section C above, remove elders of the church.

A simple majority of the membership present and voting at a meeting is required to:

- Approve new members;
- Approve the annual spending plan of the church;
- Approve the purchase, sale, and mortgaging of land;
- Accept, reject, or otherwise dispose of any matter submitted to the membership of the church by the Eldership;
- Call a special meeting according to Section C above.

E. Rules of Order

Sufficient parliamentary procedures shall be utilized in conducting all church affairs.

ARTICLE XII. Policies Regarding Marriage and Sexuality

Recognizing that the holiness of God is to be treated with the utmost reverence, we also recognize that God is loving and gracious and that we should likewise conduct ourselves in a manner befitting Jesus Christ Himself. All truth and beliefs regarding sexual identity should be communicated with love and compassion in a Christ-like demonstration of grace.

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin by seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. No matter the nature of the offense committed, God's grace and love are exceedingly sufficient to make the individual anew.

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful, hostile, and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual or group are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture and the convictions of this church.

People of all backgrounds, self-proclaimed identities, and personal struggles are welcome at this church. However, ongoing life decisions which are contrary to God's Word may exclude them from certain levels of participation including, but not limited to, church membership, leadership positions, and areas of service.

In dealing with matters of sexuality, we do so out of fear and reverence for the holiness and majesty of God's standards of righteousness. In keeping with the character of God Himself, we affirm the following scriptural convictions concerning sexual identities and conduct:

- We believe that gender exists as a binary reflection of biological sex. Biological human males are men in gender and biological human females are women in gender.
- We believe that marriage was ordained by God at creation as the sacred union between one naturally born male/man and one naturally born female/woman. All sexual relations must therefore be reserved for that sacred union. Christian marriage is a representation of Christ's relationship to His church.
- We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a biological man and a biological woman who are married to each other (a natural sexual identity is one that is biologically male or female). We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be indulged outside of a marriage covenant between a man and a woman. We

believe that any form of sexual impurity, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, pedophilia, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography, polygamy, any attempt to change one's sex, or disagreement with one's biological sex, is sinful and offensive to God.

- We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of the church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by the church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, should abide by and agree to this Statement on Marriage and Sexuality and conduct themselves accordingly.
- Church facilities may not be used for any purpose that advocates, endorses, or promotes sexual impurity, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, pedophilia, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography, polygamy, any attempt to change one's sex, or disagreement with one's biological sex. This policy includes but is not limited to weddings, funerals, birthday parties, reunions, anniversaries, and baby showers.
- Under no circumstance is an elder or church member to officiate or endorse any wedding ceremony that violates the belief and teaching of this church body in accordance with the biblical teachings of sexual identity.

ARTICLE XIII. Constitutional Changes

We recognize that this document forms a construct for governance under our ultimate authority, which is the Word of God. We shall be governed by the Word of God, though we see this document as a necessary and helpful tool to functionally and efficiently work out the mission of the church, as well as reflect, in belief and practice, our convictions and priorities. Any changes to this Constitution should be done with great care, process, and prayer, and shall require a two-thirds majority vote of the membership.