

PROVIDENCE CHURCH OF LEHIGH ACRES, FLORIDA

CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

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CONSTITUTION

PREFACE

There are many good reasons why a New Testament Church should have Articles of Faith, a Covenant, and a Constitution. Together they can greatly assist us in the efforts of biblically organizing and conducting the ministries that have been entrusted to us by Jesus Christ. It must be readily acknowledged, however, that these documents, despite their usefulness and precision, will avail nothing apart from the presence and power of the Spirit of God in a Church. It is with this keen awareness of our absolute dependence upon our great God, that these articles are set forth.

PREAMBLE

We, the members of Providence Church, do ordain and establish the following articles, to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

ARTICLE I

Name

The name of this church shall be 'Providence Church of Lehigh Acres, Florida.'

ARTICLE II

Purpose

The purpose of this church is to glorify God, by treasuring Christ, loving people, and making disciples. To this end we are committed to proclaiming God's perfect Law and His glorious Gospel of Grace in Jesus Christ throughout the world, and to defending the 'faith once delivered unto the saints' (Jude 3). (See Appendix F for our Core Values).

ARTICLE III

Articles of Faith

The Articles of Faith (see Appendix A), Church Constitution, and Church Covenant (see Appendix B) are accepted by its present members and shall be subscribed to and accepted voluntarily by new members as they offer themselves for membership.

We do hereby adopt as the fullest expression of our faith the Articles of Faith, which have been adapted from the Abstract of Principles of 1858. This document is a summary of things most surely believed among us. We accept the same, not as an authoritative rule or code of faith, whereby we are to be fettered, but as an assistance to us in controversy, a confirmation in faith, and a means of edification in righteousness. In this Confession the members of our church will have a body of Divinity in small compass and by means of Scriptural proofs will be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in them (1 Peter 3:15).

We do hereby also adopt the Chicago Statement on Inerrancy (see Appendix C) as the position of this church regarding the authority, inerrancy, and sufficiency of Scripture; and the Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (see Appendix D) expressing the divine roles man and woman have been given by God.

ARTICLE IV

Membership

The membership of this church shall consist of only those who have given a credible profession of faith in Christ Jesus as Lord. Any person who professes repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, who has been baptized as a believer, and who expresses substantial

agreement with the doctrines, covenant, aims, and government of this church, shall be eligible for membership and received into its membership according to the By-Laws of this church.

ARTICLE V

Leadership & Organization

Jesus Christ alone is the head of His church. However, as head, He has ordained that individual churches should be blessed with the spiritual rule and ministry of special office bearers. Therefore, it is the duty of the church to seek to discover those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the necessary gifts for office bearing. The Lord's appointment is recognized by not only the inward conviction of the individual involved, but also by the approval of the church observing the possession of those gifts and graces required, and by Scriptural definition of the office according to our Method of Election described in the By-Laws (see Article III in our By-Laws). Christ has ordained that the administration of local churches is to be by Elders and Deacons (Phil. 1:1; Acts 6:1-7; 14:23).

ARTICLE VI

Revisions, Additions, & Amendments

Amendments to the Constitution may be adopted by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting at a congregational meeting, provided that such amendments have been distributed by the elders in written form at least two weeks prior to the congregational meeting.

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I Membership

In order to keep an accurate membership roll, there shall be an annual review of the membership roll by the Elders prior to the Annual Meeting. All who have been inactive members for whatever cause, will be classified as such, notified of this action in writing, and pursued in accordance with Article VI and Appendix E.

Section 1 Qualifications

To qualify for membership in this church, a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration, who has been baptized, in obedience to Christ, following his or her regeneration, and who wholeheartedly believes in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible. In order to be received into membership, a person must complete the membership course, submit a Membership Application, sign a Membership Covenant, submit to the teaching of Scripture as expressed in the Articles of Faith, and be accepted by the Council of Elders. The elders shall be responsible for determining each person's qualification for membership. In making this determination, they may rely on a person's profession of faith, or such other evidence, as the elders deem appropriate.

Section 2 Admission of Members

To be admitted into church membership, applicants shall be recommended by the elders for admission and accepted by majority vote of the members at any regular or special meeting of the members, and shall at that point relinquish their membership in other churches.

- A. By Baptism - Any person professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, giving evidence of change of heart, and having accepted the faith, aims and ideals of this Church as expressed in the affirmation of Faith and Church Covenant, may be received into membership by baptism, upon recommendation of the Council of Elders.
- B. By Letter / Transfer - Members from other churches holding like faith may be received as members with us upon presentation of letters of transfer from such churches, and upon acceptance of the faith, aims and ideals of this Church as expressed in the Articles of Faith and the Church Covenant. If such credentials be of older date than six months prior to their presentation, the applicant may be required to furnish additional information.
- C. By Experience / Restoration - All applicants for membership other than by baptism or by letter of transfer, that is by Christian experience if previously baptized, or by restoration, shall be received into the church in the same way as those by baptism, except the ordinance shall not be administered.

Section 3 Forms of Members

- A. REGULAR - All who are received into the membership of the church on the above mentioned conditions shall be considered members in good standing until such status is changed by one of the conditions set forth in Article 1, Section 5 (below).
- B. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS - The membership status of invalids, shut-ins, Christian workers, and others whose relationship to the church involves special consideration and circumstances, shall be determined on a case by case basis.

Section 4 Duties and Privileges of Members

- A. All communicant members who are at least eighteen years old and in good standing in the church shall be voting members. ("Good standing" means that a member is not presently

under the censure of suspension or discipline.) Any voting member in attendance at a duly called meeting shall be entitled to one vote on matters brought before the congregation. Voting by proxy shall not be permitted.

- B. In accord with the duties enumerated in the Church Covenant, each member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the church, consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God. Only those shall be entitled to serve in the ministries of the church who are members of this congregation; non-members may serve on an ad-hoc basis with the approval of the elders. Notwithstanding, non-members may serve the church for purposes of administration and professional consultation.

It is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend all members' meetings and vote on the election of officers, on decisions regarding membership status. Matters on finances and doctrine may also be voted upon as described in Articles VII and VIII of the Bylaws.

Section 5 – Dismissal of Members

Members shall be removed from the membership roll for the following reasons:

- A. Death.
- B. Transfer of membership to another church.
A letter is needed from the church the member is transferring to in order to properly remove the member from the membership rolls.
- C. Withdrawal of Membership.
In order to properly withdraw from membership, a written letter of intent is required with explanation of reasons submitted to the Council of Elders. The church shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation or transfer of membership to another church, either for the purpose of proceeding with a process of church discipline, or for any other biblical reason.
- D. Dismissal by Church Discipline as outlined below in Article VI.

ARTICLE II Government

Section 1 – Summary

Jesus is the Head of Providence Church. The Biblical offices in the church are elders and deacons. In addition, our church recognizes the administrative positions under this constitution of clerk and treasurer. All officers must be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

Section 2 – Elders

The elders shall be comprised of not less than three men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of elder set forth in I Timothy 3: 1–7 and Titus 1: 6–9. A certain number of the active eldership shall be composed of church members not in the regular pay of the church, and no elder shall hold the office of deacon during his tenure.

Subject to the will of the congregation, the elders shall oversee the ministry and resources of the church with equal authority as a body of leadership under Christ. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6: 1–6 and I Peter 5:1–4, the elders shall devote their time to prayer, the ministry of the Word (by teaching and encouraging sound doctrine), and shepherding God's flock.

The church shall recognize men gifted and willing to serve in this calling, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as elders. This recognition shall be reaffirmed by the church biennially. After an

elder, other than the senior or associate pastor(s), has served two consecutive two-year terms, he may only be elected to the office of elder after at least one year.

An elder's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members with reason to believe that an elder should be dismissed should express such concern to the elders and, if need be, to the congregation. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18: 15-17 and I Timothy 5: 17-21. Any of the elders may be dismissed by a two-thirds vote of the members at any members' meeting of the church.

The elders shall take particular responsibility to examine and instruct prospective members, examine and recommend all prospective candidates for offices and positions, oversee the work of the deacons and appointed church agents and committees, conduct worship services, administer the ordinances of baptism and communion, equip the membership for the work of the ministry, encourage sound doctrine and practice, admonish and correct error, oversee the process of church discipline, coordinate and promote the ministries of the church, and mobilize the church for world missions. The elders are further to ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share our fundamental convictions.

The elders may establish ministry positions or committees to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities. The elders may also propose funding for new paid staff positions. The membership shall approve all candidates to fill the positions of lead and associate pastor. The scope and approval of job descriptions for any staff position shall reside in the hands of those with hiring authority for that position.

The elders shall have primary responsibility for the employment, supervision, and evaluation of staff members. This responsibility may, on a case-by-case basis, be delegated to another staff member.

Each year the elders, after consultation with the deacons, and the membership, shall present to the church an itemized budget. This budget shall be presented for discussion at a specially-called budget meeting and called up for a vote at the following members' meeting. No money shall be solicited by or on behalf of the church or any of its ministries without the approval of the elders.

The elders shall elect a chairman of elders' meetings and shall also elect one of their number to serve as moderator of members' meetings. For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the State of Florida, the elders shall elect one of their number to serve as the chairman of the corporation, and another to serve as vice chairman.

Section 3 - The Lead Pastor

The lead pastor shall be an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in Section 2, above, and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching.

His call shall not be subject to the biennial reaffirmation or to the term limitation set out in Article 5, Section 2, for elders. His call shall be defined as per Article III, Section 3.

He shall preach on the Lord's Day, administer the ordinances of baptism and communion, and perform such other duties as usually pertain to that office, or as set forth in the constitution.

In the absence or incapacity of the lead pastor the elders shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which can be delegated.

Section 4 - Associate Pastors

The church may call additional pastors whose relationship to the lead pastor is that of associate.

An associate pastor shall be an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in Section

2, above, and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching.

His call shall not be subject to the biennial reaffirmation or to the term limitation set out in Article 5, Section 2, for elders. His call shall be defined as per Article III, Section 4.

He shall assist the lead pastor in the performance of his regular duties and shall perform any other duties as usually pertain to the office of pastor, or as set forth in the constitution, or which may be specifically assigned to him by the congregation.

In the absence or incapacity of the lead pastor for defined periods of time (such as sabbatical or illness), the associate pastor(s) shall assume the responsibility for his duties under the oversight of the elders.

Section 5 – Assistant Pastors

The church may call additional pastors, from within the congregation only, whose relationship to the lead pastor is that of assistant.

An assistant pastor shall be an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in Section 2, above, and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching.

His call shall be subject to the biennial reaffirmation and term limitation set out in Article II, section 2, for elders. His call shall be defined as per Article III, Section 5.

He shall assist the lead pastor and associate pastor(s) in the performance of their regular duties, and shall perform any other duties as usually pertain to the office of pastor. The elders shall define the responsibilities of the assistant pastor(s).

Section 6 – Senior Pastoral Assistants

The elders may hire additional staff to assist with pastoral ministry, designated as senior pastoral assistants. These shall not be pastors, though they may be recognized as elders should they be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation, in accordance with Article II, Section 2.

The elders shall define the responsibilities of the senior pastoral assistant(s). They shall serve at the will of the elders for an initial term up to four years, though that term may be extended with the approval of the elders.

Section 7 – Pastoral Assistants

The lead pastor may hire additional staff to assist with pastoral ministry, designated as pastoral assistants. These shall not be pastors, though they may be recognized as elders should they be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation, in accordance with Article II, Section 2.

The lead pastor shall assign the responsibilities of the pastoral assistant(s). They shall serve at the will of the lead pastor for a term of one year, though that term may be extended with the approval of the elders.

Section 8 – Deacons

A. Description:

The office of deacon is described in I Timothy 3: 8–13 and Acts 6: 1–7. A Deacon is a lead servant in the ministry of our church. Deacons work with fellow Deacons in extending the overseeing ministry of the Elders into the physical needs of the people and property of the church and responsibilities of this body. Under the Elders' leadership, the Deacons are to care for and maintain the orderly administration of our fellowship in which God has placed them as a Deacon. Deacons are not in a position of authority in areas of teaching,

correction, or rebuke.

B. Term:

Deacons shall be elected to one term lasting for a maximum of three years and may only be elected to another term after one year.

C. Qualification:

1. In accordance with the biblical requirements found in 1 Timothy 3, Deacons at Providence must be respectable, sincere, temperate and trustworthy. They must not be greedy or drunkards. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience, and manage their families well. Deacons will be tested to ensure that their lives qualify them for the task of service.
2. The first Deacons in Acts 6:1-7 were "full of the Spirit and wisdom;" Providence's Deacons must also demonstrate fullness of the Spirit and wisdom.

D. Obligations:

Deacons shall care for the temporal needs of members, attend to the accommodations for public worship, and encourage and support those able to help others and those with gifts of administration.

The deacons shall receive, hold, and disburse a fund for benevolence, reporting on its use to the elders at their request, and reporting to the church its total receipts and total disbursements only.

The deacons, with the agreement of the elders, may establish unpaid administrative positions or committees of members to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities in the church.

E. Selection:

The church shall recognize, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections, men who are giving of themselves in service to the church, and who possess particular gifts of service. These members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as deacons.

F. Termination:

The following are reasons for termination of service.

1. Resignation.
2. Elimination of area-specific task
3. Continued behavior which violates the biblical qualifications for the office (requires unanimous vote of elders and majority vote of the congregation).
4. Continued agreement with doctrine which violates the doctrinal outlook of our church (requires unanimous vote of elders and majority vote of the congregation).

ARTICLE III

Elections

Section 1 – Principles

The process for church elections shall be interpreted and carried out to fulfill the following principles:

Substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, should be an integral part of the election process; Nominations should proceed with the support of the elders;

All candidates for church office should be treated with the grace, kindness, and honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow members;

The election process shall express that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration that is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Section 2 – Selection of Officers

The election of officers shall be held at a members' meeting of the church. Names of nominees to serve as elders, deacons, etc. shall be presented by the elders at the previous members' meeting (providing that previous meeting occurred at least eight weeks prior), and the election shall proceed as directed by the moderator.

The elders should seek recommendations and involvement from the general membership in the nomination process. Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for an office should express such concern to the elders. Members intending to speak in opposition to a candidate should express their objection to the elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant church members' meeting.

The moderator shall declare elected all men receiving a 75% majority of all votes cast for the office of elder. For all other offices, the moderator shall declare elected all persons receiving a simple majority of all votes cast; abstentions will not be considered as votes cast.

The persons elected shall assume their respective offices upon election, unless another date has been specifically designated.

Section 3 – Calling of the Lead Pastor

In the calling of any man to this position, the same basic process of calling an elder must be followed. In addition, however, the church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential lead pastor and, before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Statement of Faith and Church Covenant. Notice of the nomination of a man to be elected to membership and called as lead pastor (which shall include, if necessary, election to membership of his wife if he is married) must be given at two Sunday morning services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a members' meeting.

Section 4 – Calling of Associate Pastor

In the calling of any man to the position of associate pastor, the same basic process of calling an elder must be followed. In addition, however, the church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential associate pastor and, before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Statement of Faith and Church Covenant. Notice of the nomination of a man to be called as associate pastor (which shall include, if necessary, election to membership of him and his wife if he is married) must be given at two Sunday morning services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a members' meeting.

Section 5 – Calling of Assistant Pastor

The calling of any man to the position of assistant pastor requires that that man have been recognized and called by the congregation to the office of elder, according to the process described in Article III, Section 2. Such a man may then be called by the elders to serve as assistant pastor with defined duties for a fixed period of time specified by the elders in the terms of his call.

ARTICLE IV Members Meetings

Section 1 Notice of Meetings

Notice of all congregational meetings shall be given at regular worship services on the two successive Sundays immediately prior to the meeting. In an emergency, a meeting may be called on shorter notice by notifying each local member by mail of the time, place and purpose of the congregational meeting.

Section 2 Annual Meeting

In every meeting together, members shall act in that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There shall be a regular members' meeting at least every other month, at some time apart from a public worship service agreed upon by the membership.

An elder designated by the elders shall preside as moderator at all members' meetings of the church. The elders shall see that the stated meetings of the church are regularly held and that required reports are submitted to the church by the responsible members.

Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those members present. All votes shall be tallied based on the number of votes cast by members present.

A budget shall be approved by the membership at a members' meeting not more than three months after the start of the fiscal year. Prior to this approval and subject to the elders' discretion, expenditures may continue at the prior year's level.

At any regular or special members' meeting, officers may be elected and positions filled as needed, so long as all relevant constitutional requirements have been met.

Special members' meetings may be called as required by the elders, or at the written request, submitted to the elders, of five percent of the voting membership. The date, time, and purpose of any special meeting shall be announced at all public services of the church within two weeks preceding the meeting. In the event of a written request from the members, the elders shall call a special meeting to be held within one month of their receipt of the request.

Section 3 Responsibility for Meetings

The Elders shall arrange the details of all congregational meetings and see that all possible preparation for their successful conduct is made, following the principles outlined in *Robert's Rules of Order, Revised*.

Section 4 Quorum for Transaction of Business

The voting members present at any constitutionally called congregational meeting shall be considered a quorum for the transaction of business.

Section 5 Voting Age

Any member of the church eighteen years of age or over, in good and regular standing, shall have the right to vote on any question properly brought before the congregation.

ARTICLE V
Organizing for Ministry

Members of this church shall have the liberty to participate in and organize themselves for ministry, provided that such participation and organization is in line with Article II of the Constitution. Any such organization may seek church sanction from the Elders as an official ministry of Providence Church. Sanction by the Elders does not necessarily imply support for the organization by the church with personnel, finances, or facilities.

ARTICLE VI
Discipline

Church discipline shall be carried out according to Scripture as explained in the Guidelines for Church Discipline (see Appendix E).

ARTICLE VII

Finances

Section 1 General

It is understood that membership in this church involves financial obligations to support the Church and its causes with regular and proportionate giving. Each member shall be encouraged in Scriptural giving, with tithing as the ideal minimum. Special offerings may be sought by the Church with the approval of the Elders. This shall not preclude individuals from making special offerings or designated gifts at any time as the Spirit of God may move them.

The fiscal year of the church shall begin January first and end December thirty-first.

Section 2 Financial Planning

The financial planning of the Church shall be carried out by the Elders through the medium of annual budgets for carrying out of its work. Annual budgets shall be adopted at a members' meeting by the Church upon the approval of the Elders and a majority vote of the members.

Section 3 Amendments

The budget may be amended in three ways: reallocation, adjustment for growth, and expansion.

A. Reallocation

1. The budget may be amended by reallocation of funds from one account to another upon approval by the elders so long as the total change in funds does not exceed 5% of the annual budget. This change does not require congregational approval.
2. Elders must approve reallocation of funds by a majority vote.
3. Reallocation of funds which exceeds 5% of the annual budget requires both approval by the elders and a majority vote at a members' meeting. A quorum for this vote is specified in Article IV Section 4 of these By-Laws.

B. Adjustment for Growth

1. The budget may be amended if giving exceeds the amount estimated in the annual budget. Adjustment for growth allows the elders to expand the budget so that what is given can be distributed to various budget items in proportion to the excess giving.
2. Elders must approve adjustment for growth by majority vote.
3. Adjustment for growth does not require congregational approval.

C. Expansion

1. The budget may be amended for the expansion of ministry need. This includes but is not limited to:
 - a. Expansion of a budget for a ministry that has grown in its need for resources.
 - b. Addition of a new budget item, such as a new ministry or staff member.
2. Expansion for budget items less than 5% of the annual budget may be approved by a majority vote of the elders and does not require congregational approval.
3. Expansion for budget items greater than 5% of the annual budget may be approved by a majority vote of the elders and a majority vote at a members' meeting. A quorum for this vote is specified in Article IV Section 4 of these By-Laws.

Section 4 Indebtedness

No note or contract exceeding 1% of the total annual budget whereby the credit of the Church is pledged shall be made except by the approval of the Elders and a majority vote of the members.

ARTICLE VIII
Amendments

Amendments to the By-Laws may be adopted by a majority of the members present and voting at a congregational meeting, provided that such amendments have been distributed by the Elders in written form at least two weeks prior to the congregational meeting.

ARTICLE IX
Church Corporation

In compliance with the laws of the State of Florida for Corporations Not for Profit, the Elders shall from its members in good standing elect at least 3 members to serve as trustees of the corporation. They shall serve for a term of one year, and perform such services as required by law. Those elected shall consist of a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, a Clerk, and a Treasurer (as outlined in our Articles of Incorporation) for purposes of carrying out their required services.

Section 1 Chairman

The Chairman shall be a person who is a member of the Council of Elders, shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the Corporation and shall, subject to the control of the Council of Elders, have general supervision, direction, and control of the activities and officers of the Corporation.

Section 2 Vice-Chairman

In the absence or disability of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman, who shall be a person who is a member of the Council of Elders, shall perform all the duties of the Chairman, and when so acting shall have all the powers of, and be subject to all the restrictions upon, the Chairman.

Section 3 Treasurer

The Treasurer shall ensure the stewardship of the physical and financial resources of the Corporation, "taking precaution that no one should discredit us in our administration...for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (2 Corinthians 8:20-21). He shall select "men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom" (Acts 6:3) to implement and accomplish this responsibility.

The Treasurer shall ensure that all financial activities and transactions are consistent with the Articles of Incorporation and these Bylaws as well as the Florida Nonprofit Corporation Act. The Treasurer shall keep and maintain, or cause to be kept and maintained, adequate and correct accounts of the properties and business transactions of the Corporation. The books of account shall at all reasonable times be open to inspection by any Elder. The Treasurer shall deposit, or cause to be deposited, all monies and other valuables in the name and to the credit of the Corporation with such depositories as may be designated by the Council of Elders. He shall disburse, or cause to be disbursed, the funds of the Corporation as may be ordered by the Council of Elders, shall render, or cause to be rendered, to the Chairman and the Council of Elders, whenever they request it, an account of all the transactions and of the financial condition of the Corporation, and shall have such other powers and perform such other duties as incident to the office of Treasurer and as may be prescribed by the Council of Elders. He shall make, or cause to be made, the financial reports at each regular Council meeting and at the regular annual meeting of church members.

Section 4 Clerk

The Secretary shall keep, or cause to be kept, a book of minutes at the principal office or such other place as the Council of Elders may order, of all meetings of the church members, the Council and its Committees, with the time and place of holding, whether regular or special, and

if special, how authorized, the notice thereof given, the number of members present at the church member meetings, the Council and Committees' meetings, and the proceedings thereof. The Secretary shall keep, or cause to be kept, at the principal office in the State of Florida the original and a copy of the Corporation's Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, as amended to date. The Secretary shall keep, or cause to be kept at the principal office of the Corporation, a church membership register, or a duplicated church membership register, showing the names of the members and their addresses.

Appendix A

Articles of Faith

The following best describe beliefs taken from the Bible that are embraced by Providence Church.

I. The Scriptures

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament were given by inspiration of God, and are the only sufficient, certain and authoritative rule of all saving knowledge, faith and obedience. [2 Tim. 3:15-17; 2 Peter 1:19-21]

II. God

There is but one God, the Maker, Preserver and Ruler of all things, having in and of himself, all perfections, and being infinite in them all; and to Him all creatures owe the highest love, reverence and obedience. [Deut. 6:4; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; 1 Tim. 1:17]

III. The Trinity

God is revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit each with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence or being. [Mt. 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14]

IV. Providence

God from eternity, decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs and governs all creatures and all events; yet so as not to destroy the free will and responsibility of intelligent creatures. [Heb. 1:3; Mt. 10:39-31; Prov. 16:33]

V. Election

Election is God's eternal choice of some persons unto everlasting life – not because of foreseen merit in them, but of his mere mercy in Christ – in consequence of which choice they are called, justified and glorified. [Rom. 8:30; Eph. 1:3-6; Acts 13:48]

VI. The Fall of Man

God originally created man in His own image, and free from sin; but, through the temptation of Satan, he transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original holiness and righteousness; whereby his posterity inherit a nature corrupt and wholly opposed to God and His law, are under condemnation, and as soon as they are capable of moral action, become actual transgressors. [Gen. 1:27; 3:4-7; Rom. 5:12-21; Eph. 2:1-3]

VII. The Mediator

Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is the divinely appointed mediator between God and man. Having taken upon Himself human nature, yet without sin, He perfectly fulfilled the Law, suffered and died upon the cross for the salvation of sinners. He was buried, and rose again the third day, and ascended to His Father, at whose hand He ever lives to make intercession for His people. He is the only Mediator, the Prophet, Priest and King of the Church, and Sovereign of the Universe. [Mt. 3:17; 1 Cor. 15:3-7; 1 Tim. 2:5; Rom. 5:6-11; Phil. 2:5-11; Heb 1:3]

VIII. Regeneration

Regeneration is a change of heart, wrought by the Holy Spirit, who quickens the dead in trespasses and sins enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the Word of God, and renewing their whole nature, so that they love and practice holiness. It is a work of God's free and special grace alone. [Jn. 3:1-8; Titus 3:5; 1 Pet. 1:3]

IX. Repentance

Repentance is an evangelical grace, wherein a person being, by the Holy Spirit, made sensible of the manifold evil of his sin, humbles himself for it, with godly sorrow, detestation of it, and self-aborrence, with a purpose and endeavor to walk before God so as to please Him in all things. [Mk. 1:15; Acts 20:21; 2 Cor. 7:9]

X. Faith

Saving faith is the belief, on God's authority, of whatsoever is revealed in His Word concerning Christ; accepting and resting upon Him alone for justification and eternal life. It is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, and is accompanied by all other saving graces, and leads to a life of holiness. (Jn. 1:12; 5:24; Eph. 2:8, 9)

XI. Justification

Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal of sinners, who believe in Christ, from all sin, through the satisfaction that Christ has made; not for anything wrought in them or done by them; but on account of the obedience and satisfaction of Christ, they receiving and resting on Him and His righteousness by faith. (Rom. 3:23-24; Rom. 5:1-2; 18, 19; 2 Cor. 5:21)

XII. Sanctification

Those who have been regenerated are also sanctified, by God's word and Spirit dwelling in them. This sanctification is progressive through the supply of Divine strength, which all saints seek to obtain, pressing after a heavenly life in cordial obedience to all Christ's commands. (Jn. 17:17; 2 Thes. 2:13; Heb. 12:14)

XIII. Perseverance of the Saints

Those whom God hath accepted in the Beloved, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere to the end; and though they may fall, through neglect and temptation, into sin, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, bring reproach on the Church, and temporal judgments on themselves, yet they shall be renewed again unto repentance, and be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation. (Jn. 10:28-29; 1 Jn. 2:19; Rom. 8:30)

XIV. The Church

The Lord Jesus is the Head of the Church, which is composed of all his true disciples, and in Him is invested supremely all power for its government. According to his commandment, Christians are to associate themselves into particular societies or churches; and to each of these churches he has given needful authority for administering that order, discipline and worship which he has appointed. The regular officers of a Church are Bishops, or Elders, and Deacons. (Col. 1:18; Mt. 16:18; 18:15-18; 1 Tim. 3:1-15; 1 Pet. 5:1-4) *We at Providence Church hold that the office of bishop, elder, and pastor, are the same, and are used synonymously in the Bible.*

XV. Baptism

Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus, obligatory upon every believer, wherein he is immersed in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, as a sign of his fellowship with the death and resurrection of Christ, of remission of sins, and of his giving himself up to God, to live and walk in newness of life. It is prerequisite to church fellowship, and to participation in the Lord's Supper. (Mt. 28:19-20; Rom. 6:3-5; Acts 8:38-39)

XVI. The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is an ordinance of Jesus Christ, to be administered with the elements of bread and wine, and to be observed by his churches till the end of the world. It is in no sense a sacrifice, but is designed to commemorate his death, to confirm the faith and other graces of Christians, and to be a bond, pledge and renewal of their communion with him, and of their church fellowship. (Mt. 26:26-27; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:23-26)

XVII. The Lord's Day

The Lord's Day is a Christian institution for regular observance, and should be employed in exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private, resting from worldly employments and amusements, works of necessity and mercy only excepted. (Acts 20:7; 1 Cor. 16:1-2; Col. 2:16; 3:16; Rev 1:10)

XVIII. Liberty of Conscience

God alone is Lord of the conscience; and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in anything contrary to His word, or not contained in it. Civil magistrates being ordained of God, subjection in all lawful thing commanded by them ought to be yielded by us in the Lord, not only for wrath, but also for conscience sake. [Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:17]

XIX. The Resurrection

The bodies of men after death return to dust, but their spirits return immediately to God – the righteous to rest with Him; the wicked to be reserved under darkness to the judgment. At the last day, the bodies of all the dead, both just and unjust, will be raised. [1 Cor. 15; Jn. 5:28, 29; Phil. 3:21]

XX. The Judgment

God has appointed a day, wherein he will judge the world by Jesus Christ, when every one shall receive according to his deeds; the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment; the righteous, into everlasting life. [Mt. 25:31-46; 1 Cor. 15:35-58; 2 Cor. 5:10]

Appendix B

Church Covenant

Having been led, as I believe, by the Spirit of God to receive Jesus Christ as the Lord and Savior of my life, and on the profession of my faith, having been baptized, I now in the presence of God, solemnly and joyfully covenant the following:

1. I will endeavor to maintain family and personal devotion with the Lord through regular Bible reading, prayer, fellowship and practice of the other spiritual disciplines. I commit to educate my children in the Christian faith. My walk with Christ will be evident through my regular participation in the corporate worship services, accountability to other members of the body, and involvement in a life group (Psalm 119:97, 105; Acts 2:42-47; Hebrews 10:23-25).
2. I have read and understand the Providence confession and agree to not be divisive to its teaching and content. I also understand the importance of submission to church leadership and will be diligent to preserve unity and peace (Hebrews 13:7, 17; Ephesians 4:1-3).
3. I will strive to properly manage the resources God has given me, including my time, body, gifts and talents, attitudes, finances and possessions (Ephesians 5:15-18; Romans 12:1-2; Ephesians 4:1-16; Galatians 5:22-26; Proverbs 3:9-10). This includes regular giving to Providence that is sacrificial and cheerful (2 Corinthians 8-9).
4. I commit to using the spiritual gift(s) God has given me for the building up of the church, both as part of Providence and universally (Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Peter 4:10-11; Romans 12:1-8; 1 Corinthians 12:7-31).
5. I covenant to practice the humility and sacrificial attitude of Christ by considering the needs of others (Philippians 2:1-11; 1 Corinthians 13:4-5), not gossiping (Proverbs 16:28, Matthew 18:15-17), and seeking spiritual friendships (Proverbs 17:17).
6. I covenant to follow the biblical procedures of church discipline and submit myself to informal discipline as I strive to live out the gospel in community and formal discipline if the need should ever arise (Matthew 18:15-17; Galatians 6:1-5). If I withdraw from membership while the subject of pending disciplinary action according to Matthew 18:15-17, I expressly consent and submit to the elders' continuing authority to complete the disciplinary process.
7. I covenant to submit to the authority of the Scriptures as the final arbiter on all issues (Psalm 119; 2 Timothy 3:16-17). God enabling me, I will strive to live according to this Membership Covenant. I understand that it is an evaluative tool, as well as an affirmation of my continuing conviction and purpose. My responsibility will be to notify the Providence leadership if at any time I can no longer commit to this covenant, or if I have any questions, comments, or concerns regarding Providence.
8. I will, if or when, upon leaving this church body, unite with a likeminded church where I can carry out the spirit of this covenant.

Appendix C

The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy

Preface

The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian Church in this and every age. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God's written Word. To stray from Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master. Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.

The following Statement affirms this inerrancy of Scripture afresh, making clear our understanding of it and warning against its denial. We are persuaded that to deny it is to set aside the witness of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit and to refuse that submission to the claims of God's own Word which marks true Christian faith. We see it as our timely duty to make this affirmation in the face of current lapses from the truth of inerrancy among our fellow Christians and misunderstanding of this doctrine in the world at large.

This Statement consists of three parts: a Summary Statement, Articles of Affirmation and Denial, and an accompanying Exposition*. It has been prepared in the course of a three-day consultation in Chicago. Those who have signed the Summary Statement and the Articles wish to affirm their own conviction as to the inerrancy of Scripture and to encourage and challenge one another and all Christians to growing appreciation and understanding of this doctrine. We acknowledge the limitations of a document prepared in a brief, intensive conference and do not propose that this Statement be given creedal weight. Yet we rejoice in the deepening of our own convictions through our discussions together, and we pray that the Statement we have signed may be used to the glory of our God toward a new reformation of the Church in its faith, life, and mission.

We offer this Statement in a spirit, not of contention, but of humility and love, which we purpose by God's grace to maintain in any future dialogue arising out of what we have said. We gladly acknowledge that many who deny the inerrancy of Scripture do not display the consequences of this denial in the rest of their belief and behavior, and we are conscious that we who confess this doctrine often deny it in life by failing to bring our thoughts and deeds, our traditions and habits, into true subjection to the divine Word.

We invite response to this statement from any who see reason to amend its affirmations about Scripture by the light of Scripture itself, under whose infallible authority we stand as we speak. We claim no personal infallibility for the witness we bear, and for any help which enables us to strengthen this testimony to God's Word we shall be grateful.

A SHORT STATEMENT

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.
2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms, obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.

4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.

5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.

ARTICLES OF AFFIRMATION AND DENIAL

Article I

We affirm that the Holy Scriptures are to be received as the authoritative Word of God.

We deny that the Scriptures receive their authority from the Church, tradition, or any other human source.

Article II

We affirm that the Scriptures are the supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience, and that the authority of the Church is subordinate to that of Scripture.

We deny that Church creeds, councils, or declarations have authority greater than or equal to the authority of the Bible.

Article III

We affirm that the written Word in its entirety is revelation given by God.

We deny that the Bible is merely a witness to revelation, or only becomes revelation in encounter, or depends on the responses of men for its validity.

Article IV

We affirm that God who made mankind in His image has used language as a means of revelation.

We deny that human language is so limited by our creatureliness that it is rendered inadequate as a vehicle for divine revelation. We further deny that the corruption of human culture and language through sin has thwarted God's work of inspiration.

Article V

We affirm that God's revelation in the Holy Scriptures was progressive.

We deny that later revelation, which may fulfill earlier revelation, ever corrects or contradicts it. We further deny that any normative revelation has been given since the completion of the New Testament writings.

Article VI

We affirm that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration.

We deny that the inspiration of Scripture can rightly be affirmed of the whole without the parts, or of some parts but not the whole.

Article VII

We affirm that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us.

We deny that inspiration can be reduced to human insight, or to heightened states of consciousness of any kind.

Article VIII

We affirm that God in His Work of inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared.

We deny that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities.

Article IX

We affirm that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the Biblical authors were moved to speak and write.

We deny that the finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, introduced distortion or falsehood into God's Word.

Article X

We affirm that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.

We deny that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of Biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.

Article XI

We affirm that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses.

We deny that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.

Article XII

We affirm that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud, or deceit.

We deny that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious, or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.

Article XIII

We affirm the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture.

We deny that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of material, variant selections of material in parallel accounts, or the use of free citations.

Article XIV

We affirm the unity and internal consistency of Scripture.

We deny that alleged errors and discrepancies that have not yet been resolved vitiate the truth claims of the Bible.

Article XV

We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy is grounded in the teaching of the Bible about inspiration.

We deny that Jesus' teaching about Scripture may be dismissed by appeals to accommodation or to any natural limitation of His humanity.

Article XVI

We affirm that the doctrine of inerrancy has been integral to the Church's faith throughout its history.

We deny that inerrancy is a doctrine invented by Scholastic Protestantism, or is a reactionary position postulated in response to negative higher criticism.

Article XVII

We affirm that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Scriptures, assuring believers of the truthfulness of God's written Word.

We deny that this witness of the Holy Spirit operates in isolation from or against Scripture.

Article XVIII

We affirm that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture.

We deny the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting its teaching, or rejecting its claims to authorship.

Article XIX

We affirm that a confession of the full authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture is vital to a sound understanding of the whole of the Christian faith. We further affirm that such confession should lead to increasing conformity to the image of Christ.

We deny that such confession is necessary for salvation. However, we further deny that inerrancy can be rejected without grave consequences both to the individual and to the Church.

Appendix D

The Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

The "Danvers Statement" was prepared by several evangelical leaders at a Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood (CBMW) meeting in Danvers, Massachusetts, in December of 1987. It was first published in final form by the CBMW in Wheaton, Illinois in November of 1988.

Rationale

We have been moved in our purpose by the following contemporary developments which we observe with deep concern:

1. The widespread uncertainty and confusion in our culture regarding the complementary differences between masculinity and femininity;
2. the tragic effects of this confusion in unraveling the fabric of marriage woven by God out of the beautiful and diverse strands of manhood and womanhood;
3. the increasing promotion given to feminist egalitarianism with accompanying distortions or neglect of the glad harmony portrayed in Scripture between the loving, humble leadership of redeemed husbands and the intelligent, willing support of that leadership by redeemed wives;
4. the widespread ambivalence regarding the values of motherhood, vocational homemaking, and the many ministries historically performed by women;
5. the growing claims of legitimacy for sexual relationships which have Biblically and historically been considered illicit or perverse, and the increase in pornographic portrayal of human sexuality;
6. the upsurge of physical and emotional abuse in the family;
7. the emergence of roles for men and women in church leadership that do not conform to Biblical teaching but backfire in the crippling of Biblically faithful witness;
8. the increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities devised to reinterpret apparently plain meanings of Biblical texts;
9. the consequent threat to Biblical authority as the clarity of Scripture is jeopardized and the accessibility of its meaning to ordinary people is withdrawn into the restricted realm of technical ingenuity;
10. and behind all this the apparent accommodation of some within the church to the spirit of the age at the expense of winsome, radical Biblical authenticity which in the power of the Holy Spirit may reform rather than reflect our ailing culture.

Affirmations

Based on our understanding of Biblical teachings, we affirm the following:

1. Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18).
2. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart (Gen 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Tim 2:12-14).

3. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin (Gen 2:16-18, 21-24, 3:1-13; 1 Cor 11:7-9).
4. The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women (Gen 3:1-7, 12, 16).
 - In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.
 - In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility, and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.
5. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18; Gal 3:28). Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Tim 2:11-15).
6. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.
 - In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership (Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; Tit 2:3-5; 1 Pet 3:1-7).
 - In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 1 Tim 2:11-15).
7. In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission-domestic, religious, or civil-ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin (Dan 3:10-18; Acts 4:19-20, 5:27-29; 1 Pet 3:1-2).
8. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries (1 Tim 2:11-15, 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-9). Rather, Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.
9. With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world (1 Cor 12:7-21).
10. We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.

Appendix E

Guidelines for Church Discipline

The church discipline policy in place at Providence Church is founded upon holiness and the love of our glorious God, the Lordship of Jesus Christ who is the head of the church, and an understanding of the church as the Body of Christ. (Eph. 4-5; Col. 1:9-29)

Discipline is a courageous and compassionate act of love, desiring only good for the person caught in sin. **Its aim is rescue, restoration, and reconciliation.** Just as discipline is a mark of a healthy family, church discipline is a mark of a healthy church. The context and prerequisite for church discipline is authentic Christian community. (Prov. 3:11-12; 1 Cor. 5:5, 11:32; 1 Tim. 1:20; Heb. 12:5-11; Rev. 3:19)

The primary teaching and hopeful desire of the membership at Providence is for believers to develop self-discipline, so that they may lead godly lives characterized by obedient faith. We believe that love for God, the first and greatest command by our Lord Jesus Christ, is manifested primarily through diligent obedience to the Word of God and love for other believers. (Rom. 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 7:1; Col. 3:5-10; 1 Thes. 4:3-8; Heb. 3:12-15, 12:14-17; 1 Pet. 1:13-16; 2 Pet. 1:3-11; Rev. 3:14)

Church discipline has 3 purposes: (1) **To glorify and honor God** through obedience to His Word. (2) **To protect and maintain the purity of the local church** by pursuing individual and corporate holiness. (3) **To rescue and restore believers** overtaken by sin.

At Providence we believe that church discipline should be exercised in every case of substantiated, habitual, willfully, unrepentant sin when the erring party is not willing to make any attempt to resolve the matter. Though not an exhaustive list, the following sins are addressed by the New Testament church: divisiveness (2 Thes. 3:11; Titus 3:10-11; Rom. 16:17-20), irresponsible and undisciplined living (1 Thes. 5:14; 2 Thes. 3:6-15), sexual immorality (1 Cor. 5:1-13), doctrinal heresy (1 Tim. 6:3-5; 2 Tim. 2:16-18; 2 John 1:10-11; Rev. 2:14-16).

The actions and heart attitude of the church, particularly the leadership, are to be characterized by humility, compassion, mercy, gentleness, and fairness (Gal. 6:1-2; James 5:19-20; 2 Thes. 3:15; 1 Cor. 5:2; 2 Cor. 2:4-8; Micah 6:8). Elders and deacons are held to an even higher standard of accountability (1 Tim. 3:1-7, 5:17-22; James 3:1).

We believe that **church discipline is applicable to all members and believers who fellowship with us.** Withdrawal of membership or fellowship does not necessarily negate the process of church discipline, particularly where it appears that a person has done so to avoid church discipline. Such requests may not be honored until the disciplinary process has been concluded.

If a believer fails to discipline himself and demonstrates no evidence of repentance, the Scriptures clearly indicate that loving confrontation is the responsibility of the church. Church discipline is a biblical process that is to be handled prayerfully, carefully, and justly and only after several individual attempts at correction have been attempted and have failed.

The **basic stages of church discipline**, according to Mathew 18:15-20, are as follows:

STAGE ONE: If a Christian fails to discipline himself and is trapped in unrepentant sin, Christ commands (“**Go and show him his fault, just between the two of you**”) the individual who is aware of the matter to go to him in private to lovingly confront, counsel, and encourage him to repent.

STAGE TWO: If he will not listen to the one person, especially after several attempts, and there is no evidence of repentance, **“Take one or two others along with you”** to further address the matter and to continue to encourage him to repent. The intent of others being involved is to guarantee clear communication and to enlist others for prayer and discernment.

STAGE THREE: If these personal and informal steps do not elicit repentance, Jesus says we should **“tell it to the church”**. Tell it to the church necessarily involves bringing the Pastor and pastoral staff into the process and requesting their direct assistance in resolving the problem, if they were not involved in the previous steps. In some cases, the Pastor or staff members may repeat the previous steps and try to persuade the offender to repent. The Pastor, after confirming the information, a proper process, and continued refusal to repent may then inform the church when it is assembled together.

The Pastor will send a letter by registered mail warning the individual that the third or fourth step of church discipline will be taken if they have not received significant evidence of repentance by a specific date.

“Telling it to the church” means that the congregation will be informed about the general nature of the sin, given a general description of the process that has taken place, and about **the refusal to repent** (The problem is not the sin, as much as it is the refusal to repent). They will be asked to pray for and plead with the offender to repent and to pursue the person for the purpose of restoration. Personal visits, telephone calls, and letters are examples of what it means to “pursue” them. The church is to keep on loving them and seeking their restoration.

STAGE FOUR: If the offender refuses to submit to the caring admonition of the church and continues to harden his heart, then Jesus says we are to **“treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector”**. This means that the person is publicly dismissed from the church with the hope of future repentance and reconciliation. In addition, this means that the person will be denied Christian fellowship, treated as an unbeliever, and delivered over to Satan in the hope that his soul will be saved. (Rom. 16:17; 2 Thes. 1:20, 3:6, 14; 1 Cor. 5:1-5; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; Titus 3:10)

If at any point during stage three and four, the offender demonstrates repentance, then notice to that effect will also be made publicly so that the church may rejoice and gently and judiciously restore the repentant believer to the fellowship of the church.

Providence Church accepts these stages as principles prescribed by our Lord and our Scriptures. The leadership of the church, after prayer and consultation with one another and the Holy Scriptures, may eliminate, compress, contract, or combine into one any of these stages. Pastors are commanded to protect the flock and some forms of sinful conduct deemed harmful to the flock may require immediate action. (Acts 20:28-31; Titus 3:10; 1 Cor. 5:1-5)

Appendix F

Core Values

The Gospel is central to the church and the Christian. Because the Gospel is the power of God unto salvation, we never advance beyond the Gospel.

The Bible is sufficient for all matters of life. This means the church and every Christian is to be governed by God's Word.

The Church is an authentic community of believers living alongside one another in the gospel. This includes covenanting together with other Christians, and living in accountability through smaller life circles. We call these *Life Groups*.

The Kingdom is being advanced by God and must be the priority of the church. This requires the church and Christians to partner with other God-centered and gospel-driven churches in order to plant the gospel and new churches around the world.

The Family is designed by God and must be built up and equipped by the church. While we are a church for all people, marriage and parenting are vital relationships planned by God. The church must structure and plan with the family in mind.

The Mission of God has been given to all Christians, that is, to seek and to save the lost. Our God is a missionary God, sending people from the very beginning with the message of redemption through Jesus Christ. The Church is God's missionary to the world. Jesus said, "As the Father has sent me, I also send you" (Jn 20:21). Christians are missionaries called to live as ones sent to our culture as well as to other cultures around the world.

The Culture is our responsibility and is in desperate need of the Gospel. In a time when the church has sought to create a subculture apart from the world, the church needs more than ever to penetrate and engage the culture we live with the gospel. The church is not a bubble, but a tool in the Redeemer's Hand. Without being of the world, we must serve in the world with the gospel.