

## ***BERACHAH BIBLE CHURCH BY-LAWS***

The By-Laws of Berachah Bible Church is a legal document under the laws of the State of Georgia that explain how the church conducts its ministry and business affairs. The by-laws have been approved by the elders of Berachah Bible Church and affirmed by a majority of its members voting in a duly constituted business meeting and recorded in the official minutes of the church. Changes to the by-laws will follow the process found in Article 6 – Amendments.

### **Article 1 – Church Membership**

- 1.1 – Member Qualifications** – Any person who has accepted Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior and gives assurance of their desire to live a consistent Christian life according to the Scriptures, and who agrees to abide by the By-Laws, the Constitution, the Church Covenant, and to honor the Doctrinal Statement as an expression of the church practices, beliefs, and teachings, may become a candidate for church membership. Any sincere child of God meeting these requirements will be welcomed to membership regardless of wealth, social position, race, color, or national origin.
- 1.2 – Membership Process** – Candidates for membership will complete the membership application process and read and sign all documents in the membership packet to verify their agreement. The candidate will be assigned an elder to guide them through this membership process. All the elders will be involved in the evaluation of the candidate’s qualifications and may prescribe any further preparations necessary. Upon approving the candidate, the elders will present the new member to the congregation to be received into the fellowship at any regular worship meeting of the church.
- A. Pastoral Membership** – Pastoral staff hired from outside the church will complete the new member packet as part of their hiring process. This will introduce them to Berachah so that, along with all other considerations for their position, they can be approved as members at the time they are presented by the elders to serve in their staff position and are approved by the membership. Their family members will be brought into membership in the usual manner prescribed for "regular" candidates in section 1.2 above, preferably at the time the staff pastor becomes a member.
- 1.3 – Types of Membership**
- A. Regular Member** – A member who is a full member of this church and attends the services regularly as health, occupation, and other circumstances permit.

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**B. Associate Member** – A member who has identical qualifications and duties to this church as does a regular member and may attend regularly, but also retains membership in another church, such as a missionary living locally and under assignment. Others may not be able to attend regularly for a period of time due to distance, but, nevertheless, desire to maintain this official, visible bond of fellowship with this church.

**1.4 – Disagreements Among Members** – The members affirm that believers should seek to handle disagreements among themselves according to Biblical principles (Matthew 5:23-25, 18:15-20, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, Ephesians 4:1-4). The court system has its place in our society, but it is not the place for settling disputes which can be arbitrated by the elders. Members should be willing to surrender their rights to legal action, if that legal action would hinder one's witness and that of this church. The members agree not to initiate or pursue legal action of any kind against the elders, deacons, or church staff in connection with the performance of their duties, or against Berachah Bible Church as an institution.

**1.5 – Church Discipline of Members** – The members affirm that there may be rare cases of a member or regular attendee of this church who is a believer in Jesus Christ who so willfully lives in a consistent state of sinful disobedience that his conduct dishonors the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, hinders the witness and welfare of the church, and requires the elders to initiate church discipline according to Matthew 18:15-17. Church members will agree to abide by and honor such church discipline as carried out by the elders according to the Scriptures, the constitution, and other member documents.

**1.6 – Membership Termination** – A written request for withdrawal from membership should be presented to the elders for consideration. The elders may remove a member from the rolls for reasons such as: church discipline; disregard of covenant obligations; willful propagation of doctrine contrary to the doctrinal statement; failure to attend worship services for an extended period of time; or death. In all such actions, the elders shall be guided by the Scriptures that relate to the termination of members.

**1.7 – Church Discipline Process** – The elders will handle all issues of church discipline according to the Scriptures and sound wisdom (Matthew 18:15-16, Galatians 6:1, Roman 16:17, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 2 Timothy 2:16-17).

**1.8 – Member Voting** – Regular and associate members who have reached their eighteenth birthday shall have the privilege of voting.

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### **Article 2 – Members Meetings**

- 2.1 – Annual Meetings** – An annual meeting is generally held in the fall to discuss business items such as the proposed budget, to elect elders and deacons, to hear ministry reports, and to hear other reports and financial business as necessary.
- 2.2 – Special Meetings** – Special meetings may be called by the elders or requested by any member as needed during the year. The elders may conduct these periodic meetings specifically to update the members on various matters and issues affecting the well-being of the congregation.
- 2.3 – Moderation of Meetings** – The elder chair, or vice chair, or another elder assigned by the elders, shall moderate at all members meetings. Unless specified elsewhere for the specific issue, a quorum shall be met by those members present, and any matter brought to a vote shall be passed with a two-thirds majority of the members present.

### **Article 3 – Church Government**

- 3.1 – Elders** – We affirm that Jesus Christ is the Lord and Head of this church, and that He directs the affairs of the church through elders who are chosen according to Scriptural precepts. The elders are to submit to the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit in the governing and direction of the church. The elders serve as the official Board of Directors for directing all legal responsibilities under the State of Georgia nonprofit corporation law. The biblical offices of the church are elders and deacons. All elders and deacons must be church members in good standing prior to assuming or discharging their responsibilities.
- A. Elder Distinctions** – The Scriptures teach that all elders, by calling, by desire, by responsibility, and by accountability before the Lord Jesus Christ, are to be equally recognized and respected as elders – overseers – pastors – teachers.
- a. Staff Elders** – We affirm that among the elders there are those who, in response to God’s call, devote their vocational lives to the preaching and teaching of the Word of God and prayer in the service of Christ’s church (1 Timothy 5:17-18) and receive payment from the church for their services. These elders hereafter referred to as staff elders for the purposes of the by-laws and the constitution, will, as far as possible, be adequately compensated by the church in material necessities to provide for their livelihood, so they need not pursue any secular employment. Staff elders are considered church employees under federal and state law due to their compensation.
- b. Non-Staff Elders** – Elders who serve without compensation and who are not church employees are hereafter referred to as non-staff elders for the purpose of these by-laws and the constitution.

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- c. Distinctions Among Elders** – Staff and non-staff elders are equal in authority and position. Their primary distinction is that non-staff elders do not receive payment from the church for their services and are not employees of the church.
  
- B. Qualifications** – Any man desiring the office of elder must evidence the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, and Titus 1:5-9. Elders must be able to conscientiously affirm their agreement with the doctrinal statement, the by-laws, the membership covenants, and the constitution.
  
- C. Nomination and Selection**

  - a. Staff Elders** – A search committee composed of the elders and selected church members will evaluate one candidate at a time. The elders will give priority to mature, trained, and qualified men within the membership of this church who desire to serve in this full-time ministry. Each candidate will be given an opportunity to demonstrate their competency to minister so that the entire church may have a basis for evaluation. The desired candidate will be extended a call to serve by a recommendation from the elders, followed by a ballot vote of the membership. Three-fourths of the votes cast by the membership are required to extend a call. There will be a two-week notice in the regular services prior to the Sunday of the membership vote, and provision will be made for absentee ballots through the church office.
  
  - b. Non-Staff Elders** – Each year, nominations for non-staff elders are solicited from the membership. Each elder candidate meets with the elders for examination and those approved are recommended to the congregation. The church membership must affirm the recommendation by a three-fourths majority vote, following the same voting procedure as with the staff elders.
  
- D. Term of Office** – Staff elders serve for an unlimited period of time until resignation, retirement, or termination. Non-staff elders serve for a maximum term of three consecutive years. They may be eligible to serve another term by submitting to the nomination and selection process in the by-laws.
  
- E. Responsibilities** – The fundamental responsibility of the elders is to devote themselves to the ministry of the Word of God and to prayer. The elders also have oversight and authority over all activities and affairs of the church and are responsible for shepherding and feeding the flock (Acts 20:28, Hebrews 13:17, 1 Peter 5:1-4). These responsibilities include: conducting worship services; overseeing the work of the deacons and appointed church ministry leaders; equipping the members for the work of the ministry; visiting in the homes of the people; ministering to the sick, the poor, the afflicted, and the dying; to make the Gospel known to the lost; teaching the whole counsel of God both formally and informally; correcting error; church discipline; overseeing, coordinating and promoting the ministries of the church; and mobilizing the church for world missions.

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- F. Powers** – Subject to the limitations of Scripture, the by-laws, the doctrinal statement, the constitution, and pertinent restrictions of the non-profit corporation code of the State of Georgia, all the activities and affairs of the church are exercised by or under the direction of the elders. Under those limitations, the elders shall have the following powers in addition to other powers enumerated elsewhere in the constitution and the by-laws:
- a. To select and remove all officers, agents, staff and non-staff elders, deacons, staff and employees of Berachah Bible Church, prescribe their duties consistent with the Scriptures, the laws, the by-laws, and the constitution.
  - b. To disburse from the funds and property of the church what is required to fulfill the purposes of the church, and generally to conduct, manage, and control the activities and affairs of the church and to make such rules and regulations not inconsistent with the law, the by-laws, or the constitution, as they deem best.
  - c. To adopt, make and use a corporate seal, and to alter the form of the seal from time to time as they deem best. (Nonprofit Code of Georgia, 14-3-846- Effect of Corporate Seal on Document.)
  - d. To establish and approve policies, procedures, and practices for the church consistent with its purpose. If determined practical by the elders, the congregation will normally be informed of new church policies, practices, and procedures prior to implementation and have an opportunity to review and comment on them prior to implementation.
  - e. To borrow money and incur indebtedness for the church, and to execute and deliver, in the church name, promissory notes, bonds, debentures, deeds of trust, pledges, or other debt and securities in a manner consistent with restrictions and limitations expressed in the bylaws, the constitution, and the laws of the State of Georgia.
  - f. To identify, define, and clarify doctrinal distinctives on such topics as abortion, marriage, homosexuality, the role of men and women in the church, and other matters which may be topics of interest, or controversial or societal issues.
- G. Limitations** – The authority of the elders is limited to that permitted by Scripture, and they have no authority to act contrary to Scripture. In addition, the elders shall not exercise any of the following prerogatives without the consent of the members:
- a. To incur annual expenses for the church exceeding the annual revenues of the church unless such expenditures are necessary to secure continuity in the work of the church.
  - b. To infringe upon any right reserved to the members by the by-laws or the constitution.
  - c. To appoint any elder (staff or non-staff) or deacon without the vote of the membership as prescribed by the by-laws.

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- H. Elder Number and Vacancies** – The number of elders shall be no less than five (5). Vacancies may exist as a result of death, resignation, removal, or end of term. An elder may resign before the end of his term by giving written notice to the elders. If the resignation is to take place at a specific future time, a successor may be elected before that time. If the number of elders falls below five (5), the elders may temporarily appoint deacons or other men from the membership to serve as needed until elder qualified men can be elected according to the by-laws.
- I. Officers** – The elders will elect a chair, vice-chair, and secretary annually at their first regularly called meeting. The chair shall preside at all elder meetings, unless another elder is appointed for this function, and shall exercise general direction and supervision in concert with the elders. The vice-chair shall perform the duties of the chair in his absence or at his direction and, when so acting, has all the powers of, and is subject to all the restrictions upon, the chair. The secretary will maintain a record of minutes of all regularly called meetings of the elders; regular, called, and special meetings of the church; and will perform such other administrative duties as assigned by the elders.
- J. Removal/Termination/Dismissal** – Elders are subject to scrutiny not only in the areas which might call for general church discipline, but also as to their continued meeting of the biblical qualifications for eldership. An elder shall give the church written notice not less than thirty (30) days prior to the date he intends to terminate his position. An elder may be removed from office by the elders if he is found to be physically or mentally incapacitated or spiritually unqualified, after a thorough investigation by the elders according to pertinent Scriptures (Matthew 18:15-18 and 1 Timothy 5:17-21). The elders shall notify the congregation of the resignation or dismissal in a duly called meeting of the church.
- K. Quorum** – The elders normally decide on important matters by unanimous agreement to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). However, elders from time to time during discussions and review of matters may express biblical disagreements as they exercise due diligence, discernment, and wisdom in administering the affairs of the church. On occasion, difficult matters may require extended discussion, prayer, and search of the Scriptures in arriving at decisions. Since all elders are equal in authority, it is important that all have an opportunity to fully express their understanding and concerns when an important matter is under review. Should the elders decide to continue to a vote on such an issue where there are still Biblical differences, a two-thirds majority of the elders present and voting constitutes a quorum.

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- L. Elder Meetings** – A duly constituted elder meeting requires a minimum of three-fourths of the elders serving. Meetings must be announced to all elders at least a week in advance unless the announcement is waived by all elders. Elders may participate in a duly called meeting via teleconference or by submitting their views on a matter or a vote in writing.

**3.2 – Deacons** – The duly elected deacons serve under the direction of and in assistance to the elders (Acts 6:3, 4).

- A. Qualifications** – The church shall recognize men who give themselves in service to the church, who possess particular gifts of ministry, and who are called to further service and care of the church and its members. Men desiring the ministry of deacon must evidence in their lives the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications outlined in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
- B. Selection** – Deacons shall be nominated and selected using the same process and at the same time of year as the non-staff elders.
- C. Term of Office** – Men who qualify for the office of deacon will serve for a maximum term of three consecutive years. They may again be eligible to serve another term by submitting to the nomination and selection process in the by-laws.
- D. Responsibilities** – The deacon's primary responsibility is a ministry of service to the church with spiritual grace and in cooperation with and subjection to the elders. Additionally, the deacons will assist the elders in the shepherding of the church by: providing spiritual and physical comfort to the sick, the aged, the sorrowing, and the infirm; assisting in the accommodations for the public worship and the Lord's Supper; attending to the normal care and maintenance of the church properties; receiving, holding, and disbursing a benevolence fund to assist the poor and needy, reporting on its use to the elders at their request; ministering the Scriptures and rendering counsel to those needing such assistance; and otherwise providing necessary aid in times of crisis and distress.
- E. Resignation/Termination/Dismissal** – The deacon office is vacant under the same conditions and procedures as the office of the non-staff elder.

### **Article 4 – Church Administrative Staff**

**4.1** – The Church's administrative staff includes the Treasurer, Business Manager, Financial Secretary, Administrative Secretary, and other positions which may be established for the work of the church. Job descriptions will be developed and approved by the elders for the Treasurer, Business Manager, Church Financial Secretary, or any other job position established. The job descriptions will be maintained on file at the church office available for review by any church member.

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### **Article 5 – Church Committees**

**5.1 – Authority to Establish Committees** – The elders have the authority to establish and oversee various standing and temporary committees to assist in the administration of church ministries and business matters. The elders may also appoint and approve church members to serve on these committees giving special regard to those who are gifted, qualified, and desire to serve. Committees may be disestablished by the elders except as limited by paragraph 5.2.

**5.2 – Permanent Standing Committees** – The Missions Committee and the Executive Financial Committee are permanent standing committees of the church.

**5.3 – Responsibilities and Duties of Committees** – The responsibilities of the Missions Committee and the Executive Financial Committee or other committees established by the elders will be defined in church policy letters.

### **Article 6 – Amendments**

**6.1** – The by-laws of Berachah Bible Church may be amended by the elders as necessary to reflect the current conduct of and/or procedures of any ministry or business of the church. Proposed amendments will be announced and explained to the congregation by the elders, and the elders will give church members an opportunity to understand and comment on proposed amendments. The business manager will maintain the most current copy of these by-laws, and this copy will be made available to any church member upon request. Additionally, any church member may submit to the elders a recommendation for amending these by-laws.