

*The Constitution of  
Emmanuel  
Baptist  
Church*

**April 1995**

## **PREAMBLE**

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

### **ARTICLE I: NAME**

The name of this church shall be the Emmanuel Baptist Church.

### **ARTICLE II: AFFILIATION**

#### **SECTION 1. Headship of Christ**

We acknowledge no ecclesiastical authority other than our Lord Jesus Christ, who is Head of the church (Eph 5:23) and who directs the affairs of the church through elders chosen and ordained according to the precepts of Holy Scripture. The elders themselves at all times and in all their activities stand under the authority of Holy Scripture.

#### **SECTION 2. Mutual Assistance.**

The church may and does cooperate with other like minded churches in matters of mutual interest and concern. We may seek the assistance and counsel of other churches in matters of special concern to us, but the decision of no other church or group of churches shall at any time be acknowledged as binding on this church.

### **ARTICLE III: PURPOSE**

The purpose of this church is to glorify the God of the Scriptures in promoting His worship, evangelizing the lost, and edifying saints. Therefore we are committed to the proclamation of God's glorious Gospel of His grace through all the world and to the defense of "the faith once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), and to the pure and faithful celebration of the ordinances of the New Covenant. "Unto Him be the glory in the church and in Christ Jesus to all generations forever and ever. Amen." (Eph 3:21).

### **ARTICLE IV: ARTICLES OF FAITH**

We do hereby adopt as the fullest expression of our faith the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689. The ultimate authority in all matters of faith, order, and morals is and must be the Bible alone, as articulated in the opening article of the Confession itself. This historic document is, however, an excellent summary of "the things most surely believed among us". We accept it not as an infallible rule or code of faith, but as an assistance to us in doctrinal definition, a confirmation in faith, and a means of edification in righteousness. Here the members of our church will have a body of theology in compact form and by means of Scriptural proofs will be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in them (I Pet 3:15).

## ARTICLE V: MEMBERSHIP

### **SECTION 1. Requisites for Membership.**

Any person who professes repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who manifests a life transformed by the power of Christ, who has been baptized upon profession of his faith, who manifests a willingness to be taught and substantial agreement with what he or she already knows concerning the church's doctrine, and who is willing to submit to its government shall be eligible for membership in it. (Acts 26:20; 20:21; Eph 2:8 10; Heb 13:17; Matt 28:19,20).

### **SECTION 2. Types of membership.**

Each member of the church is acknowledged to form a vital part of the body and to have a particular function in the life of that body (I Cor 12:14 27). Practical considerations however, require that certain distinctions be recognized in the membership of this church.

***Paragraph A. Regular Members.*** All who are received into the membership of the church according to the procedures set forth in Section 3 of this Article, who continue in regular attendance at the stated meetings of the church, and who do not come under the corrective discipline of the church as set forth in Article VI, shall be considered regular members in good standing and entitled to all the rights and privileges of membership in the church. (Acts 2:37 47).

***Paragraph B. Membership under Special Circumstances.*** Regular members who move away from our area and who cannot find another local church with which they can conscientiously unite will, at their request, be retained as members of this church. Such persons must maintain regular communication with the elders in order to maintain their membership in it. Nevertheless, they are urged to diligently seek a church with which they can unite elsewhere. Such a member shall not be allowed to vote in any congregational meeting of the church. At the discretion of the elders, such membership may also be granted to invalids, Christian workers and others whose relation to the church involves unusual circumstances. Members of other churches who come to live in our area for a limited period of time (e.g., students, military personnel, persons on special work assignments) may be received into or removed from the membership of the church on the same basis and in the same manner as persons who have permanent residence in our geographical area. Such a person need not be released from the membership of his "home church" but will be regarded as a member while in our midst, enjoying all the privileges, performing all the duties, and submitting to all the responsibilities of regular membership. When such a person terminates his period of temporary residence, he will be released to the fellowship of his "home church" and no longer be regarded as a member of this church (compare: Acts 18:27; Rom 16:1,2; II Cor 3:1f; Col 4:10; III John 5 10). If such persons decide to live in our area permanently and to end their membership in their former "home church," they may request to be regarded as a regular member of this church. Such regular membership will begin once their membership in their former "home church" has ended. A letter will be sent to the "home church" informing it of the new status of all who begin or end such special membership in this church.

### **SECTION 3. Procedures in the Reception of New Members.**

***Paragraph A. Application for Membership.*** A person who desires to become a member of this church should apply to the elders and request to be interviewed by them. During the interview the elders will seek to determine whether that person has a credible profession of faith in Christ,

has been scripturally baptized, is in substantial agreement with the doctrines of the church, and intends to give wholehearted support to its ministries and submit to its discipline.

**Paragraph B. Current Members of Other Churches.** If the applicant is or has been a member of another church, special effort will be made to determine the person's standing in that church and his reasons for leaving. At the discretion of the elders, a letter of inquiry concerning the person's standing may be sent to that church before his acceptance as a member in this church is determined. Reception by transfer does not negate any of the requisites for becoming a member in this assembly.

**Paragraph C. Congregational Responsibility.** If the elders are satisfied that the applicant meets the requisites for membership, they shall announce the same to the congregation at a stated meeting of the church. The applicant's name will be announced at least three (3) consecutive Lord's Days at stated meetings of the church. This time will be allowed for objections or questions to be raised by any member concerning the applicant's manner of life or doctrine. If no objection is raised which the elders consider to be valid, the person will be publicly received into membership at a stated meeting of the church. The elders may postpone the reception of a person into the membership until proper investigation can be made concerning objections which in their judgment, in the light of Scripture, are sufficiently serious (Matt 3:6-12; Acts 9:26,27; I John 4:1; Rev 2:2).

#### **SECTION 4. Termination of Membership.**

**Paragraph A. By Physical Death.** When a member of the church is removed from our midst by death, his name shall automatically be removed from the membership roll.

**Paragraph B. By Transfer.** When it is so requested, the elders may grant to a departing member in good standing a letter of dismissal to the fellowship of another church. No such letter may be given to a member who is at the time under the corrective discipline of this church. The elders may refuse to grant a letter of transfer to any church which is in their judgment disloyal to "faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3) or which does not exercise godly care over its members.

**Paragraph C. By Dismission.** Occasionally, a person's membership may need to be terminated under circumstances which make both transfer and corrective discipline inappropriate. In such circumstances a member may be dismissed. Dismission may be initiated either by the request of a member to the elders, or by the elders themselves when a member ceases to maintain vital contact with this church. In either case, the final decision regarding the action of dismission will lie with the elders. Church membership is a very serious matter. Members, therefore, shall be dismissed only after due inquiry and admonition by the elders, whenever such contact is possible. Before any individual is dismissed, the church shall be informed of the intention of the elders to dismiss the individual. This information must include the grounds for the proposed dismission. A suitable period of time following the announcement shall be given for the church to privately raise concerns with the elders. After due consideration of such concerns, the elders may proceed with dismission. When possible, they shall send a letter to the dismissed individual informing him of his dismission. The elders shall subsequently communicate to the church that the person has been dismissed. If one who has been dismissed applies again for membership, the normal procedures shall be followed as set forth in Section three (3) of this Article. Dismission may be warranted for any of the following reasons:

(a) A member in good standing concludes that he is not truly saved.

(b) A member in good standing wishes to terminate his membership for reasons that do not impugn his Christian profession.

(c) A member ceases to maintain vital contact with this church due to relocation or other unique circumstances.

**Paragraph D. By Excommunication.** According to the teaching of Holy Scripture a congregation must cut off from its fellowship and visible membership any person who teaches or insists on holding false and heretical doctrine, who blatantly and persistently conducts himself in a manner inconsistent with his Christian profession, or who persists in disturbing the unity and peace of the church and is unwilling to settle differences on Scriptural grounds (Matt 18:15-18; I Cor 5:1f; Rom 16:17; II Thess 3:6; Titus 3:10,11). The procedure to be followed in such excommunication is set forth in Article VI, Section 2 of this Constitution.

#### **SECTION 5. Conduct Required of Members.**

**Paragraph A. Attendance at Stated Meetings.** All regular members are expected to attend all the stated meetings of the church unless providentially hindered (by illness, accident, unusual working conditions, and other such extenuating circumstances). The stated meetings of the church are all the services on the Lord's Day (the Sunday school, morning and evening worship service), the mid week prayer meeting, the congregational meetings, and any special meetings which the elders shall occasionally deem it necessary to call. (Heb 10:24-25; Acts 2:42; Matt 18:20)

**Paragraph B. Means of Grace.** The church expects its members to make use of the various other means of grace which are available to them such as the regular reading of the Bible, private prayer, family worship, and a proper reverence for observance of the Lord's Day. (Ps 1:2; Col 4:12; Deut 6:4-7)

**Paragraph C. Tithing and Financial Support.** Since it is clearly taught in Scripture that Christians should financially support the work of the Lord by systematic and proportionate giving made through the local church (Mal 3:8-10; I Cor 16:1,2; II Cor 8; 9), all the members are expected to conform to this rule of Scripture. The tithe (10 percent of one's income) is not imposed on the people of God as a tax, but is strongly urged upon each member as an expression of worship and the biblical norm for basic giving, to which should be added gifts and offerings according to one's ability and the willingness of one's heart (II Cor 8:1-5; Ex 36:2-7).

**Paragraph D. Family Life.** The church expects its members to obey the teachings of the Scriptures in respect to family life and government. As the God appointed head of the family, the husband must rule over the household with gentleness and love but also with wisdom and firmness (Eph 5:25ff; I Tim 3:4,5). The wife must be in subjection to her husband in all things according to the rule of Scripture (Eph 5:22-24; I Pet 3:1). The husband with the wife must "nurture their children in the chastening and admonition of the Lord" (Eph 6:1-4), by setting a godly example before them, by instructing them consistently in the Scriptures, and by loving, wise, and firm discipline.

**Paragraph E. Relationships and Ministries.** Inasmuch as the church is represented in Scripture as a body having many members, each of the members having its particular function and yet having a concern for the health and protection of the whole (I Cor 12:12-27; Eph 4:4,11-16), this church expects that each of its members will strive for the good of the entire body. The members must actively seek to cultivate acquaintance with one another so that they may be better able to pray for one another; love, comfort, and encourage one another; and help one another materially

as necessity may require. They must refrain from speaking ill of one another. (Heb 12:15; Eph 4:29 32; II Thess 3:6 15)

**Paragraph F. Evangelism.** It is the duty of every Christian individually and as a member of a local church to labor for the extension of the kingdom of God both at home and to the ends of the earth. Therefore, every member of this church is expected prayerfully to recognize and to seize every opportunity to bear witness to his faith in Christ, both by consistent Christian conduct and by the testimony of his lips (Matt 28:19,20; Acts 1:8; I Pet 3:15; Col 4:5,6).

**Paragraph G. Sin.** Each member of the church is required to render in his daily life loyal obedience to all the moral precepts established in the Word of God (Rom 8:3,4). If God has not condemned or forbidden a practice in His Word, a Christian is at liberty to participate in it. The following principles must always guide the Christian's exercise of liberty:

1. Love of God. As the servant of Christ, all actions must be moved by a motive of love to God, and all objects must be used for His glory. The term "liberty" is often used as a cloak of malicious self indulgence, which is sin (I Cor 10:31; I Tim 4:4,5; I Pet 2:15,16).
2. Love of the brethren. Though no man may dictate the Christian's conscience, the welfare of fellow saints must always deeply affect his decisions. In a spirit of serving the brethren, he must do that which he judges will edify them and prevent their stumbling (Gal 5:13; I Cor 10:23; I Cor 8:9).
3. Compassion for sinners. Use of liberty must always be regulated by its effect upon sinners, and the behavior chosen must be that which is most likely to win some (I Cor 9:19 22).
4. Watchfulness over the soul. Though free in conscience to use all of God's creation, carefulness in practice is demanded because of remaining lusts. Where the Christian judges himself weak through lust, he must abstain in order to persevere (I Cor 9:23 27; Gal 5:13; James 4:17; Rom 13:14; 14:22,23).

**Paragraph H. Submission to Oversight.** All who come into the membership of this church are expected to recognize and submit to the scriptural authority deposited in the elders of this church. This responsibility will include willingly scheduling an oversight meeting with an elder(s) when requested (I Cor 16:15,16; I Thess 5:12,13; Heb 13:7,17).

## ARTICLE VI: CHURCH DISCIPLINE

### **SECTION 1. Formative Discipline.**

Formative discipline is that normal instruction, encouragement, admonition, correction or reproof which occurs in the life of the church as the body ministers one to another (I Cor 12:12 27), through mutual submission one to another (Eph 5:21) and through submission to the ministry and rule of the overseers whom the Lord has set over His church (I Pet 5:5). God uses such discipline to conform us (thus "formative") into the image of the Son (Rom 8:29), resulting in the sanctification of each member individually and of the whole body of the church collectively (Eph 4:11 16).

### **SECTION 2. Corrective Discipline.**

**Paragraph A. General Statement.** There are occasions, however, when one's failure to respond to this formative discipline makes the application of corrective discipline necessary. Such discipline becomes necessary when heretical doctrine or disorderly or scandalous conduct appears among the members of the church. In all such cases reasonable efforts must be made to resolve difficulty, correct error, and remove offense through counsel and admonition before more

drastic steps are taken (Gal 6:1; James 5:19,20). The principles given to us in Matthew 18:15,16; I Corinthians 5:1-13; Romans 16:17-20; II Thessalonians 3:6-15; I Timothy 5:19,20; Galatians 6:1 and II Timothy 2:24-26 must be carefully followed in all cases of corporate discipline. Corrective discipline always has for its aim the glory of God, the welfare and purity of the church, and the restoration and spiritual growth of the offender. When admonition is not heeded, suspension of some of the privileges of membership may need to be imposed, and if this measure fails, excommunication from the membership of the church may be necessary. All the members of the church are obliged to submit to and enforce as appropriate the decision of the church in acts of corrective discipline.

***Paragraph B. Suspension.***

1. Any conduct on the part of a member which disturbs the peace of the church or damages its testimony may require that the offending brother or sister be debarred by action of the elders from participating in certain activities of the church according to the gravity of the offense. A suspension shall be announced to the congregation by the elders and shall remain in force until the suspended member gives evidence of true repentance and change of conduct. When a suspended member can be restored to full fellowship, this shall also be announced to the congregation by the elders. While a member is under such discipline, he shall be treated by the congregation according to the directions given in II Thessalonians 3:6-15. Although such a person is considered to be walking disorderly, he must still be regarded as a member and not cut off from the church.
2. If a member has sinned publicly but shows hopeful signs of repentance, including submission to the admonition of the elders, it may still be necessary to suspend him for a time from some of the privileges of membership lest reproach be brought upon the church, lest others be emboldened to sin, and lest the offender himself fail to test his own soul and realize the gravity of his offense. Those who humbly submit to the imposed discipline shall afterwards be wholly forgiven and publicly received back into full fellowship of the church.
3. In the case where a person is accused or suspected of gross sin and absents himself from the congregation, refusing to meet with elders that the matter may be investigated, the elders shall announce to the congregation that the person is suspended from the membership, and such suspension shall continue in force as long as the conditions giving rise to it continue.

***Paragraph C. Excommunication.*** Excommunication is the strongest statement of church discipline and is the final act of corrective discipline. It shall be enacted Scripturally as an act of the church toward a member who teaches or insists on holding false or heretical doctrine, who blatantly or persistently conducts himself in a manner inconsistent with his Christian profession, or who persists in disturbing the unity and peace of the church (Tit 3:10,11; Rom 16:17,18). Excommunication must be enacted in the following cases:

1. Suspended members who have persisted in unrepentant, sinful behavior may, by the decision of the elders, have their status reviewed and be dealt with as in item #2 below.
2. Some types of conduct must be categorized as "immoral" (I Cor 5:9-11; 6:9,10; Gal 5:16ff) and a member guilty of such conduct must be cut off from the fellowship of the church (I Cor 5:3-5; Matt 18:17). In such a case the elders shall make earnest efforts to bring the offender to true repentance and reformation, but if these efforts fail, they shall report the same to the congregation at a regular or specially called business meeting of the

church and recommend that the offender be excommunicated which must be done, according to Scripture by action of the entire church (Matt 18:17; I Cor 5:4). To be valid, an act of excommunication must have the approval of at least two thirds of the members present and voting.

3. Likewise, some wrong opinions regarding the doctrines of Scripture are so serious that they must be categorized as "heretical" (Gal 1:6 9; I Tim 4:1), and a member who persists in propagating or holding any such opinion, in spite of earnest and patient admonition, shall be dealt with in the same manner as an immoral person.

***Paragraph D. Restoration.*** It is the duty of the church to forgive and restore to membership those persons who give satisfactory evidence of being penitent (II Cor 2:6 8). The elders may review the status of those who have been excommunicated or suspended to judge whether the aims of the discipline have been accomplished. Such action is to be reported to the church. Upon recommendation of the elders, the congregation shall have the right to restore an excommunicated member by a two thirds vote of the members present and voting at a duly called congregational meeting. Such restoration does not automatically include restoration to offices previously held. Future service in an office will be determined according to Article VIII of this constitution.

## ARTICLE VII: ORDINANCES

### **SECTION 1. General Statement.**

There are two ordinances which our Lord has commanded us to observe, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Neither of them has saving merit, nor is any grace imparted to the recipient through the water of Baptism or the bread and cup of the Supper. These ordinances are not means of "special grace", but they are "special means of grace" and powerful aids to the faith of the believers who participate in them.

### **SECTION 2. Baptism.**

***Paragraph A. Administration.*** Only confessed disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ are proper candidates for Baptism, and all such persons should be baptized (Acts 2:38). Believing that Baptism is the God ordained door of entrance into the visible community of the people of God, we shall receive into membership of the church only those who have been baptized "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt 28:19).

***Paragraph B. Special Circumstances.*** Occasionally, a genuine believer in the Lord Jesus Christ whose baptism is marked by irregularities of mode may apply for membership in this church. It is according to the mind of Christ that a believer who was baptized by a mode other than immersion should be immersed as a believer. Occasionally, such a believer may be prevented by his conscience from doing this. Therefore, should this be the case, the elders may at their discretion admit such a person if they believe that it is in the best interests of the person and this church. Before such a person is admitted, he must be submissive to instruction on the subject and prove to have a teachable and peaceable spirit with regard to the standards of this church respecting baptism. Should such a member come to agreement with the convictions of this church, he must, then, be immersed.

### **SECTION 3. The Lord's Supper.**

Whereas Baptism is the initiatory ordinance by which one enters the visible church and should be observed only once by each believer, the Lord's Supper should be celebrated frequently by the assembled church (I Cor 11:26). While this is a most holy ordinance and should be observed

with solemnity and dignity, the bread and the cup of the Supper are and remain only symbols of the broken body and the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. In order to maintain the purity of this ordinance, the elders will faithfully seek to insure that only true believers who are members in good standing of true churches are admitted to the Table. True believers whose church membership involves unusual circumstances may be admitted at the discretion of the elders.

## **ARTICLE VIII: OFFICE BEARERS**

### **SECTION 1. General Statement.**

Jesus Christ alone is Head of the church (Col 1:18), and He governs His church through office bearers whom He appoints and who are endowed by His Spirit with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work. Office bearers in the church are of two kinds: elders (also called "bishops/overseers, pastors"), and deacons (Phil 1:1; I Tim 3:3 13). It is the duty of the church to seek and discover among its members those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the necessary gifts of office bearing, and after formally recognizing them by common suffrage, to set them apart by united prayer.

### **SECTION 2. Elders.**

***Paragraph A. Number, Source, and Calling.*** Whereas in new or small congregations only one man may have the gifts requisite to his being recognized as an elder (such a congregation may, in fact, invite a man who has the necessary gifts to come and labor among them), the Scriptures indicate that normally there should be a plurality of elders in the church (Acts 20:17; Phil 1:1). These are also called "bishops" (meaning "overseers") because they are charged with the oversight of the assembly (Acts 20:28; I Pet 5:2). They are the "pastors and teachers" given to the church "for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph 4:11,12). In view of the fact that the responsibilities of this office are numerous and grave, it is highly desirable that at least one elder should devote his full time to "labor in the word and doctrine" (I Tim 5:17). The church is responsible to give adequate financial support to such men (I Cor 9:9 11; I Tim 5:17,18), and it is free to invite men from outside the local congregation to come into its midst and serve in this capacity. Any man called to the office of elder must join the church as a member and must conscientiously affirm his agreement with the Articles of Faith and Constitution of this church. Should he at any time move from this position, he is under spiritual and moral obligation to make this fact known to the church.

***Paragraph B. Roles and Responsibilities.*** Elders are responsible for the spiritual ministrations of the church, the implementation of discipline, and the oversight of the souls of the church's members "as they that shall give an account" to God (Acts 20:28; Heb 13:17; I Pet 5:2,3). While every elder is to be "apt to teach", some will be more engaged in formal and public teaching, while others will be more engaged in pastoring (that is, private teaching and admonishing) and governing. Gifted men who are not recognized as elders may engage in public preaching and teaching, provided they are godly in character and walk, but the exercise of their gift must be under the direction and oversight of the elders.

***Paragraph C. Oversight of Elders.*** While elders are overseers of the flock, they are themselves members of the flock. Therefore, each elder as an individual is under the oversight of his fellow elders and is subject to the same discipline as are all the members of the church.

***Paragraph D. Number and Term of Elders.*** The church should endeavor to discover and then formally recognize all the men whom the Holy Spirit has endowed with the requisite gifts and graces to oversee the church, but only such men. Thus when men have been ordained to this

office, the church will have the confidence that it has recognized the overseers whom the Holy spirit has set over it (Acts 20:28). It is evident, therefore, that neither the number of elders nor the length of their term of office can be fixed by the church.

***Paragraph E. Qualifications.*** The qualifications for a man chosen to fill the office of elder are clearly set forth in Scripture, particularly in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

### **SECTION 3. Deacons.**

***Paragraph A. Responsibilities.*** Deacons are responsible to administer the ordinary business, secular affairs, and benevolent concerns of the church so that the elders may devote themselves without distraction to the matters of spiritual oversight (Acts 6:3,4). They must fulfill the duties of their office in cooperation with and subjection to the elders.

***Paragraph B. Number of Deacons.*** The number of deacons shall not be fixed. The church shall choose as many as are needed for work to be done from among the men who give evidence of having the Scriptural qualifications for that office (Acts 6:3).

***Paragraph C. Qualifications.*** The qualifications for a man chosen to fulfill the office of deacon are particularly set forth in Acts 6:3 and I Timothy 3:8-13.

### **SECTION 4. Appointment of Office bearers.**

***Paragraph A. Guidance on Appointments.*** The appointment of elders and deacons is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. However, He has ordained that each local church exercise the responsibility of recognizing those whom He is appointing to be elders and deacons in that particular church. Each individual involved should have an inward conviction that the Lord is calling him to the particular office, and the church should recognize that call as it observes in the individual evidence of the gifts and graces which Scripture requires for particular office. This is a matter of such gravity that it should be accompanied by much prayerful waiting on God for guidance, a careful study of the relevant passages of Scripture, and an objective evaluation of each man nominated to a particular office. These activities are the responsibility of each individual member of the church as well as of the church as a whole.

***Paragraph B. Nominations.*** Nominations to the offices of elder and deacon may be made by the elders or by the congregation.

1. The elders may at any time during the year present a candidate or candidates to either or both offices and call a special congregational meeting for their consideration. In no case may a man be presented for either office without his knowledge and prior consent.
2. At least once each year, in conjunction with the Annual Congregational Meeting, the congregation will submit written ballots to determine the mind of God's people as to who they regard as qualifying for office. On this ballot each voting member may write the name of any male member and the office for which he believes that member to be qualified. Those thus recognized by one fourth or more of the total voting members of the church shall be considered.
3. Prior to presenting the candidate(s) to the congregation, the elders will meet with the man and his family to confirm his willingness to undergo congregational examination and his readiness to serve in church office. He may, without prejudice, decline nomination. If the man consents, he will be presented to the congregation as a nominee for office.

***Paragraph C. Discussion of Qualifications and Voting.*** When the time comes to consider a nomination during a business meeting of the church, the candidate for office and any member of his immediate family who are present shall be requested to leave the room while his qualifications are openly discussed by the entire congregation in the fear of God and the light of

Scripture and with due respect for the reputation of the nominee/officer. After that a written ballot shall be taken. It is hoped that the vote of the congregation will in such matters always be unanimous, but if unanimity is not realized, no less that a three fourths majority of the members present and voting shall be required for recognition of an office bearer. Any church meeting for the election of officers shall be announced on four consecutive Lord's Days previous to its being held.

**Paragraph D. Public Installation.** Following the recognition of an office bearer by vote of the congregation, he shall be publicly installed in his office at a regular worship service by the prayer of the whole church and the laying on of the hands of the elders (I Tim 4:14; II Tim 1:6).

**Paragraph E. Discipline and Reconfirmation of Office bearers.** Office bearers are subject to the same rules of discipline as are the other members of the church. In addition, the Scriptures outline special guidelines for the discipline of elders in terms of the number of witnesses and the public nature of such discipline (I Tim 5:19 22). They shall hold office as long as they are faithful to their calling and have the confidence of the congregation. The church shall reconfirm (or express the withdrawal of) its confidence in each of its office bearers at its annual meeting four years after their installation or last reconfirmation in the manner designated in Paragraph C of this section. There may arise reasons that would require an officer to be reviewed before the regularly scheduled time. Such a review meeting may be called by a majority of the elders (or a majority of the other elders in the case of an elder). The members may also request such a meeting. This request must be set forth in writing with the signatures of one third of the total voting membership of the church. It must be presented to the elders, who shall in a timely and constitutional way (see Paragraph C) call such a meeting. Any member who publicly suggests in such a meeting that the officer being reviewed is unqualified for his office must have previously spoken with the officer himself and informed the elders of the church of his concerns (I Tim 5:19). He must also present biblical and factual warrant for his concerns at the review meeting. Just as it is wrong for a church to retain an officer who is not biblically qualified, so also it is rebellion against the head of the church to reject an officer for any but biblical grounds. Additionally, any officer about whom such concerns are raised must be permitted, if he wishes, to return to the meeting and defend himself. The church should seek unity of mind concerning the matter, but should such unity not be fully realized, no fewer than three fourths of those ballots cast shall be required for the reconfirmation of an officer in his office. Any officer failing reconfirmation no longer holds office in the church. In the event that an officer fails to receive an expression of confidence from the congregation, he remains a member in the church, unless disciplinary proceedings under Article VI are in effect. In these cases, these proceedings take precedence. In the event that a full time elder fails to receive an expression of confidence, he is removed from his office and is no longer entitled to ongoing financial support from the church. Arrangements for his financial settlement shall be the responsibility of the elders. The financial severance will not exceed three (3) months of compensation. An officer may, however, resign his office without prejudice if for good and valid reasons he finds he is no longer able to discharge the duties of it.

## **ARTICLE IX: CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS**

### **SECTION 1. General Statement.**

There shall be an Annual Congregational Meeting of the church for the hearing of reports and the transaction of such other business as may properly be brought before the congregation.

Congregational meetings may be called at other times at the discretion of the elders or when one third of the voting members make a written request for such a meeting. This request must state the reason for the meeting, be signed by one third of the members in good standing, and must be presented to the elders, who shall in turn make the proper announcement of the meeting.

### **SECTION 2. Notice of Meetings.**

*Paragraph A. Congregational Meetings.* Notice of all congregational meetings shall be given at regular worship services on two (2) successive Lord's Days immediately prior to the meetings. However, in the case of an emergency, a meeting may be called on shorter notice by notifying each member by mail or phone of the time, place, and purpose of the meeting.

*Paragraph B. Special Meetings.* Meetings for the hearing of special reports or for seeking the counsel of the congregation may be called on shorter notice, but no vote may be taken or other business transacted at such meetings.

### **SECTION 3. Quorum.**

The regular members present at any properly convened congregational meeting shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business. The elders shall cancel any previously announced congregational meeting of the church if through an act of God (such as inclement weather) an unusually large proportion of the members of the church cannot be present.

### **SECTION 4. Maintenance of Order.**

One of the elders shall preside at all business meetings.

### **SECTION 5. Voting.**

*Paragraph A. Eligibility.* All regular members in good standing in the church may vote on any question brought before the congregation.

*Paragraph B. Decision Standards.* Unanimity of heart and mind under God shall at all times be sought and prayed for (Acts 6:5), but when unanimity is not realized, not less than a two thirds majority of the members present and voting shall be required to make a resolution valid, unless other guidelines are required in this constitution.

## **ARTICLE X: AMENDMENTS**

### **SECTION 1. Procedure.**

This Constitution may be amended by a three fourths majority of the regular members present and voting at a duly convened congregational meeting.

### **SECTION 2. Notification.**

No proposed amendment may be voted on which has not been distributed to the members in written form at least four (4) weeks prior to such a meeting.

## **ARTICLE XI: DISSOLUTION**

If Emmanuel Baptist Church should conclude its ministry and be dissolved, none of its assets remaining after meeting all responsibilities and payment of all just obligations shall inure to the benefit of an individual member of the church, its officers or other private individuals. Such assets, if any, shall in the event of its dissolution, be assigned by action of its members, at a properly called meeting, to such other organization(s) which are in harmony with the objectives and doctrinal position as stated in this Constitution. Such organization(s) must also be recognized by the United States Internal Revenue Service as entitled to income tax exempt status under section 501 (c) (3) or amendments thereto of the revenue code.

## AMMENDMENTS

### AMENDMENT I: TRUSTEES

#### **Section 1. Composition of the Board**

In order to ARender to Caesar the things that are Caesar=s,@ (Mark 12:17) this church shall have a Board of Trustees. This board shall consist of three men who are members in good standing and shall be elected by the church. The term for each Trustee will be three years. A trustee may be elected to succeed himself. Trustees may be elected from among the office bearers or from the congregation at large.

#### **Section 2. Duties of Trustees**

The Trustees shall perform such legal and business transactions as are particularly designated to them by the laws of the Commonwealth of Virginia. In the discharge of their duties, they shall act only at the direction of the elders.