

# Principles of Order



**Volume Two  
Faith & Order  
of the  
Bible Fellowship Church  
2026 Edition**

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# Table of Contents

Foreword	viii
Key and Abbreviations	ix
<b>200 Form Of Government</b>	<b>2:83</b>
Article 201 - Preliminary Principles	2:85
Article 202 - The Church	2:86
202-1 The Church -- Universal and Particular	2:86
202-2 Responsibilities of the Church Toward Members	2:86
202-3 Qualifications and Duties of Church Membership	2:87
Article 203 - The Government of the Church	2:88
Article 204 - Elders, Deacons, Staff	2:89
204-3 Pastoral Staff	2:92
204-4 Deacons	2:92
204-5 Church Staff	2:93
<b>300 Book Of Discipline</b>	<b>2:95</b>
Article 301 - Nature and Purpose of Corrective Discipline	2:98
Article 302 - Original and Appellate Jurisdiction	2:100
Article 303 - Steps in Institution of Judicial Process	2:102
Article 304 - Conduct of Trials	2:103
Article 305 - Evidence	2:105
Article 306 - Censure and Restoration	2:106
Article 307 - Appeals	2:109
Article 308 - Dissents and Protests	2:110
<b>400 Bylaws For Particular Churches</b>	<b>2:113</b>
Article 401 - Boards of Elders and Deacons	2:114
401-1 The Board of Elders	2:114
401-2 The Board of Deacons	2:116
Article 402 - Church Committees	2:118
402-1 Required Committee	2:118
402-2 Optional Committees	2:118
Article 403 - Congregational Meetings	2:119
403-1 Miscellaneous Information	2:119
403-2 Elections in Congregational Meetings	2:119
403-3 Suggested Format for Congregational Meetings	2:120
403-4 Format for Special Congregational Meetings	2:121
Article 404 - Choosing Leaders Other Than Elders and Deacons	2:122
Article 405 - Communication of Particular Churches to BFC Conference	2:123
Article 406 - Other Organizations in the Particular Church	2:124
406-1 Sunday Bible School	2:124
406-2 Mission Organizations	2:124
406-3 Youth Organizations	2:125
Article 407 - Miscellaneous Bylaws	2:126
407-1 Legal Representatives	2:126
407-2 Church Assessment	2:126
407-3 Offerings	2:126
407-4 Congregational Minutes and Records	2:126
407-7 Child Protection Policy	2:127
Article 408 - Church Properties	2:128

Article 409 – Pastoral Change Procedure .....	2:129
409-1 Instituting the Pastoral Relationship.....	2:129
409-2 Dissolving the Pastoral Relationship .....	2:133
<b>500 Bylaws For BFC Conference .....</b>	<b>2:139</b>
Article 501 - Ministry in the Bible Fellowship Church .....	2:140
501-1 Men Entering the Ministry of the BFC .....	2:140
501-2 Probationary Service.....	2:141
501-3 Ordained Ministers Received From Other Churches .....	2:142
501-4 Ordination .....	2:142
501-5 Retirement From the Ministry .....	2:144
Article 502 - BFC Conference .....	2:145
Article 503 - BFC Annual Budget .....	2:147
Article 504 - Membership of Congregations in BFC Conference .....	2:148
504-1 Particular Church .....	2:148
504-2 Mission Churches .....	2:148
504-3 Other Congregations.....	2:149
504-3.1 Daughter Churches of Bible Fellowship Churches .....	2:149
504-3.2 Pre-existing Congregations.....	2:149
Article 505 - Members of BFC Conference.....	2:150
Article 506 - BFC Conference Registration.....	2:151
Article 507 - Officers of BFC Conference .....	2:153
507-1 Conference Moderator .....	2:153
507-2 Vice-Moderator .....	2:153
507-3 Secretary .....	2:154
Article 508 - Business Rules of BFC Conference .....	2:155
508-1 Regular Order of Business .....	2:155
508-2 Addressing BFC Conference .....	2:155
508-3 Reports of Boards and Committees to BFC Conference .....	2:155
508-4 Election Procedures of BFC Conference .....	2:155
508-5 Study Committees.....	2:156
Article 509 - General Rules of Elections and Resignations.....	2:157
509-1 Categories .....	2:157
509-2 Ministers .....	2:157
509-3 Elders .....	2:157
509-4 Laypersons .....	2:157
509-5 Resignation .....	2:157
509-6 Vacancy.....	2:158
509-7 Term.....	2:158
Article 510 - Appointments by the Conference Moderator .....	2:159
510-1 Committees and Appointees for the Succeeding BFC Conference .....	2:159
510-1.1 Committee on Agenda and Arrangements .....	2:159
510-1.2 Registrar and Assistant Registrar (see §506-1, 506-2) .....	2:160
510-2 Committees and Appointees for the Current BFC Conference.....	2:160
510-2.1 Committee on Examination of BFC Conference Minutes.....	2:160
510-2.2 Parliamentary .....	2:161
Article 511 - Boards and Committees Elected by BFC Conference.....	2:162
511-1 Bible Fellowship Church Executive Board.....	2:162
511-1.1 Composition, Election, and Terms of Office.....	2:162
511-1.2 Meetings and Quorum .....	2:162
511-1.3 Organization.....	2:162

511-1.4 Duties of Officers.....	2:163
511-1.5 Duties of the BFC Executive Board .....	2:164
511-1.6 Executive Director of the Bible Fellowship Church.....	2:165
511-1.7 Sub-Committees Supervised by the BFC Executive Board .....	2:166
511-1.7 (1) Communications Committee.....	2:166
511-1.7 (2) BFC Education and Training Committee.....	2:166
511-1.7 (3) Youth and Young Adult Committee .....	2:167
511-1.7 (4) Historical Committee .....	2:167
511-1.7 (5) BFC Life Committee .....	2:168
511-1.7 (6) BFC Prayer Committee.....	2:169
511-1.8 Pinebrook Educational Foundation.....	2:171
Section 1 - Establishment and Purpose.....	2:171
Section 2 - Overview .....	2:171
Section 3 - Control.....	2:171
Section 4 - Administration .....	2:172
Section 5 - Aid Projects/Designated Accounts.....	2:173
Section 6 - Miscellaneous Regulations .....	2:174
511-2 Nominating Committee.....	2:175
511-2.1 Composition and Election.....	2:175
511-2.2 Duties .....	2:175
511-3 Ministerial Candidate Committee.....	2:176
511-3.1 Purpose .....	2:176
511-3.2 Composition and Election .....	2:176
511-3.3 Duties.....	2:176
511-3.4 Terms .....	2:176
511-3.5 Procedure .....	2:177
511-3.6 Equivalency Training Program .....	2:177
511-4 Ministerial Credentials Committee.....	2:179
511-4.1 Composition and Election.....	2:179
511-4.2 Duties.....	2:179
511-4.3 Categories of Ministry .....	2:180
511-5 Ministerial Relations Committee .....	2:183
511-5.1 Purpose .....	2:183
511-5.2 Composition and Election.....	2:183
511-5.3 Duties.....	2:183
511-5.4 Conference Pastor.....	2:184
Article 512 BFC Departments .....	2:185
512-1 BFC Departments .....	2:185
512-2 Board of Church Extension.....	2:186
512-2.1 Purpose .....	2:186
512-2.2 Composition and Election .....	2:186
512-2.3 Duties.....	2:186
512-2.4 Director of Church Extension Ministries.....	2:187
512-2.5 Rules Relative to the Recognition of Churches.....	2:187
512-3 Board of Missions .....	2:188
512-3.1 Purpose .....	2:188
512-3.2 Composition and Election .....	2:188
512.3.3 Duties of the Board of Missions .....	2:188
512.3.4 Duties of the Board Officers .....	2:189
512-3.5 Contributions .....	2:189

512-4 Board of Church Health.....	2:190
512-5 Board of Victory Valley .....	2:193
512-5.1 Composition and Election .....	2:193
512-5.2 Duties.....	2:193
Article 513 Miscellaneous Bylaws of BFC Conference .....	2:195
513-1 Yearbook.....	2:195
513-2 Past Minutes of Boards and Committees.....	2:195
<b>600 Regionalization.....</b>	<b>2:197</b>

## Amendments

700 Amendments to the Faith & Order.....	2:200
701 Amendments to the Articles of Faith .....	2:200
702 Amendments to the Principles of Order.....	2:200
703 General Rules on Amendments.....	2:200
704 Special Rules on Amendments.....	2:201

## Resources

Beneficiary Society .....	2:205
Ministerial Convention .....	2:208
History of the Bible Fellowship Church .....	2:210
Historical Society of the Bible Fellowship Church .....	2:216
Guidelines for the Church in Handling Suspected Spousal Abuse Situations .....	2:217

## Suggested Forms

Admission of Members.....	2:221
Baptism.....	2:222
Dedication of Children.....	2:222
Marriage .....	2:223
Funeral .....	2:225
Dedication of a Church Building .....	2:227
Installation of a Pastor .....	2:229
Local Church Recognition of Ordination .....	2:230
Chartering Ceremony for a New Church.....	2:231

# Foreword

The Faith and Order of the Bible Fellowship Church is comprised of two volumes. Volume One contains the Articles of Faith and the Biblical Principles for Living. Volume Two contains the Principles of Order. Together the two volumes contain the denomination's teaching on faith and practice.

This edition of the Faith and Order represents the latest official version and supercedes all previous editions. An electronic edition posted on the website, BFC.org, includes any intervening updates between printings.

Citations in this format are made by section and paragraph, not necessarily by page number. For example:

Composition of the Board of Elders .....	401-1.1
Bylaws for Particular Churches	Section 400
Board of Elders and Deacons	Article 401
The Board of Elders	401-1
Composition of Elders	401-1.1

The following words or phrases are technical terms in the Faith and Order and are usually capitalized:

- BFC Conference
- Board of Deacons
- Board of Elders
- Particular Church

A Table of Contents and Indexes are incorporated for easy reference.

# Key and Abbreviations

Abbreviations:

BFC Bible Fellowship Church  
F&O Faith and Order

Biblical abbreviations follow the 18th edition of the Chicago Manual of Style.

Gen.	Genesis	Nah.	Nahum
Exod.	Exodus	Hab.	Habakkuk
Lev.	Leviticus	Zeph.	Zephaniah
Num.	Numbers	Hag.	Haggai
Deut.	Deuteronomy	Zech.	Zechariah
Josh.	Joshua	Mal.	Malachi
Judg.	Judges	Matt.	Matthew
Ruth	Ruth	Mark	Mark
1 Sam.	First Samuel	Luke	Luke
2 Sam.	Second Samuel	John	John
1 Kings	First Kings	Acts	Acts
2 Kings	Second Kings	Rom.	Romans
1 Chron.	First Chronicles	1 Cor.	First Corinthians
2 Chron.	Second Chronicles	2 Cor.	Second Corinthians
Ezra	Ezra	Gal.	Galatians
Neh.	Nehemiah	Eph.	Ephesians
Esther	Esther	Phil.	Philippians
Job	Job	Col.	Colossians
Ps.	Psalms	1 Thess.	First Thessalonians
Prov.	Proverbs	2 Thess.	Second Thessalonians
Eccles.	Ecclesiastes	1 Tim.	First Timothy
Song of Sol.	Song of Solomon	2 Tim.	Second Timothy
Isa.	Isaiah	Titus	Titus
Jer.	Jeremiah	Philem.	Philemon
Lam.	Lamentations	Heb.	Hebrews
Ezek.	Ezekiel	James	James
Dan.	Daniel	1 Pet.	First Peter
Hosea	Hosea	2 Pet.	Second Peter
Joel	Joel	1 John	First John
Amos	Amos	2 John	Second John
Obad.	Obadiah	3 John	Third John
Jon.	Jonah	Jude	Jude
Mic.	Micah	Rev.	Revelation

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**200**

# **Form of Government**

## **Article 201 - Preliminary Principles**

**201-1** That in seeking to be founded on the Word of God in practice as well as doctrine, the BFC sets forth this form of government as that which is in its judgment most clearly in keeping with the Holy Scriptures.

**201-2** That the formulation of faith and practice must be in submission to the Holy Scriptures because God has not bound the conscience to the doctrines and commandments of men when they exceed or contradict His Word.

**201-3** That every union of Particular Churches shall have the right, in harmony with the preceding principles, to formulate a faith and order that shall seek to provide a basis of fellowship always in submission to the written Word of God.

**201-4** That this form of government shall seek to make this body a church that operates by written standards, which is not, however, to be understood as being opposed to love or spirit, but rather opposed to disorder and injustices that can so easily pervert right human relationships when authority is personal or when there is no accepted way of deciding issues that inevitably arise among men, however deeply they may be committed to Jesus Christ and to one another.

**201-5** That our Lord, the Head of the Church, for the edification of the body and the evangelization of the world, has appointed elders in the visible church to preach the Gospel, administer the ordinances, and exercise discipline.

**201-6** That, although the character, qualifications, and authority of the elders are described in the Holy Scriptures, the electing of persons to oversee shall rest with the body.

**201-7** That careful adherence to these principles will contribute to the glory and happiness of the church in that it can own the blessing of our Lord, the Head of the Church universal, and also the approbation of an impartial public.

## **Article 202 - The Church**

### **202-1 The Church -- Universal and Particular**

**202-1.1** Jesus Christ has established His rule on earth in the church. The universal church consists of all those persons, in every nation, who make profession of faith in Christ and yield submission to Him and His rule. Because this multitude cannot meet in one place for worship and fellowship, the Scriptures indicate that these believers shall be divided into many Particular Churches.

**202-1.2** A Particular Church consists of professing believers voluntarily associated in submission to the Holy Scriptures, for divine worship, corporate prayer, godly living, and evangelism. The Particular Churches seek to demonstrate their participation in the church universal by forming unions with other Particular Churches that have a similar understanding of doctrine and organization.

### **202-2 Responsibilities of the Church Toward Members**

**202-2.1** Each Particular Church has been directed by Christ to minister corporately to the needs of individual members. The Elders of each congregation shall endeavor to establish a program that shall honor the body of Christ in fulfilling the following responsibilities toward members:

- (1) To implement the corporate worship of God (John 4:23-24; Eph. 5:19-20; Col. 3:16)
- (2) To promote the development of Christian character and conduct (Rom. 6:1-23, 12:9-21, 14:1, 15:7; Gal. 5:16-26; Eph. 4:22-5:21)
- (3) To maintain purity of life and doctrine (1 Cor. 5:1-13; 1 Tim. 1:3-11; Titus 2:1-15, 3:1-11; Heb. 13:9; 2 John 1:10-11; Jude 1:3-4; Rev. 2:2, 2:14-15, 2:20)
- (4) To instruct and train for Christian service and to give opportunity to serve (Rom. 12:1-8; 1 Cor. 12:1-31; Eph. 4:8-16; Matt. 28:18-20; 2 Tim. 2:2)
- (5) To impart a vision for evangelism and missions (Matt. 9:36-38, 28:18-20; Acts 1:8; Rom. 9:1ff; Rom. 10:1ff)
- (6) To assist in building good relationships in family (Eph. 5:22, 6:4; 1 Pet. 3:1-7), employment (Eph. 6:5-9; 1 Pet. 3:18-21), community and state (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17)
- (7) To promote fellowship and hospitality (Rom. 12:13; Heb. 13:2, 13:16; 1 Pet. 4:9; 3 John 1:5-8)
- (8) To minister comfort (2 Cor. 1:3-7)

- (9) To promote unity and harmony (1 Cor. 1:10-13; Eph. 4:3)
- (10) To care for the needy (Acts 6:1-8; 1 Tim. 5:3-16)
- (11) To settle disagreements and administer discipline (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor.5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:14-15)

## **202-3 Qualifications and Duties of Church Membership**

**202-3.1 Qualifications.** Anyone desiring to be a member of the BFC shall give testimony and evidence of faith in Christ and the new birth. He shall be in sympathy with the *Faith & Order*, be baptized subsequent to salvation (including modes not practiced by the BFC but approved by the local church elders), and manifest holiness toward God and separation from the world (Acts 2:41-47).

**202-3.2 Duties.** Commitment to Christ and the BFC shall be manifested by the joyful acceptance of the following responsibilities:

- (1) To live in keeping with the doctrines and standards of the Church as found in the *F&O* (John 17:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:6-11, 6:14-18; Eph. 5:26-27; Titus 3:10; James 1:26-27; 2 John 1:9-10)
- (2) To exercise willingly one's spiritual gifts within the body (Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Cor. 12:4-31; Rom. 12:3-8)
- (3) To minister under the direction of the Church (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:7; 1 Pet. 5:2-3; 1 Tim. 3:1; 5:17)
- (4) To bear the message of the Church to the outside world (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; Matt. 5:13-16)
- (5) To pray consistently for the elders and the ministries of the Church (Rom. 10:1; Matt. 9:38; Acts 4:29; Eph. 6:18-19; Acts 13:2-4)
- (6) To support the program of the Church financially with the regular giving of tithes and offerings (Mal. 3:10; 1 Cor. 9:13-14, 16:1-2; 2 Cor. 8:7-9, 9:6-7)
- (7) To submit to those God has ordained as overseers in the Church (Heb. 13:17; cf. also references under #3 above)
- (8) To attend faithfully the stated meetings of the Church (Acts 2:42; Heb. 10:25)
- (9) To observe the Lord's Supper (1 Cor. 11:23-28)
- (10) To demonstrate mutual care and concern for the other members of the Church (John 13:34-35, 15:12, 15:17; Gal. 6:1-2, 6:10; James 5:9, 5:16)

## **Article 203 - The Government of the Church**

**203-1** By providing spiritually qualified overseers, called Elders, Christ enables each Particular Church to govern itself.

**203-2** But although the Churches are autonomous, they are not independent, because they are a part of a fellowship of churches. The basis of this fellowship is mutual conviction of the body of truth set forth in the Scriptures.

**203-3** The authority of the fellowship is secondary, being derived from the Particular Churches, and is limited to matters that pertain to the churches in fellowship or to common concerns that churches agree to take care of together.

**203-4** All authority in the Church, whether in Particular Churches or in the denomination, is moral and spiritual, ministerial and declarative. It is moral and spiritual, negatively, in that the church is unable to use civil force to compel obedience, and positively, in that obedience is incomplete unless it is inward and real as well as outward and apparent. All authority in the church is ministerial and declarative in that the Holy Scriptures are the only rule of faith and conduct, and all decisions and laws must therefore be understood as being servants of the Word, announcing what the body believes the Scriptures to teach with the constant recognition that “councils may err” through frailty inseparable from humanity.

**203-5** The church consists of many Particular Churches needing counsel and assistance. Because this counsel and assistance is needed on occasion by each Particular Church, each Particular Church is responsible for and accountable to the others and to the denominational body as a whole. However, this counsel and assistance must neither violate the autonomy of Particular Churches in the body nor negate the accountability of each to all other churches. The goals of this mutual counsel and assistance are to encourage and maintain spiritual health, to preserve soundness of doctrine and discipline, to enter into joint effort for the advancement of the work of Christ, and to guard against doctrinal error and immorality. From these arises the importance and usefulness of assemblies of Particular Churches.

**203-6** The assembly of churches shall represent, in one body, all of the Particular Churches of this denomination and shall be called the Bible Fellowship Church Conference (BFC Conference).

## **Article 204 - Elders, Deacons, Staff**

Having called and assembled His church, our Lord provides for the leadership and care of each Particular Church by providing elders and deacons and enabling them to do their work. Elders are responsible to rule the church and must be qualified men, and deacons are responsible to serve the church and may be qualified men or women. Elders and deacons are the only terms describing continuing positions in the New Testament church. Those who serve in these ways do not create their positions, nor do their positions clothe the individuals with power, but the Lord endows individuals with gifts and qualifications (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1; 1 Pet. 5) that enable them to do their work as God Himself has designed.

### **204-1 Elders**

**204-1.1** In the New Testament church Christ has provided men to hold the position of elder to oversee the life of His Church; those whom He commissions He enables to shepherd His Church.

**204-1.2** The position of elder is given broad responsibility and authority in the New Testament. Because they are to be examples to the flock in godliness and to govern well, they are called elders. Because they are responsible for oversight and administration of the life of the church, they are called overseers or bishops. Because they are to care for and feed God's people, they are called pastors (shepherds). Because they serve the people of the church, they are called ministers.

**204-1.3** All elders together share the authority in and responsibility for the life of the church. Some elders are gifted and recognized as teaching elders; their primary authority and responsibility is in the Word and doctrine and secondarily in oversight. Other elders are gifted and recognized as ruling elders; their primary authority and responsibility is in oversight and secondarily in the Word and doctrine.

**204-1.4** The work of the elders is to shepherd the flock. This work includes: guarding (Acts 20:28), overseeing (1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Pet. 5:2), discipling (1 Thess. 5:12; 2 Tim. 2:2), preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 1:9; John 8:31-32), evangelizing (2 Tim. 4:5), praying (Acts 6:4, John 17, John 14:12-14, James 5:13-16), serving (1 Tim. 4:14; 1 Pet. 4:10-11) and disciplining (Titus 1:9).

**204-1.5** Elders, as leaders of the people, are chosen by the membership of the church on the basis of Scriptural qualifications.

**204-1.6** Because of the qualifications and dignity of the position of Elder, including minister, each Particular Church shall give careful consideration to

ensure that a man who has been divorced or who has married a divorced woman has Biblically resolved issues in his family, church, and community raised by the divorce and has demonstrated since the divorce, stability of character and is presently characterized as above reproach, and if married, faithful to and exclusively committed to his wife.

**204-1.7** The elders shall ensure that the church has obtained background checks and child abuse clearances for all elders. In jurisdictions that require clearances, the elders will ensure that their policy complies with the law. A man convicted of sexual abuse or included in the national or state registry of sexual offenders will be ineligible for the office of elder.

## **204-2 Ministers**

**204-2.1** The Lord of the Church has given gifts to men called ministers in His church. This position is the first in the church in both dignity and usefulness. Although all elders are to be able to teach, some elders are specially gifted for teaching and preaching. The Lord of the Church has given those gifts to men we call ministers.

**204-2.2** Terminology. The term “minister” is not used in Scripture to identify the specific position of elder, but to indicate the service to Christ and His people given by those who hold this position. “Pastor” is used as a gift to the church. Although neither “minister” nor “pastor” is used in Scripture as a specific position, these titles are used and are interchangeable in practice for those men we call ministers.

Moreover, though the English word “deacon” has its roots in the Greek word *diakonos*, which is translated “minister” or “servant,” this gives no basis for women being elders, ministers or pastors.

A minister or pastor in the BFC must hold or be seeking credentials in the BFC.

**204-2.3 The Qualifications for the Ministry.** The Christian ministry is a divine calling that makes high and holy demands on those who aspire to this work. Although the minister of the gospel preaches Christ and not himself, the personality of the minister is involved in the proclamation of the gospel and the performance of pastoral functions. It is imperative, therefore, to give heed to the qualifications imbedded in the Word of God. To minister effectively to his generation, a man must have certain spiritual, personal, physical, and educational qualifications.

### **Spiritual Qualifications**

- (1) The Christian minister must give evidence of having been born again, of having the assurance of salvation, of being inwardly persuaded that he is called of God to the Christian ministry, and of being willing to make the

necessary commitment.

- (2) To minister in the name of Christ one must possess the gifts of the Holy Spirit and have a knowledge of God's plan and will.

### **Personal Qualifications**

- (1) The minister must have a love for the study of Scripture and be devoted to prayer inasmuch as his primary function is to be pastor-teacher.
- (2) The minister must possess qualities of leadership and administration, together with a willingness to assume responsibility inasmuch as he is an elder who numbers ruling among his duties.
- (3) The minister, being accountable to God, must have a genuine love for people, exercise patience in dealing with them, be receptive to criticism and correction, and remain steadfast in his duties inasmuch as he is an under-shepherd of the flock of God.
- (4) The minister must not be a lover of money inasmuch as he is to be a lover of God.
- (5) The minister must be willing to forgo personal rights and privileges for the sake of ministering to others inasmuch as he is to be an example of a servant.
- (6) Because of the qualifications and dignity of the position of minister, when considering a man for ordination, the Ministerial Candidate and the Credentials Committees shall give careful consideration to ensure that a man who has been divorced or who has married a divorced woman has Biblically resolved the issues in his family, church, and community raised by the divorce, demonstrated since the divorce stability of character, and is presently characterized as above reproach, and if married, faithful to and exclusively committed to his wife.
- (7) A man convicted of sexual abuse or included in the national or state registry of sexual offenders will be ineligible for ordination or the position of minister at any church. Additionally, a man will be ineligible to maintain his ordination credentials or his position of minister at any church if convicted of sexual abuse.

### **Physical Qualifications**

The pastor must be a mature man who is physically and mentally fit, being free from impairments that would undermine his ability to minister. His physical and mental fitness should give promise that he will be able to bear the demands of the ministry.

### **Educational Qualifications**

- (1) All men desiring to be ordained to the ministry of the BFC shall have been graduated from college/university and are encouraged to pursue

a seminary degree. The minimum requirement is 3 years of theological training or its approved equivalent. A man may be an applicant or candidate during the period of his training, but the 3 years of theological study shall be completed before he becomes a probationer. Exceptions to these rules may be made for some mature men; however, in no case will a man be recommended for ordination examination before completing the equivalent of 3 years of theological training.

- (2) Candidates for the ministry should be men of broad reading interests, giving evidence of understanding and practical wisdom.

### **204-3 Pastoral Staff**

**204-3.1** The pastoral staff of a Particular Church is composed of, and limited to, those men who are serving as ministers in the BFC. For an individual to serve as a senior/lead minister in the BFC, he must be called according to our Principles of Order. Other pastoral staff must either be ordained by or have had his previous ordination recognized by the BFC or, as a candidate/probationer, he must be under the care of the Ministerial Candidate Committee.

**204-3.2** A pastor may only serve as a voting member of the Board of Elders if he has a congregationally-approved call or has been elected as an elder by the congregation. In churches with multiple pastors, the Board of Elders may wish to limit the number of pastors that are voting members of the Board and must communicate to the congregation the pastors that will be voting members of the Board. A sole or Senior Pastor is always a voting member of the Board.

### **204-4 Deacons**

**204-4.1** The position of deacon is presented in the Scriptures as a position not of ruling, but of service. A deacon should be a person of deep spiritual life, exemplary conduct, and sound judgment (1 Tim. 3; Acts 6:1-8). This position is one of sympathetic service to the church and to the distressed, friendless, or sick, after the example of our Lord Jesus Christ.

**204-4.2** Those who serve in this position should be known for their trustworthiness, their temperance, their faith, and their blameless life.

**204-4.3** Deacons, as servants of the church, are chosen by the membership of the church on the basis of Scriptural qualifications.

**204-4.4** Because of the qualifications and dignity of the position of Deacon, each Particular Church shall give careful consideration to ensure that a person who has been divorced or who has married a divorced person is presently characterized as above reproach, and if married, faithful to and exclusively committed to his or her spouse.

**204-4.5** The elders shall ensure that the church has obtained background checks and child abuse clearances for all deacons. In jurisdictions that require clearances, the elders will ensure that their policy complies with the law. A person convicted of sexual abuse or included in the national or state registry of sexual offenders will be ineligible for the office of deacon.

**204-5 Church Staff**

**204-5.1** The church staff of a Particular Church is composed of individuals who are employed by that Particular Church. The church staff shall include the pastoral staff, but is not limited to the pastoral staff. Others included in the church staff would be secretaries, sexton, director of women's ministries, director of children and youth, choir director, etc. The title of "Pastor," when it is used in association with a person that is occupying a position on a church staff, is to be reserved for those who are members of the pastoral staff (see 204-3).

**204-5.2** The elders shall ensure that the church has obtained background checks and child abuse clearances for all church staff. In jurisdictions that require clearances, the elders will ensure that their policy complies with the law. A person convicted of sexual abuse or included in the national or state registry of sexual offenders will be ineligible for employment in any church.

**300**  
**Book of Discipline**

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## 300 - Book of Discipline

**300-1** True church discipline is preventive as well as corrective. Preventive discipline includes instruction, exhortation, oversight and all other such means as are necessary to promote maturity and to keep men free from error and sin in doctrine and life.<sup>1</sup> Corrective discipline includes all action necessary to restore those who have been involved in error or sin in doctrine or life.<sup>2</sup> All church discipline should be according to the authority, standards and methods given by God in the Bible.

**300-2** The Bible teaches that preventive and corrective discipline must acknowledge both divine initiative and human responsibility.<sup>3</sup> The divine initiative is acknowledged by instruction and correction, which point to the person and work of Jesus Christ as the only source of true holiness.<sup>4</sup> The human responsibility is acknowledged by instruction and correction, which call believers to apply God's standards of thinking and behavior as the means of achieving the holiness Christ made possible. These standards must be applied to individual lives<sup>5</sup> and to the corporate life of the church.<sup>6</sup>

**300-3** The reason for providing written standards of church discipline for the BFC is to develop from the Scripture specific means of realizing the righteousness which God desires for His church. These means should help individuals, congregations, denominational departments, and the entire BFC to identify sin and to experience cleansing and restoration based, first, on the sacrificial death of Christ and, second, on Elders and people accepting their God-given responsibilities to one another.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age (Matt. 28:20). Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ (Col. 1:28).

<sup>2</sup> This testimony is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith (Titus 1:13).

<sup>3</sup> Now we command you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you keep away from any brother who is walking in idleness and not in accord with the tradition that you received from us. (2 Thess. 3:6). And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives" (Heb. 12:5-6).

<sup>4</sup> Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish (Eph. 5:25-27).

<sup>5</sup> And he said to all, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me (Luke 9:23).

<sup>6</sup> Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. Let us therefore celebrate the festival, not with the old leaven, the leaven of malice and evil, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. (1 Cor. 5:6-8).

<sup>7</sup> Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. (Gal. 6:1). “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother.” (Matt. 18:15). Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him,…” (Luke 17:3).

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## Article 301 - Nature and Purpose of Corrective Discipline

**301-1** Church discipline is the exercise of the authority which Christ, the Head of the Church, has given to the visible church to increase and preserve its purity and order.<sup>1</sup> Church discipline is not a substitute for personal, family or civil discipline. As the outgrowth of careful teaching, specific application and pastoral concern, it is to be exercised when these other means have failed to produce purity of life and good order. The need for both preventive and corrective church discipline arises from the deceitfulness of indwelling sin<sup>2</sup> and the expressed desire of Christ for holiness among His people.<sup>3</sup> Corrective discipline in the church is doctrinal, moral, or administrative.

**301-2** Doctrinal or moral discipline is an effort to prevent and correct beliefs and actions contrary to the Word of God.<sup>4</sup> The purpose of doctrinal or moral discipline is to vindicate the honor of Christ, to promote the purity of the church, and to restore the offender.

**301-3** Administrative discipline is an effort to maintain adherence to the governing rules of the church in other than doctrinal or moral cases.<sup>5</sup> The purpose of administrative discipline is to promote unity in the entire body, to encourage faithful discharge of all duties, and to preserve the rights and privileges of each member of the body.

**301-4** All members of a Particular Church are under the care of that church and are therefore subject to doctrinal, moral, and administrative discipline by that church.<sup>6</sup> All congregations and agencies of the BFC are members one of another and are therefore subject to doctrinal, moral, and administrative discipline by the whole church.<sup>7</sup>

**301-5** No charge shall be received by the elders of a church or by another judicatory unless it appears that the plaintiff(s) has first done his/their utmost to restore the alleged offender(s) in the manner prescribed by Christ.<sup>8</sup>

**301-6** No charge shall be received against the elders of the church except on the basis of two or three witnesses.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven” (Matt. 16:19). “Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them” (Matt. 18:18, 18:20). “If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld” (John 20:23).

<sup>2</sup> Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Heb. 3:12-13). Now these things happened to them as

an example, but they were written down for our instruction, on whom the end of the ages has come. Therefore let anyone who thinks that he stands take heed lest he fall (1 Cor. 10:11-12).

<sup>3</sup> For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Heb. 12:10-11). But as he who called you is holy, you also be holy in all your conduct, since it is written, “You shall be holy, for I am holy” (1 Pet. 1:15-16).

<sup>4</sup> It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father’s wife. For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. You are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord (1 Cor. 5:1, 5:3, 5:5). As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him (Titus 3:10).

<sup>5</sup> Remind them to be submissive to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready for every good work (Titus 3:1). Eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3). But all things should be done decently and in order (1 Cor. 14:40).

<sup>6</sup> It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father’s wife. And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people. For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? (1 Cor. 5:1-2, 5:9, 5:12). “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (Matt. 18:17).

<sup>7</sup> Therefore my judgment is that we should not trouble those of the Gentiles who turn to God, but should write to them to abstain from the things polluted by idols, and from sexual immorality, and from what has been strangled, and from blood. For from ancient generations Moses has had in every city those who proclaim him, for he is read every Sabbath in the synagogues.” Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers, with the following letter: “The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.” So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch, and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement (Acts 15:19-31).

<sup>8</sup> “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (Matt. 18:15-17).

<sup>9</sup> Do not admit a charge against an elder except on the evidence of two or three witnesses (1 Tim. 5:19).

## **Article 302 - Original and Appellate Jurisdiction**

**302-1** Individual Members. Original jurisdiction over an individual belongs to the congregation of which the individual is a member. All of the elders or a portion of the elders designated by the Board of Elders shall be the judicatory for a trial in a Particular Church. Those serving as a judicatory shall choose one of their number to serve as moderator of the trial. Any elder who has personal involvement in the issue being tried shall be disqualified from participation in the judicatory.

**302-2** Ministers. Original jurisdiction over ministers belongs to the Ministerial Credentials Committee. All of the members or a portion designated by the Committee shall be the judicatory for a trial involving a minister. Those serving as a judicatory shall choose one of their number to serve as moderator of the trial. Any member of the Committee who has personal involvement in the issue being tried shall be disqualified from participation in the judicatory.

**302-3.1** Particular Churches. Original jurisdiction over Particular Churches belongs to the Ministerial Relations Committee. All of the members or a portion designated by the Committee shall be the judicatory for a trial involving a Particular Church. Those serving as a judicatory shall choose one of their number to serve as moderator of the trial. Any member of the Committee who has personal involvement in the issue being tried shall be disqualified from participation in the judicatory.

**302-3.2** Departments of the BFC. Original jurisdiction over departments of the BFC belongs to a judicatory elected by BFC Conference called the Conference Judicatory. Departments of the BFC shall consist of any boards, committees, or departments, temporary or permanent, incorporated or unincorporated, established by BFC Conference.

**302-4.1** Appeals to the Conference Judicatory. If a judicatory in a Particular Church, the Credentials Committee, or the Ministerial Relations Committee is unable to resolve an issue, or if the defendant or plaintiff in a case desires to appeal the decision of the original judicatory, the appeal shall be made to the Conference Judicatory. (Charges brought against an department of the BFC shall be made directly to the Conference Judicatory.) The Conference Judicatory shall be composed of five ordained ministers who are voting members of BFC Conference and five laymen who are voting members of BFC Conference at the time of their election. Laymen on the Conference Judicatory who are no longer voting members of BFC Conference may continue to serve their term of office as long as they remain members in good standing of a Particular Church. BFC Conference shall elect the members of the Conference Judicatory for three-year terms in three classes as follows:

Class I	Two pastors and two elders
Class II	Two pastors and two elders
Class III	One pastor and one elder

When a case is presented to the Conference Judicatory, all ten members shall designate which five shall hear the case and shall designate which one of the five shall serve as moderator. The chairman and the secretary shall be chosen by the ten members from among their number. All charges or appeals shall be presented to the secretary. The name of the secretary shall be announced at BFC Conference and included in its minutes.

302-4.2 Appeals to the Special Appellate Judicatory. If the Conference Judicatory is unable to resolve an issue, or if the defendant or plaintiff in a case desires to appeal the decision of the Conference Judicatory, subsequent appeal shall be made to the Special Appellate Judicatory. The Special Appellate Judicatory shall be composed of four ordained pastors who are voting members of BFC Conference and four laymen who are voting members of BFC Conference at the time of their election. Laymen on the Special Appellate Judicatory who are no longer voting members of BFC Conference may continue to serve their term of office as long as they remain members in good standing of a Particular Church. BFC Conference shall elect the members of the Special Appellate Judicatory for three-year terms in three classes as follows:

Class I	Two pastors and two elders
Class II	One pastor and one elder
Class III	One pastor and one elder

When a case is presented to the Special Appellate Judicatory, all eight members shall designate which five shall hear the case and shall designate which of the five shall serve as moderator. The chairman and the secretary shall be chosen by the eight members from among their number. All appeals shall be presented to the Secretary. The name of the secretary shall be announced at BFC Conference and included in its minutes. The Special Appellate Judicatory shall conduct a hearing and their decision shall be final and shall be reported to BFC Conference. The Special Appellate Judicatory shall be the only place of appeal for issues which have had the Conference Judicatory as the place of original jurisdiction.

## **Article 303 - Steps in Institution of Judicial Process**

**303-1** A charge of an offense must be instituted at the place of original jurisdiction; it may be brought by an individual, Particular Church or Department of the BFC. The one who brings a charge shall be designated as the plaintiff. The one who is charged shall be designated as the defendant.

**303-2** A charge of offense must describe the alleged offense and state the facts which support the charge. The charge shall include, as far as possible, the time, place, circumstances of the alleged offense, the names of witnesses, and titles of relevant documents. A charge shall be deemed to have been filed when it is presented in writing to the chairman or secretary of the Board of Elders of the Particular Church or the chairman or secretary of any other place of original jurisdiction.

**303-3** No charge shall be received if it is filed more than two years after the time the alleged offense was committed unless good cause prevented an earlier filing.

**303-4** When an individual, Particular Church or Department of the BFC is ready to present a charge, the judicial body receiving the charge shall warn the plaintiff that he may be censured if the accused is found to be innocent of the alleged offense. If the judicial body receiving the charge determines that the charge is frivolous, it may dismiss the charge and censure the plaintiff.

**303-5** When a charge is filed, the Board of Elders of the Particular Church, the Ministerial Credentials Committee, the Ministerial Relations Committee, or the Conference Judicatory shall establish the time and place for the trial, and shall cite the accused to appear at the trial and shall constitute the judicial body to conduct the trial.

## **Article 304 - Conduct of Trials**

**304-1** At the beginning of every trial the moderator of the body conducting the trial shall announce that the body is meeting as a judicatory and shall exhort the members of the body to understand that the body is responsible to minister and declare the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and practice, and to subordinate all human standards and judgments to that rule. The moderator shall lead in prayer. This announcement and exhortation shall be repeated by the moderator at the beginning of each session of the trial. The judicatory conducting the trial shall determine if the trial shall be opened or closed to individuals not directly involved in the trial.

**304-2** If the accused does not appear for the trial, he shall be cited again to appear for trial with a warning that failure to appear is viewed as disrespect and that the trial will proceed in his absence if he fails again to appear.

**304-3** At the first meeting of the trial, only the following actions shall be taken:

- (1) the accused shall hear read and be formally presented with the charges against him, along with the names of witnesses and copies of documents which are part of the charges;
- (2) the accused shall be given opportunity to call witnesses he desires to be summoned to participate in the trial
- (3) the judicatory shall establish the time and place of the next session of the trial, which shall not be less than ten days after the first session and shall cite all persons it deems necessary for the conduct of the trial to appear at that time.

**304-4** At the second meeting of the trial, the accused may raise objections to the charges or relevancy of the evidence presented against him. The judicatory shall determine the validity of such objections. If the accused requests the judicatory to do so, it shall determine whether the evidence is sufficient to demonstrate support for the charges made. It may dismiss the case, decide that the charges should be modified, or proceed with the trial. When the trial is ready to proceed, the accused shall be called upon to plead “guilty” or “not guilty” and his plea shall be entered upon the record. If the accused pleads “guilty,” the judicatory shall determine the censure. If the accused pleads “not guilty” or refuses to plead, the trial shall proceed.

**304-5** No person shall be denied the right to offer in evidence in any judicatory of the church the provisions of the Word of God or of any church regulations. Any person serving as a representative of the accused or the judicatory must be a member in good standing of the BFC.<sup>1</sup>

**304-6** When the evidence against the accused has been presented and he has had opportunity to cross-examine those testifying against him, the accused shall have the right to move for dismissal of the charges. If this motion is denied by the judicatory, the accused may then present evidence in support of his defense. After all evidence in the case has been presented, the accused may make his final argument with respect to the evidence and to church regulations. The judicatory shall then deliberate and vote on each charge separately. If the judicatory decides the accused is guilty, it shall also determine the censure.

**304-7** When the judicatory has concluded the deliberations, the moderator shall announce its finding on each charge. If the accused has been found guilty, the judicatory shall also state the censure it proposes. Full censure shall not be carried out until the expiration of the time in which an appeal may be filed. If an appeal is filed, the original judicatory may not execute its censure unless and until its judgment is affirmed by the judicatory to which appeal is made.

**304-8** In any trial the judicatory shall preserve a complete and accurate record of the proceedings. This record shall include the charges, objections made and exceptions taken by the accused during the trial, the testimony of witnesses and all rulings and findings of the judicatory. This appeal shall be certified by the trial judicatory to another judicatory in cases of appeal. If the trial is appealed, the accused and the appellate judicatory shall be supplied one written copy of the record at the expense of the judicatory; other copies may be supplied at the expense of those who request a copy.

<sup>1</sup> When one of you has a grievance against another, does he dare go to law before the unrighteous instead of the saints? Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is to be judged by you, are you incompetent to try trivial cases? Do you not know that we are to judge angels? How much more, then, matters pertaining to this life! (1 Cor. 6:1-3).

## **Article 305 - Evidence**

**305-1** Evidence must be factual in nature. It may be direct or circumstantial. Caution should be used in consideration of evidence which is purely circumstantial.

**305-2** Witnesses shall be required to affirm that they will speak all of the truth and nothing but the truth concerning the matters on which they are asked to testify.<sup>1</sup>

**305-3** The judicatory shall appoint one of its members to conduct on its behalf the examination of witnesses, but other members of the judicatory may also take part. Witnesses presented by the accused may be cross-examined by the judicatory.

**305-4** Certified records of a judicatory shall be received in evidence in another judicatory if it is relevant.

<sup>1</sup> You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor (Exod. 20:16). You shall not spread a false report. You shall not join hands with a wicked man to be a malicious witness (Exod. 23:1). There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood (Prov. 6:16-17). Let what you say be simply 'Yes' or 'No'; anything more than this comes from evil (Matt. 5:37). Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ. Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another. (Eph. 4:15, 4:25).

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## Article 306 - Censure and Restoration

**306-1** All censures shall be accompanied by prayer to God that He might graciously use the discipline for the restoration of the offender, the edification of the church, and the glory of God.<sup>1</sup>

**306-2** There are five degrees of censure in judicial discipline: admonition, rebuke, suspension, deposition and excommunication.

- (1) **Admonition.** Admonition consists in tenderly and solemnly confronting the offender with his sin, warning him of his danger, and exhorting him to repentance and to greater fidelity to the Lord Jesus Christ.<sup>2</sup>
- (2) **Rebuke.** Rebuke is a form of censure more severe than admonition. It consists in setting forth the serious character of the offense, reproving the offender, and exhorting him to repentance and to more perfect fidelity to the Lord Jesus Christ. The judicatory shall determine if public rebuke is necessary.<sup>3</sup>
- (3) **Suspension.** Suspension is a form of censure by which one is deprived of the privileges of membership in the church, of office or of both.<sup>4</sup> It may be for a definite or indefinite time. Suspension of an officer from privileges of membership shall always accompany suspension from office, but suspension from office does not necessarily include suspension from privileges of membership.

An individual under suspension from office or from privileges of membership shall be the object of concern and earnest appeal that he may be restored. When the judicatory which imposed the suspension is satisfied with the repentance of the offender or when the period of suspension has expired, the censure shall be removed and the offender restored. Restoration shall be accompanied by solemn admonition. Restoration to the privileges of membership may be granted without restoration to office.

If a person is suspended indefinitely and has not within a year manifested repentance, the judicatory shall consider whether suspension shall be continued or more severe censure imposed.

- (4) **Deposition.** Deposition consists of depriving an officer of his office.<sup>5</sup> Deposition of a minister shall require the dissolution of the pastoral relationship. The sentence of deposition shall be read before the congregation and the pulpit declared vacant.

If a minister is deposed who is serving in a non-pastoral office, the agency under which he serves shall be informed of the discipline and that the

man is disqualified from denominational service.

A minister, elder or deacon who has been deposed cannot resume his former office without again being ordained or installed.

- (5) Excommunication.** Excommunication is the most severe form of censure and is resorted to only in cases aggravated by persistent impenitence. It consists of a solemn declaration by the judicatory that it no longer regards the offender as a member of the body of Christ.<sup>6</sup>

**306-3** Suspension, deposition or excommunication of an officer or other member of the church shall be announced to the church where the officer holds office or the member holds membership. Such announcement shall be accompanied by an urgent request for prayer for the offender to the end that he might be restored.

**306-4** Restoration shall always be accompanied by prayer of thanksgiving to God for His redeeming grace.<sup>7</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them” (Matt. 18:19-20).

<sup>2</sup> I myself am satisfied about you, my brothers, that you yourselves are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge and able to instruct one another (Rom. 15:14). And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all (1 Thess. 5:14).

<sup>3</sup> As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear (1 Tim. 5:20).

<sup>4</sup> If anyone does not obey what we say in this letter, take note of that person, and have nothing to do with him, that he may be ashamed (2 Thess. 3:14). But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one (1 Cor. 5:11).

<sup>5</sup> As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him (Titus 3:10). But I discipline my body and keep it under control, lest after preaching to others I myself should be disqualified (1 Cor. 9:27).

<sup>6</sup> And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. Cleanse out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, as you really are unleavened. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. God judges those outside. “Purge the evil person from among you” (1 Cor. 5:2, 5:7, 5:11, 5:13). “If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector” (Matt. 18:17).

<sup>7</sup> Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted (Gal. 6:1). Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working. Let him know that whoever brings back a sinner from his wandering will save his soul from death and will cover a multitude of sins (James 5:16, 5:20). “Just so, I tell you, there is joy before the angels of God over one sinner who repents” (Luke 15:10). Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to all of you.

For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him (2 Cor. 2:5-8). As it is, I rejoice, not because you were grieved, but because you were grieved into repenting. For you felt a godly grief, so that you suffered no loss through us. For godly grief produces a repentance that leads to salvation without regret, whereas worldly grief produces death (2 Cor. 7:9-10).

## **Article 307 - Appeals**

**307-1** An appeal is a petition asking that the final judgment of one judicatory be reversed or modified by another judicatory.

**307-2** Notice of intention to appeal must be filed in writing within ten days after the judgment of the original judicatory has been announced. This notice must be filed with the moderator of the original judicatory.

**307-3** To perfect an appeal, the appellant must file in writing within thirty days of the notice of appeal his appeal and specifications of error by the original judicatory. This shall be filed with the secretary of the judicatory to which the appeal is made; a copy of the appeal and specifications of error shall also be filed with the moderator of the original judicatory.

**307-4** If the judicatory to which appeal is made does not sustain any of the specifications of error, the judgment of the original judicatory is affirmed. If the appellate judicatory sustains any specifications of error, it shall determine whether the error is of such importance as to require a reversal, or modification of the original judgment. A judicatory to which appeal is made may remand the case to the original judicatory, may modify the original judgment or may reverse the original judgment.

## **Article 308 - Dissents and Protests**

**308-1 Dissent.** Any member of a judicatory who votes against the judgment of the majority may request that his dissenting vote be recorded in the minutes of the judicatory.

**308-2 Protest.** Any member of a judicatory may file a written protest stating his reasons for objecting to a judgment of the judicatory. A protest must be filed with the moderator of the judicatory within ten days of the announcement of the judgment. A protest shall be read to the judicatory and recorded in its minutes. The judicatory may, if it desires, place in its minutes an answer to a protest.

**400**  
**Bylaws for Particular  
Churches**

## **Article 401 - Boards of Elders and Deacons**

### **401-1 The Board of Elders**

**401-1.1** The Board of Elders shall be composed of the minister and all of the active elders of the congregation. The active elders shall be elected by majority vote of the congregation. They shall be mature men who meet the qualifications of Scripture (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1; 1 Pet. 5). If the congregation has more qualified elders than are needed to serve at one time, the number of active elders shall be determined by the congregation by ballot vote upon recommendation of the Board of Elders.

**401-1.2** The Board of Elders shall elect one of its members to serve as chairman and one of its members to serve as secretary. Two thirds of the membership of the board shall constitute a quorum.

**401-1.3** The Board of Elders shall have the general oversight of the life and work of the church, including worship, preaching, ordinances, evangelism, visitation, discipline, finances, and maintenance of the properties.

**401-1.4** Because they are “undershepherds” and not “lords,” the elders shall rule the congregation according to the direction of Christ, the Chief Shepherd, as expressed in the Scriptures and according to the needs of the membership. They shall conduct at least one congregational meeting per year to report the status of the work to the congregation. When they deem it advisable, they shall present recommendations to the congregation. The congregation shall have the right to agree with, to suggest changes in, or to disagree with such recommendations. Agreement indicates that the congregation is ready to follow the leadership of the Board of Elders. Suggesting changes indicates that the congregation believes that the Board of Elders has overlooked some factors and should revise its recommendation. Disagreement indicates that the congregation is not ready to follow the leadership of the elders.

**401-1.5** Even though the elders are to rule under Christ’s authority, and although the congregation is to follow, the elders should use wisdom and carefully consider the propriety of taking action that is not supported by the congregation. It is the responsibility of the Board of Elders not only to lead but also to provide sufficient information, sound reasoning, and ample time for the congregation to follow intelligently.

**401-1.6** The elders must distinguish between those areas of disagreement that are matters of preference and those that are matters of principle. Even though the decisions of the congregation are not binding on the elders according to the authority invested in the office in the Scriptures, the elders must seek to rule in harmony with the decisions of the congregation except when the standards of

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Scripture would be violated, the cause of Christ harmed, or the F&O violated. Whenever there is disagreement, the Board of Elders should consider prayerfully the reasons for the disagreement by the congregation in determining the appropriate action to be taken by the board in the exercise of its leadership.

**401-1.7** The Board of Elders shall be the channel of communication between the Particular Church and the fellowship of churches and its organizations. The Elders shall elect from their number enough delegates to attend the meetings of BFC Conference based on congregational membership as follows:

1-299 members	1 delegate
300-499 members	2 delegates
500-plus member	3 delegates

If a delegate is not able to attend all the meetings of BFC Conference, the Board of Elders may, if possible, elect as many delegates as necessary to provide representation at all meetings.

A man serving on a pastoral staff is not eligible to serve as a lay delegate at the BFC Conference.

**401-1.8 The Election and Installation of Elders.** Every congregation shall elect elders, in keeping with the qualifications set forth in the Scriptures. Elders must be male members in full communion in the church in which they are to hold this position.

The term of service shall be decided by the Particular Church by congregational vote but shall not be for less than three years, except when a Particular Church desires a probationary term of service for newly chosen elders. When possible, the Board of Elders shall be divided into not fewer than three classes, as determined by the congregational vote in each of the Particular Churches. When a church chooses to elect elders for an unlimited term, the requirement for classes does not apply.

In the event of a vacancy by death, resignation, or removal, a man may be elected to complete the unexpired term.

When a man has been elected to this position and has declared his willingness to accept its responsibilities, he shall be set apart in the following manner. In a service of worship, the minister shall state in a concise manner the warrant and nature of the position of elder, together with the spiritual qualifications required for its exercise and the duties to be fulfilled. He shall then ask the candidate, in the presence of the congregation, the following questions:

- (1) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and conduct?

- (2) Are you in agreement with the Articles of Faith of the Bible Fellowship Church?
- (3) Will you endeavor to follow the Principles of Order of the Bible Fellowship Church?
- (4) Do you accept the position of elder in the congregation and promise faithfully to perform all of the duties thereof?
- (5) Do you promise to promote the purity, peace and unity of the church?

After the elder-elect has answered these questions in the affirmative, the minister shall ask the members of the church the following questions:

- (1) Do you, the members of the church, acknowledge and receive this brother as an elder?
- (2) Do you promise to yield him all honor, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord to which his position entitles him?

After all members of the church have answered these questions in the affirmative by holding up their right hands, the minister shall proceed to set apart the candidate by prayer to the position of elder and shall give to him and to the congregation an exhortation suited to the occasion.

**401-1.9** The Board of Elders in each Particular Church shall determine which men are in agreement with the Articles of Faith and who will endeavor to follow the Principles of Order of the BFC. Each Elder shall annually declare in writing his agreement with the Articles of Faith, and his willingness to follow the Principles of Order of the BFC, and this declaration be included in the Board of Elders Report to the Congregation. No man can be divested of this position except by deposition for failure to maintain standards of doctrine and life in keeping with the dignity of the position.

**401-2 The Board of Deacons**

**401-2.1** The Board of Deacons shall be composed of all deacons duly elected by and from the congregation, and who meet the qualifications of the Scriptures. They shall be mature believers who demonstrate spiritual wisdom and compassion so that they might serve the needy in a Christlike, merciful manner.

**401-2.2** The Board of Deacons shall serve under the direction of the Board of Elders and shall elect a chairman and a secretary from among the membership of the board. The secretary shall be responsible to report the actions of the deacons to the Board of Elders. Two thirds of the board shall constitute a quorum.

**401-2.3** The general responsibility of the deacons is one of sympathetic and benevolent service to the church, to the distressed, and to the friendless and sick, showing the mercy and concern of the church for the material and natural needs

of others. The deacons shall assume the responsibility to care for such specific benevolent and material services as directed them by the Board of Elders.

**401-2.4** The function of the deacons is to see that the material and natural needs of the church constituency are met so that the elders can give freely of their time and concern to the spiritual needs of the congregation.

**401-2.5** Election and Installation of Deacons. Each congregation may elect deacons in keeping with the qualifications set forth in Scripture. Deacons must be members in full communion in the church in which they are to hold their position.

The Deacon's term shall be determined by the Particular Church by congregational vote, but shall not be for less than three years, except when a Particular Church desires a probationary term of service for newly chosen deacons. When possible, the Board of Deacons shall be divided into not fewer than three classes as determined by congregational vote in each of the Particular Churches.

In the event of a vacancy by death, resignation, or removal, a member may be elected to fill the unexpired term.

In a service of worship, the minister shall state in a concise manner the warrant and nature of the position of deacon, together with the Scriptural qualifications required for its exercise and the duties to be fulfilled. He shall then ask the candidate, in the presence of the congregation, the following questions:

- (1) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament to be the Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and conduct?
- (2) Do you accept the position of deacon in the congregation and promise faithfully to perform this ministry of service?
- (3) Do you promise to promote the purity, peace, and unity of the church?

After the deacon-elect has answered these questions in the affirmative, the minister shall ask the members of the church the following questions:

- (1) Do you, the members of this church, acknowledge and receive this brother (or sister) as a deacon?
- (2) Do you promise to give him (her) all of the honor, encouragement, and support in the Lord to which this position entitles him (or her)?

After the members of the church have answered these questions in the affirmative by holding up their right hands, the minister shall proceed to set apart the candidate by prayer to the position of deacon and shall give to him (or her) and to the congregation an exhortation suited to the occasion.

## **Article 402 - Church Committees**

The Board of Elders shall have the general oversight of the life and work of the church, including worship, preaching, ordinances, evangelism, visitation, discipline, finances, and maintenance of the properties.

### **402-1 Required Committee**

**402-1.1 Pastoral Relations Committee.** The Board of Elders of every church shall designate a Pastoral Relations Committee composed of lay elders.

#### **Purpose**

- (1) Encourage the pastor in his endeavor to minister to the congregation.
- (2) Promote good relationships between the pastor and the congregation.

#### **Duties**

- (1) Meet at least twice annually.
- (2) Conduct an annual review with the pastor. The annual review (Resources for Churches) may be used as a guideline.
- (3) Receive communication and be a liaison between the pastor, his staff, and the congregation.
- (4) Annually review with each member of the pastoral staff the adequacy of his compensation and submit a proposed budget for salary and benefits.

### **402-2 Optional Committees**

**402-2.1** The Board of Elders may organize various committees to assist them in carrying out the work of the board when such assistance is necessary. The size of the congregation and the nature and amount of work to be done will determine the nature and number of committees appointed.

**402-2.2** Should the Board of Elders decide that it needs committees to carry out its work, the committees organized may be subdivisions of the Board of Elders or may be appointed from among the membership of the congregation, subject to the approval of the Board of Elders.

**402-2.3** All church committees organized shall be subordinate to the Board of Elders.

**402-2.4** Some suggested committees for consideration are Membership and Discipline, Ordinances, Building and Maintenance, Missionary, Evangelism, Finance, Christian Education, Benevolence, Music, Visitation, and Nominations.

## **Article 403 - Congregational Meetings**

### **403-1 Miscellaneous Information**

**403-1.1** The congregational meeting of the Particular Church is composed of any and all members of that congregation meeting in an official capacity duly organized according to the Principles of Order and Article 18 of the Articles of Faith. Only those members of the Particular Church conducting the meeting who are present and have attained the age of 16 years are eligible to vote.

**403-1.2** The Board of Elders shall conduct at least one regular congregational meeting each year. Special meetings may be called by action of the Board of Elders. Calls for special meetings shall include a statement of the purpose of the meeting, and no other business shall be conducted. Prayer shall be offered at the beginning and close of all congregational meetings.

**403-1.3** The Board of Elders shall appoint an elder or pastor to serve as chairman of congregational meetings. The secretary of the Board of Elders shall serve as secretary of the congregational meeting. If either of these officers cannot serve in a specific meeting, another elder shall be chosen by the Board of Elders to bear the responsibility. A quorum shall consist of the chairman, the secretary, and all of the eligible voters present.

**403-1.4** The congregational meeting(s) shall include the electing of officers, receiving of reports of officers and committees, and any other business that may arise. The annual report of the Board of Elders to the congregation shall include a summary of the membership of the congregation and a financial statement. This report shall be the source of the information for the report of the congregation to the BFC Conference.

**403-1.5** The secretary shall keep adequate and accurate minutes of all congregational meetings. The Board of Elders shall ensure that a copy of the minutes of all congregational meetings held during the year is sent to the Board of Church Health. The copy(ies) shall be delivered to the designated address by the date set by BFC Conference.

### **403-2 Elections in Congregational Meetings**

**403-2.1** Elections That Use a Nominating Committee. A Particular Church may use a nominating committee to make nominations for church officers or leaders when this desire is expressed by a local congregational resolution. The pastor shall be a member of this committee.

In an election in which a nominating committee is used, the Nominating Committee shall bring to the meeting nominations of one or more eligible persons for each office to be filled.

Each Particular Church shall determine whether additional nominations shall or shall not be received from the floor when a nominating committee is used.

**403-2.2** Elections in Which All Nominations Are Made From the Floor. In an election in which nominations are made exclusively in the congregational meeting, ballots shall be used to nominate the candidates.

Each Particular Church shall adopt those additional procedures in its local bylaws that ensure that only qualified persons be nominated.

A majority of votes shall be necessary for election. After the first ballot has been cast, if there is no election, the name of the candidate receiving the fewest votes shall be dropped. In the event that a candidate receives two-thirds of the votes cast in the nominating ballot, he may be declared elected by congregational affirmation.

**403-3 Suggested Format for Congregational Meetings.**

- (1) Prayer: The meeting shall be opened with prayer
- (2) Roll Call: The roll shall be called at all congregational meetings, regular and special. The roll call shall include all church officers and all individuals responsible for reporting at the regular meeting(s)
- (3) Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting(s)
- (4) Reports (Annual Congregational Meeting)

**Report of the Board of Elders, to include at least the following:**

- Membership Report
- Financial Report(s), including evidence of annual review
- Submission of the proposed church budget
- Record of Designation of the Pastoral Relations Committee
- Record of Elders' Declaration of Agreement with the Articles of Faith and willingness to follow the Principles of Order
- Status of the Work
- Benevolence Report (may be included in the Board of Deacons Report or in the Financial Report)
- Recommendations

**Report of the Board of Deacons**

**Reports as required by the bylaws of the Particular Church:**

- Sunday Bible School
- Youth Fellowship
- Adult Fellowship(s)
- Women's Missionary Society
- Special Committees

- Pastor
  - Etc.
- (5) Old Business: All motions properly recorded
  - (6) New Business: All motions properly recorded
  - (7) Election of Church Officers: All elections properly recorded. A complete list of the Elders who will be serving the congregation in the new church year shall be included in the minutes so that BFC Conference can verify that the Delegate(s) are active Elders in the congregation.
  - (8) Petition(s) to BFC Conference
  - (9) Adjournment with closing prayer
  - (10) Minutes are to be signed by the secretary.

**403-4 Format for Special Congregational Meetings**

- (1) Prayer: The meeting shall be opened with prayer.
- (2) Roll Call
- (3) Statement of Purpose: The purpose of the special meeting must be stated at the beginning of the minutes of the meeting, and business shall be limited to the stated purpose of the meeting. Any action must be properly recorded.
- (4) Adjournment with prayer
- (5) Minutes are to be signed by the Secretary.

## **Article 404 - Choosing Leaders Other Than Elders and Deacons**

**404-1** Should the Board of Elders deem it necessary to have positions of church leadership other than elders and deacons, and other than officers and leaders of church organizations, it shall recommend to the congregation the creation of such positions of leadership. If the congregation approves, such leaders shall be chosen by one of the following ways:

- (1) Election by congregational vote upon being presented by a nominating committee and nominated by congregational ballot
- (2) Appointment by the Board of Elders

**404-2** Though these leaders may not meet all of the Biblical qualifications for the position of elder, nevertheless their lives shall be in keeping with the Biblical Principles for Living. Being chosen for one of these positions of leadership does not make one a member of the Board of Elders or the Board of Deacons.

**404-3** The following shall be the procedure in case of death, resignation, or removal of a church leader other than an elder or deacon:

- (1) The Board of Elders shall review and act on the resignation or removal of the leader.
- (2) The Board of Elders shall either appoint someone or determine the time of a congregational meeting to fill the position vacated owing to death, resignation, or removal.

**404-4** Officers and other leaders in church organizations shall be elected or appointed in harmony with the F&O and according to the bylaws of the Particular Church and/or the bylaws of the organization.

**404-5** The elders will ensure that the church has obtained background checks and child abuse clearances for all volunteers that have a significant likelihood of contact with children in their ministries. In jurisdictions that require clearances, the elders will ensure that their policy complies with the law. A person convicted of sexual abuse or included in the national or state registry of sexual offenders will be ineligible for volunteer ministry where there is significant likelihood of contact with children. The elders shall define what “significant likelihood of contact with children” means in their context.

**404-6** Preaching and teaching in the church’s gathered worship is to be done by qualified men, typically elders or elders in training, and ruling authority is exercised by elders who must give an account to God. Women are not permitted to function as elders over the church. Women are encouraged to exercise their gifts of teaching and administration in God-glorifying ways in the life of the body. The Board of Elders of each particular church shall determine such settings in accordance with Scripture.

## **Article 405 - Communication of Particular Churches to BFC Conference**

**405-1** Any Particular Church has the right to petition BFC Conference to request its action or guidance. A petition must be approved by a majority vote of those present and voting at a duly called congregational meeting and must appear in the minutes. It must be placed on the agenda of BFC Conference and the answer to the Particular Church placed in the minutes of BFC Conference. The Secretary of the Board of Elders shall be responsible for forwarding the petition to the Secretary of BFC Conference. Petitions received by March 1 shall be guaranteed consideration in that session of BFC Conference. Those received after March 1 will be held for consideration in the next conference year. The Secretary of BFC Conference shall send copies to each pastor a month before BFC Conference.

**405-2** The Board of Elders of a Particular Church has the right to request the action or guidance of BFC Conference on issues confronting the Particular Church. There may be times when it will be inadvisable for the whole congregation to be involved in the approach to BFC Conference. The request to BFC Conference must be approved in a duly called Board of Elders meeting and appear in the minutes. The delegate of this church may introduce the board's request as a motion from the floor of BFC Conference. When a board intends to use this method, the Secretary and the Moderator of BFC Conference should be notified of its intention by April 1.

## **Article 406 - Other Organizations in the Particular Church**

### **406-1 Sunday Bible School**

**406-1.1** The Sunday Bible School is a key ministry of the local church for fulfilling its responsibility to teach the Scriptures to people of all ages and encourage them to believe on Jesus as Savior and Lord. As such, each church should exercise prayerful care and concern in the organization and leadership of this ministry.

**406-1.2** The leadership of the Sunday Bible School should come from among the membership of the Particular Church, be elected by the congregation or appointed by the Board of Elders, and be responsible to the Board of Elders.

**406-1.3** The potential for ministry through the Sunday Bible School is unlimited; therefore the leadership should address the following areas but also seek to expand beyond them when resources and the availability of gifted people make it possible:

- (1) Recruit staff and teachers that are believers.
- (2) Insure that teachers are in sympathy with and teach in agreement with the Articles of Faith and Biblical Principles for Living of the BFC.
- (3) Provide curriculum that is in compliance with the Articles of Faith and Biblical Principles for Living of the BFC.
- (4) Provide teaching aids, equipment and other resources for the staff that will assist them in their ministry.
- (5) Evaluate the total ministry of the Sunday Bible School periodically in order to encourage the staff and make improvements.
- (6) Provide a program of teacher training and enrichment.
- (7) Keep records as requested by the Board of Elders.

**406-1.4** Expanded information and bylaw suggestions for the Sunday Bible School are available in the appendix: Resources for Churches.

### **406-2 Mission Organizations**

**406-2.1** Each Particular Church is encouraged to establish organizations that will promote and assist in the carrying out its task of world evangelization. Organizations so established are encouraged to inform the Board of Missions and Church Extension Ministries of their officers in order that information can be circulated to and coordinated with similar organizations from other Particular Churches. Suggested bylaws for such organizations are available in the appendix: Resources for Churches.

**406-2.2** Regional Mission Organization Programs. The Board of Missions and Church Extension Ministries may coordinate regional programs as deemed advisable.

**406-2.3** Conference-Wide Mission Organization Programs. The Board of Missions shall coordinate Conference-Wide mission meetings and events as deemed advisable. Committees to promote such programs shall be appointed by the Board of Missions.

### **406-3 Youth Organizations**

**406-3.1** “Remember also your Creator in the days of your youth. . . The conclusion when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person” (Eccles. 12:1, 12:13 NASB). “Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe” (1 Tim. 4:12 NASB).

**406-3.2** Reflecting on these Scripture passages, the BFC recognizes and joyfully accepts its responsibility and privilege of ministering to youth. The goal of this ministry is to be used of God to help young people experience the new birth in committing themselves to Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, to guide them into Christian maturity so that they may be “an example of those who believe,” and to offer them training and opportunities in Christian service. Further, this ministry seeks to develop future leadership for the church (cf. Philosophy of Christian Education, Bylaws of the Board of Christian Education).

**406-3.3** Programs to attain these goals are to be developed by the Particular Churches and the denomination. Particular Churches may have specific organizations whose function is to minister to youth. Such organizations may be parachurch agencies having affiliations outside the BFC, or they may be the Youth Fellowship of the Particular Church. In either situation the youth organization shall be under the control of the Board of Elders of the Particular Church.

**406-3.4** The doctrinal standards, teachings, goals, and programs of all para-church agencies incorporated into the youth ministry of any BFC shall be in compliance with the F&O.

**406-3.5** Churches functioning with their own Youth Fellowship are encouraged to formulate a Youth Fellowship Constitution. This constitution shall provide the Youth Fellowship with an organizational structure and the effective means of attaining its goals. This document shall include a statement of purpose and goals, a definition of and requirements for membership, a listing of officers and their duties, and regulations for election of officers. The constitution shall stipulate that all officers shall be those who profess Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and who give evidence of this profession in Christian conduct.

## **Article 407 - Miscellaneous Bylaws**

### **407-1 Legal Representatives**

**407-1.1** In an incorporated congregation the authorized legal representatives shall be chosen from among the members of the Board of Elders according to its respective Articles of Incorporation.

**407-1.2** When an incorporated congregation becomes incapable of electing elders and seeks to maintain its work, the BFC Executive Board shall appoint elders who, on ratification by the congregation, shall become the corporate officers of the Particular Church.

**407-1.3** In an unincorporated congregation, three trustees shall be elected by and from the Board of Elders to be the authorized legal representatives.

### **407-2 Church Assessment**

The Particular Churches, through their representatives to the BFC Conference adopt the BFC Annual Budget with a Church Assessment Rate each year. This rate is a percentage of the regular offering from the previous calendar year. (For instance, The BFC Annual Budget for 2023 is adopted at the BFC Conference in 2022. It includes the adoption of a Church Assessment Rate of percentage of the regular offerings reported for 2021. The amount is provided in the Particular Church Budget for 2023 to fund the BFC Annual Budget for that year.)

### **407-3 Offerings**

- (1) BFC Training and Educational Committee - annually to its Treasurer by April 1.
- (2) Church Extension - quarterly to its Treasurer
- (3) Victory Valley Camp - yearly, by March 1 to its Financial Secretary
- (4) Board of Missions - quarterly to its Financial Secretary of the Board of Missions.
- (5) BFC Life Committee - annually to the committee
- (6) All monies due to Conference boards and committees shall be forwarded to them prior to December 31 of the year in which they are to be reported.

### **407-4 Congregational Minutes and Records**

Each Particular Church is encouraged to place its minutes and past records in the denominational archives for storage and preservation, where they will be available to the local church as it desires and available to those doing study and research.

**407-5** Each church shall inform the Registrar of BFC Conference of the names of the delegate(s) elected by the board of elders by way of the BFC Conference Registration Form.

**407-6** Congregations shall consult with the BFC Executive Board prior to establishing any gift annuities and shall list all gift annuity obligations annually in their financial report to the congregation.

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**407-7 Child Protection Policy**

The church shall maintain a written child protection policy, enacted and overseen by its Board of Elders. The elders will ensure that their policy complies with the laws of their jurisdiction (Suggested guidelines are included in the 2021 Yearbook, pp. 134-141).

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## Article 408 - Church Properties

**408-1** The title of church property where the church is incorporated shall be conveyed directly to the Corporation. In cases in which the church is not incorporated, the conveyance shall be made to a Board of Trustees duly elected according to the Rules of the BFC Conference (setting forth their names), their successors, and assigns. Whether the title is conveyed to a corporation or to a Board of Trustees, the title shall contain a trust clause in the following words:

**In trust for the use of the ministry and membership of the \_\_\_\_\_ Church of the Bible Fellowship Church at \_\_\_\_\_ subject to the doctrines, laws, usages, and ministerial appointments of the BFC Conference of the Bible Fellowship Church incorporated under the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania as from time to time established, made and declared by the lawful authorities of the said church, and if the said property shall be sold or encumbered, the proceeds of the sale or the encumbrance shall be applied for the use of the aforesaid, subject, however, to the provisions of the law of the church relating to abandoned church properties and of that forbidding mortgaging of real estate for current expenses.**

**408-2** The title to parsonages shall be conveyed in like manner as that for the churches and shall contain the following clause of trust:

**In trust, that said premises shall be kept, maintained, and disposed of as a place of residence for the use and occupancy of the preachers of the Bible Fellowship Church who are from time to time duly appointed in said place according to the rules and usages of said church, and if sold, the proceeds to be used according to the rules of said church. If the congregation controlling this property shall be disbanded, the property shall be controlled and disposed of according to the rules of the Bible Fellowship Church.**

**408-3** In instances where a Particular Church loses its corporate officers, votes to close, and abandons its property, the BFC Executive Board is authorized to appoint surrogate elders, to settle its affairs in closing the church, and to sell its properties, with any residual proceeds going to the Bible Fellowship Church.

## **Article 409 – Pastoral Change Procedure**

The orderly transition of pastoral leadership is crucial to the health of a church. As the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ should be invoked to provide for the care of His under shepherds, the pastors, and for the needs of His flock, the congregation. The Ministerial Relations Committee is responsible to provide guidance to both pastors and churches during this transition.

### **409-1 Instituting the Pastoral Relationship**

**409- 1.1** When a church is seeking a Pastor, the Board of Elders shall meet with representatives of the Ministerial Relations Committee to discuss the following:

- (1) Temporary pulpit supply. The Board of Elders shall provide for temporary pulpit supply on an interim basis. Pastors serving in this capacity shall be in sympathy with the F & O of the BFC. The Board of Elders may hire an Interim Pastor to provide more stability during the pastoral vacancy. If the Board of Elders decides to hire an Interim Pastor who does not hold BFC credentials, they must obtain the approval of the Ministerial Relations Committee. The responsibilities and remuneration of the Interim Pastor shall be established by the Board of Elders. The term of service, whether he is BFC credentialed or not, shall be up to a year, and may be renewed on an annual basis with the approval of the Board of Elders and Ministerial Relations Committee.
- (2) Election of a pastoral search committee.
- (3) Congregational self-study, pastoral profile, and candidate search procedures.
- (4) Rules for calling a pastor.

**409-1.2** The Board of Elders shall call a congregational meeting according to our rules (see §403) in order to elect a pastoral search committee. The Board of Elders shall recommend the composition, size and election of the pastoral search committee. The committee may vary from church to church, but in all cases shall be viewed as subordinate to the Board of Elders. Under normal circumstances, the chairman of the pastoral search committee shall be an elder.

**409-1.3** The Pastoral Search Committee shall maintain regular communication with the chairman of the Ministerial Relations Committee concerning progress in the pastoral search. The Ministerial Relations Committee shall seek to provide guidance and advice to the Pastoral Search Committee in its work.

**409-1.4** The Pastoral Search Committee shall seek a candidate who is fitted to the needs of the church and is or will be licensed to serve as a pastor in the BFC. If a candidate is not licensed to serve as a pastor in the BFC, he shall be referred to the Ministerial Candidate Committee. Under ordinary circumstances, the candidate must gain final approval by regular procedures in order to be called by the church.

**409-1.5** On certain exceptional occasions, it may be necessary to expedite the procedure for issuing a call to a man who is previously ordained but not licensed by the BFC.

These circumstances are when:

- (1) geographic distance allows limited direct contact.
- (2) the demands of current ministry do not allow for the normal process.
- (3) the church applies for special consideration because of urgent circumstances.

The expedited process is as follows:

- (1) The church shall request the chairman of the Ministerial Relations Committee to use the expedited process. He, in consultation with the chairman of the Ministerial Candidate Committee, approves or disapproves the request.
- (2) If the request is approved, the Ministerial Candidate Committee shall interview the man. If he is approved as a candidate under our rules (see §511-4.5), he shall be given the Open Book Examination.
- (3) Upon the satisfactory completion of the Open Book Examination, the church may seek to issue a call, which is provisional.
- (4) After the provisional call is issued, the man shall complete all other examinations and requirements of the Ministerial Candidate Committee before beginning the new ministry or moving into church-provided housing.
- (5) When all examinations and requirements are satisfactorily completed, the Ministerial Candidate Committee will approve the man as a licensed probationer (see §511-4.4), effective on the date of the approval of his final examination. The Ministerial Relations Committee will recognize the provisional call as the formal call on the same date.

**409-1.6** When the Pastoral Search Committee has completed its work, it shall recommend a candidate to the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders shall conduct any other research or interviews it deems necessary, including establishing the terms of the call.

**409-1.7** When the Board of Elders is ready to present a candidate to the congregation, it shall inform the chairman of the Ministerial Relations Committee of the name and of the terms of the call. The purpose of this consultation is to protect the candidate, the church, and the BFC from unnecessary difficulties. The Ministerial Relations Committee shall have one week to approve or disapprove of the presentation of the candidate to the congregation.

**409-1.8** If the Ministerial Relations Committee approves the presentation of the candidate, the Board of Elders shall call a congregational meeting according to our rules (see §403) for the purpose of calling a pastor.

**409-1.9** The congregational meeting shall be led by an elder elected by the Board of Elders or, at his request, a member of the Ministerial Relations Committee. Following the report of the pastoral search committee and/or the Board of Elders, the congregation shall vote on the question, “Are you ready to proceed to the calling of a pastor?” If a majority of members present and voting approve, a vote shall be taken to call the pastor. This vote shall be by written ballot. Absentee ballots are not allowed. The leader of the meeting shall announce the outcome of the vote and inform the congregation that the next step in the process is the approval or disapproval of the call by the Ministerial Relations Committee.

**409-1.10** The Ministerial Relations Committee shall be informed of the outcome of the vote. The purpose of this consultation is to advise the Board of Elders concerning the issuing of a call and to approve or disapprove it. If the vote is approved by a strong majority, the elders will be advised to proceed with the issuing of a call. If the vote is not approved by a strong majority, the elders may be advised to consider options other than issuing a call. The Ministerial Relations Committee shall have the final authority to approve or disapprove the call.

**409-1.11** Upon receiving the approval of the Ministerial Relations Committee, the Board of Elders may proceed to issue a call to the pastor as follows:

**The (name) Church, of (city and state), believing that you are well-qualified to serve as our pastor for the glory of God and our spiritual benefit, invite you,**

**(name of candidate) to accept this call to serve as our (title of pastor) promising you all proper support, encouragement, and obedience in the Lord.**

**In order to provide for your needs, we promise to pay you an annual salary of \$\_\_\_\_\_ together with additional benefits as follows; (other benefits may include provision of housing as agreed upon by you and the church, housing allowance, educational or professional allowances). We also will provide (number of weeks) vacation each year.**

**We also will pay into your 403(b) Retirement Plan the percentage of your salary established by BFC Conference.**

**We will also pay you a sum equivalent to at least one-half of your self-employment tax (FICA/SECA).**

**We will also provide health insurance for you and your family, equivalent to a standard set by the BFC Executive Board and agreed on by you and the church.**

**And we promise to review with you the adequacy of this compensation annually. We, the elders of \_\_\_\_\_ Church, sign our names to this call on    (date)   .**

**409-1.12** Upon receiving the approval of the Ministerial Relations Committee (see §409-1.9), the Board of Elders or Department may proceed to issue a bi-vocational call as follows:

**The    (church / department)   , believing that you are well-qualified to serve as pastor for the glory of God and the benefit of His church, invite you    (name of candidate)    to accept this call to serve in the office of    (position / title)   , promising you all proper support, encouragement and obedience in the Lord.**

**In order to help provide for your needs, we promise to pay you an annual salary of \$\_\_\_\_\_, together with additional benefits as follows: (other benefits may include parsonage use, housing allowance, educational or professional allowances). We also will provide    (number of weeks)    vacation each year.**

**We also will pay into your 403(b) Retirement Plan the percentage of your salary established by BFC Conference.**

**We also will pay you a sum equivalent to at least one half of your self-employment tax (FICA/SECA).**

**(The following sentence is optional.)**

**We also will provide health insurance agreed on by you and the    (church / department)   .**

**This is a call to serve bi-vocationally, that is, with the understanding that you will provide part of your support through other employment than the ministerial position to which we are calling you.**

**We promise to review with you the adequacy of this call and its conditions each year, to increase our provision for your support as we are able, and to provide full support for you as soon as it is possible.**

**We sign our names to this call on    (date)   .**

**409-1.13** A Department of the BFC may call a person to serve in its ministry. In such cases the board of directors of the Department shall act in the place of the Board of Elders, Pastoral Search Committee, and Congregation. As in the case of a call to a Particular Church, the Ministerial Relations Committee shall approve the name, the terms, and the call of the candidate. The form of the call shall be modeled after the form for Particular Churches (see §409-1.11).

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*(Paragraphs §409-1.1 - 409-1.13 refer to the calling of a Senior Pastor in a church with more than one pastor, or the only Pastor in a church with one pastor. In churches with more than one pastor, the elders may choose to adopt the procedure in paragraph §409-1.14)*

**409-1.14** In churches with more than one pastor, the elders may choose to call a pastor other than the Senior Pastor as follows: The Board of Elders shall serve as the Pastoral Search Committee and shall issue a call without a congregational vote.

The Ministerial Relations Committee shall approve the name, the terms and the call of the candidate. The form of the call shall be modeled after the call in paragraph §409-1.11. The call shall be communicated to the congregation.

**409-1.15** Upon receiving the call from the church or Department, the candidate has three weeks to accept or reject the call in writing. If the candidate accepts the call, the Ministerial Relations Committee shall set the effective date in consultation with the candidate and the church.

## **409-2 Dissolving the Pastoral Relationship**

**409-2.1** An Uncontested Resignation. If a minister desires to resign from his pastorate the procedure is as follows:

- (1) Pastor submits his resignation to the church by sending a letter to the secretary of the Board of Elders. He shall at the same time submit a copy of the letter to the chairman of the Ministerial Relations Committee.
- (2) Board of Elders acts on the resignation.
  - (2.1) Special provisions (terms for remaining in the parsonage beyond effective date of resignation, extension of health care benefits, etc.), if any, shall be specified by additional resolutions.
  - (2.2) Ordinarily a resolution to accept a resignation is preceded by a whereas, or series of whereas clauses, which indicate the reason, or reasons, for the recommendation of the Board of Elders. Resolution(s) expressing appreciation for the ministry of the pastor may be included in the resolution(s) which recommend action on the resignation. The action of the Board of Elders shall be communicated to the chairman of the Ministerial Relations Committee prior to the effective date of the resignation.
- (3) The Board of Elders shall call a congregational meeting according to our rules (see §403) in order to consider the resignation of the pastor. When the congregation approves the resignation of the pastor, this information shall be communicated to the chairman of the Ministerial Relations Committee within one week. The special provisions made for the pastor's transition (see 2.1 above) may be announced by the Board of Elders or, if they so

decide, approved by the Congregation, by a separate resolution at the same meeting.

#### **409-2.2 A Contested Resignation**

- (1) If the congregation approves a resolution from the Board of Elders recommending the resignation of the pastor be rejected, or if the congregation fails to pass a resolution from the Board of Elders recommending the resignation of the pastor be accepted, the congregation must at the same time approve “whereas” clauses which explain the reason for its action. This decision shall be communicated to the chairman of the Ministerial Relations Committee within twenty-four hours.
- (2) If a congregation takes action which either defeats a resolution to approve a resignation, or passes a resolution denying approval of the resignation of the pastor, the Ministerial Relations Committee shall, after weighing the reasons given for denying the resignation, either conclude the reasons given for denying the resignation are insufficient and approve the resignation with an effective date, or appeal the matter to the Conference Moderator with recommendation.

**409-2.3 Churches Desiring Dissolution of the Pastorate.** If a church desires a dissolution of the pastoral relation the procedure is as follows:

- (1) If the issues leading to a desire by the church to dissolve the pastorate involve moral or doctrinal charges against the pastor, the church shall follow the procedure outlined in the Book of Discipline (see §300).
  - (2) If the issues leading to a desire by the church to dissolve the pastorate do not involve moral or doctrinal charges against the pastor the process is as follows:
    - (2.1) When, by resolution, a Board of Elders concludes there are issues which threaten continuation of the pastorate it shall, in consultation with the Pastoral Relations Committee, provide in writing to the pastor, a list of issues of concern and proposed solutions. This communication shall include a statement indicating that failure to resolve these issues could lead to a desire to dissolve the pastoral relationship. This constitutes “formal notice,” that the continuance of the pastorate is in question. Although “formal notice” is a serious step, it is not necessarily a public step.
    - (2.2) Accordingly, when “formal notice” is given to a pastor, representatives of the Ministerial Relations Committee shall meet with both parties to offer counsel and advice, upon the written request of either party.
    - (2.3) When a Board of Elders issues “formal notice” the Pastoral Relations Committee shall meet with the pastor no less than quarterly in an effort to resolve outstanding issues and it shall provide the pastor with a
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written progress report at least semi-annually, in respect to all issues of concern.

- (2.4) If, after making every effort to resolve issues that threaten the pastorate, the Board of Elders reaches the conclusion it can no longer support sustaining the pastoral relationship, it shall pass whereas clauses and resolutions which indicate its desire to end the pastoral relationship and the reasons it has reached this conclusion. Copies of these resolutions shall be provided to the pastor and the Ministerial Relations Committee within forty-eight hours. The Ministerial Relations Committee shall, at the same time, be supplied with copies of the “formal notice,” and all follow-up written communication to the pastor by the Board of Elders or the Pastoral Relations Committee.
- (2.5) Upon receipt of a formal request by a Board of Elders to terminate a pastorate, the Ministerial Relations Committee shall meet with the Board of Elders and the Pastor to discuss the situation.
- (2.6) Following the meeting with the Board of Elders and the Pastor, the Ministerial Relations Committee shall either (a) approve the request of the Board of Elders to submit a resolution calling for dissolution of the pastorate to the congregation, or, (b) deny the request of the Board of Elders to proceed toward dissolution of the pastorate. Denial of a request to proceed toward dissolving the pastorate shall be accompanied by reasons for the decision, recommendations regarding how to restore the health of the pastorate, and assignment of a member, or members, of the Ministerial Relations Committee to work with the church and the pastor as they seek to restore the relationship.
- (2.7) If the Ministerial Relations Committee allows the request of the Board of Elders to dissolve the pastorate to be submitted to the congregation, the pastor may appeal by sending, within one week, a certified letter to the Conference Moderator.
- (2.8) If the Ministerial Relations Committee denies the request of the Board of Elders to proceed toward the dissolution of the pastorate, the Board of Elders may appeal by sending, within one month, a certified letter signifying its appeal to the Conference Moderator.
- (2.9) Should a decision of the Ministerial Relations Committee to permit the Board of Elders to proceed toward dissolution of the pastorate not be appealed to the BFC Conference within one week, the Board of Elders shall schedule and announce a Congregational Meeting to deal with the resolution:
- Resolved, that the pastoral relationship between \_\_\_\_\_ (Church) and \_\_\_\_\_ (Pastor) be dissolved effective (date).

- (2.10) All terms of the dissolution of the pastorate, including date, special provisions (terms for remaining in the parsonage beyond effective date of resignation, extension of health care benefits, severance pay, etc.) shall be specified by additional resolutions. All terms of separation must be approved by the Ministerial Relations Committee before they are presented to the congregation. The chairman of the Ministerial Relations Committee, or his designee, will chair the congregational meeting called to act on dissolution of the pastoral relationship if the Ministerial Relations Committee determines this is in the best interest of the BFC Conference, or if requested to do so by the Board of Elders or the Pastor.
- (2.11) The Ministerial Relations Committee shall approve dissolution of the pastorate upon approval of the resolution to dissolve the pastorate by a majority of those members present and voting at the meeting. If the congregation votes to continue the pastorate with a large minority in dissent the Ministerial Relations Committee may affirm that decision, or conclude that the situation is beyond repair and inform the church and the pastor that it intends to bring the matter to the BFC Conference with a recommendation that the pastorate be terminated.
- (2.12) All decisions of the Ministerial Relations Committee which are appealable are addressed to the Conference Moderator, who shall have the authority to refer the matter to a committee he selects to make final judgement or, to the BFC Conference.

*Paragraphs §409-2.1 - 409-2.3 refer to the resignation of a Senior Pastor in a church with more than one pastor; or the only pastor in a church with one pastor. For pastors called under the procedures §409-1.4, the resignation shall be according to the procedure of §409-2.4.*

#### **409-2.4 Resignation or Removal of Pastors called by Boards of Elders.**

In the case of a pastor called under the procedure of §409-1.14, resignation or removal is as follows:

**Resignation** - The pastor submits his resignation to the Board of Elders. He shall submit a copy to the chairman of the Ministerial Relations Committee. The Board of Elders shall act on the resignation, including special provisions such as in §409-2.1. The Board of Elders shall inform the congregation of the effective date and terms of the resignation.

**Removal** - Boards of Elders shall adopt the procedure of §409-2.3 except that following the due process of §409-2.3 (1) through (2.1-5) the Ministerial Relations Committee may approve the request of the Board of Elders to terminate the pastorate. The effective date and terms of the termination shall be communicated to the congregation. Paragraph §409-2.3 (2.12) is in effect in this situation.

**500**  
**Bylaws for BFC**  
**Conference**

## **Article 501 - Ministry in the Bible Fellowship Church**

### **Procedure for the Recognition of a Minister**

All men who desire to have ministerial credentials with the BFC shall apply to the Ministerial Candidate Committee by filling out an application from the Committee.

### **501-1 Men Entering the Ministry of the BFC**

**Applicant.** An applicant is a man who offers himself to this committee for service in the BFC. Men are encouraged to seek this recognition as early in their educational program as they sense the call of God to the ministry.

**Probationer.** A probationer is a man who has been approved by this committee and has passed the required examinations. Upon completion of his required examinations, he will be classified as a probationer eligible to receive a call. When a probationer receives a call from the BFC (a Particular Church or department) or other ministry (chaplaincy, etc.) approved by the Ministerial Candidate Committee in consultation with the Credentials Committee, he shall become a licensed probationer. Such other ministry does not include service on the pastoral staff of a church other than a BFC.

## **501-2 Probationary Service**

**501-2.1** Full-time Probationary Service in a Particular Church or Mission. Normally a probationer serves in a full-time capacity. After a probationer has served at least two years, or one year if previously ordained, he may be recommended to the Credentials Committee for ordination examination or recognition of previous ordination. The minimum period of probationary service may be extended; having served as a probationer does not guarantee ordination or recognition of previous ordination.

In some instances, the time of probation for a man who is not previously ordained may be shortened by the Ministerial Candidate Committee to one year if he has served on the staff of a BFC in a full-time capacity for two or more years prior to the effective date of his license. In no case will the probationary service be less than one year. The Ministerial Candidate Committee shall determine the length of the probationary service after evaluating the prior service of the probationer.

**501-2.2** Part-time Probationary Service in a Particular Church or Mission. A man serving his probationary period on a part-time basis may do so with the following requirements:

- (1) He shall serve the equivalent of at least two years full-time service, or one year of full-time service if previously ordained, as determined by the Ministerial Candidate Committee in consultation with the Credentials Committee.
- (2) He shall serve at least one year under the supervision of a Board of Elders and/or another evaluating body approved by the Ministerial Candidate Committee and the Credentials Committee.

**501-2.3** Probationary Service in Other Ministry. If a man seeks ordination or recognition of previous ordination in the BFC and is not serving as the pastor of a Particular Church or mission, he may do so with the following requirements:

- (1) He shall be a member of a BFC.
- (2) He shall follow the same procedure for ordination as other probationers.
- (3) He shall comply with the F&O in the course of his service.
- (4) He shall be supervised by the Board of Elders of the church in which he holds membership, the governing board of the ministry under which he serves, and any other evaluating agencies the Ministerial Candidate Committee may require during the probationary period of service. The time of the probationary service may be in full or part-time capacity.

## **501-3 Ordained Ministers Received From Other Churches**

**501-3.1** When an ordained minister from another church seeks ministerial credentials in the BFC, he shall apply to the Ministerial Candidate Committee.

**501-3.2** The following matters shall be considered when determining whether to recognize a previous ordination:

- (1) the doctrinal position of the ordaining church body;
- (2) the minister's standing with the ordaining church body;
- (3) whether his ordination was intended to be within and to the ministry of the church universal;
- (4) whether his ordination was performed by the authority charged with the exercise of this specific church power within the ordaining community and accompanied by the laying on of hands by such as have themselves been similarly ordained.

**501-3.3** Under certain exceptional circumstances, a previously-ordained minister may be licensed through an expedited process (see §409-1.5)

**501-3.4** Having complied with these provisions, the minister shall be under the authority and discipline of the BFC.

**501-3.5** After serving at least one year as a probationer, he may be examined by the Credentials Committee. The Credentials Committee may then recommend to BFC Conference that he be accepted as an ordained minister with full privileges in the BFC. This recognition shall be made known in a public service.

## **501-4 Ordination**

The BFC understands ordination to the Christian ministry to be the laying-on of the hands of the elders of the church, accompanied by prayer and the public recognition by the church of gifts previously given by God to one called to the ministry of the Word of God. The examination for ordination is conducted by the Credentials Committee of the BFC. So long as an ordained minister maintains a relationship with this denomination, he remains under the care of the Credentials Committee, subscribing annually to the F&O.

**501-4.1 Form For Ordination of Ministers.** After all proper examinations and preparations have been made according to our rules and upon the approval of BFC Conference at the recommendation of the Credentials Committee, the probationer shall be ready for public ordination to the Christian ministry. The Credentials Committee shall be responsible for making proper preparation for the ordination service.

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On the day appointed for the service of ordination, a minister shall preach an appropriate sermon.

The Chairman of the Credentials Committee, or another member of the committee appointed by him, shall then briefly cite the proceedings of the committee in preparation for ordination and the importance of the occasion. Then, addressing himself to the candidate, he shall propose to him the following questions:

- (1) Do you believe in one God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – and do you confess anew the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord and acknowledge Him Head over all things to the church, which is His body?
- (2) Do you believe the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments to be the inspired Word of God, the only infallible rule of faith and life?
- (3) Do you sincerely receive and adopt the Articles of Faith of the Bible Fellowship Church as containing the system of doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures?
- (4) Will you endeavor to follow the government and discipline of the Bible Fellowship Church?
- (5) Do you promise subjection to your brethren in the Lord?
- (6) Have you been inwardly persuaded, as far as you know your own heart, to seek the office of the Christian ministry in response to God’s call, out of love for Him and a sincere desire to promote His glory in the Gospel of His Son?
- (7) Do you determine to be zealous and faithful in maintaining the truths of the Gospel and the purity and peace of the church, whatever persecution or opposition may arise unto you on that account?
- (8) Do you purpose to be faithful and diligent in the exercise of all your duties as a Christian and a minister of the Gospel both private and public, endeavoring by the grace of God to feed the flock of which God shall make you overseer, to seek the salvation of the lost, and to walk with exemplary piety before men?

The candidate, having answered these questions in the affirmative, shall kneel. He shall then be solemnly set apart to the Gospel ministry by the offering of prayer and the laying-on of hands of ministers according to the apostolic example.

Once prayer is concluded, he shall rise from his knees and the minister who presides shall take him by the right hand and say in effect:

- (1) (To candidate) “We give you the right hand of fellowship to take part in this ministry with us.”
- (2) (To congregation) “I now pronounce that (name of candidate) is ordained to the Gospel ministry, according to the Word of God and the Faith and Order of the Bible Fellowship Church; as such, he is entitled to all support,

encouragement, honor, and obedience in the Lord. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.”

Afterward, all of the ordained ministers of the BFC present shall welcome the newly-ordained brother to the ministry with the right hand of fellowship.

## **501-5 Retirement From the Ministry**

**501-5.1** Any minister holding credentials with the BFC and seeking retirement shall notify the Ministerial Credentials Committee of the BFC at least 90 days prior to the effective date of his retirement. The Ministerial Credentials Committee shall set the effective date of the retirement, change the status of the minister on the conference records, and notify the BFC Executive Board. Those ministers pastoring a church shall dissolve the pastoral relationship through the Pastoral Change Procedure (see section 409-2).

## **Article 502 - BFC Conference**

**502-1** The assembly of churches shall represent, in one body, all the Particular Churches of this denomination and shall be called the Bible Fellowship Church Conference (BFC Conference).

**502-2** The BFC Conference performs the legislative function of our denomination. As such, it alone has the power to amend and the final authority to interpret the F & O. By this means it governs the affairs of the Particular Churches, and receives requests and petitions from the Particular Churches. Although it has these powers, it shall not subvert the autonomy of the Particular Churches.

**502-3** The BFC Conference also exercises final oversight of the judicial function of our denomination. In this capacity, it examines, licenses and ordains candidates for pastoral ministry, provides counsel in the calling of pastors to Particular Churches, supervises the resignation and removal of pastors, examines and approves or censures the records of Particular Churches, elects judicatories, and serves as a final court of appeal in matters of discipline.

**502-4** The BFC Conference also provides for the executive function of our denomination. As such it elects a President and BFC Executive Board, ratifies the Executive Director, and approves the direction and planning proposed by the BFC Executive Board. To provide for this executive and administrative leadership, the BFC Conference has the authority to assess the Particular Churches a percentage of their offerings.

**502-5** The BFC Conference shall meet annually in performance of its responsibilities as outlined above. Officers and committees shall be elected and appointed each year in order to conduct its business in an efficient manner. The purpose of the annual gathering is to govern the BFC through the F&O, promote unity and fellowship between the churches, and to focus our vision on unified goals for our churches and their joint endeavors.

**502-6** The proceedings of the BFC Conference shall be conducted according to the Business Rules of BFC Conference (see 508). It shall keep and publish a record of its proceedings and make it available to the membership of the churches.

**502-7** BFC Conference convenes in April. The starting time and place of the Conference shall be recommended by the Committee on Agenda and Arrangements and ratified by BFC Conference.

**502-8** An Adjourned Session of BFC Conference may be scheduled by action of BFC Conference or called by the Moderator by giving the members of BFC Conference a four-week written notification. The call for the meeting shall communicate the time, place, and purpose of the Adjourned Session of BFC Conference.

## **Article 503 - BFC Annual Budget**

### **503-1 Administration**

The BFC Annual Budget is administered by the BFC Executive Board. The Board prepares the budget and presents it to the BFC Conference for adoption. The budget provides for the executive administration of the BFC and includes, but is not limited to, salaries of the Executive Director and other employees, expenses of committees, pension obligations, administrative departments, and any other obligations or projects approved by the BFC Conference.

### **503-2 Funding**

The BFC Annual Budget is funded by the Church Assessment Rate. At the time that the BFC Executive Board presents the budget, a rate shall be recommended which provides for the funding of the budget. The rate shall be a percentage of the regular offerings received by the Particular Churches in the previous calendar year. The BFC Executive Board must present a balanced budget which is adequately funded by the assessment.

### **503-3 Adoption**

The BFC Annual Budget shall be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the BFC Conference. The budget shall include the Church Assessment Rate necessary to fund it, so that a vote for the budget is also a vote for the assessment. The BFC Conference shall not adopt an Annual Budget without approving the Church Assessment Rate which balances it.

## **Article 504 - Membership of Congregations in BFC Conference**

### **504-1 Particular Church**

Any congregation meeting the standards of Article 18 of the Articles of Faith and committed to the F&O may be admitted to membership in BFC Conference and shall be known as a Particular Church. This admission must follow upon a positive assessment and recommendation by the Board of Church Extension. Assessment includes an evaluation of elders, committed participants, and financial stability.

**504-1.1** All new Particular Churches are to be evaluated by the Board of Church Health for two years.

**504-1.2** Any congregation that reports any of the following criteria will allow the Board of Church Health to assist that Particular Church.

A Board of Elders that has declined to fewer than two active lay elders.

If there is a pattern of significant decline in membership, average attendance, and/or offerings.

**504-1.3** If a Particular Church meets one of the following criteria for a period of two years, the Executive Board may place it under the supervisory care of the Board of Church Health (see 512-4.3 Duty 6) upon the recommendation of the Board of Church Health:

It does not meet the standards of a Particular Church (Articles of Faith 18-4)

It does not have at least 20 members

It does not have at least two (2) lay elders

It cannot financially support its work

### **504-2 Mission Churches**

**504-2.1** Any congregation that is under the supervision of the Board of Church Extension of the BFC but has not yet met the standard for recognition as a Particular Church shall be called a mission church. The term “mission church” is used in a technical sense, but this does not preclude the use of the term “church” in any of the congregation’s public relations activities.

**504-2.2** The Board of Church Extension has the responsibility of assessing the preparedness of the mission church for admission to BFC Conference.

**504-2.3** Upon recommendation by the Board of Church Extension, the mission church may be recognized as a church and admitted to BFC Conference by a majority vote of BFC Conference.

### **504-3 Other Congregations**

#### **504-3.1 Daughter Churches of Bible Fellowship Churches**

(1) A Bible Fellowship Church desiring to plant a daughter church shall contact the Board of Church Extension and seek its counsel and assistance in the development and preparation of the daughter church for recognition at the BFC Conference.

(2) When the parenting church determines that the daughter church is ready to pursue membership in the BFC Conference, the parenting church shall request an assessment from the Board of Church Extension. The daughter church shall be assessed by the Board of Church Extension.

(3) The daughter church shall be recommended for membership in the BFC Conference by the parenting church and the Board of Church Extension and admitted to BFC Conference upon majority vote of BFC Conference.

#### **504-3.2 Pre-existing Congregations**

(1) An independent congregation or an established congregation of another denomination desiring membership in BFC Conference shall contact the Board of Church Extension.

(2) This church shall be evaluated by the Board of Church Extension on the basis of its agreement with the F&O, particularly as to its compliance with Article 18 of the Articles of Faith. This church shall meet the standards of Article 18 of the Articles of Faith and be committed to the F&O.

(3) This church may be recommended for membership in BFC Conference by the Board of Church Extension upon satisfactory completion of an assessment.

(4) A majority vote of BFC Conference shall be required for membership in BFC Conference.

## Article 505 - Members of BFC Conference

**505-1 Voting Members.** The voting members of BFC Conference shall answer to the call of the roll. They shall be:

- (1) ordained ministers working under the direction of the BFC.
- (2) ordained ministers working under the direction of the Board of Missions of the BFC.
- (3) ordained ministers endorsed by the BFC working in the chaplaincy.
- (4) ordained ministers serving in other Christian ministries.
- (5) ordained ministers in retirement.
- (6) ordained ministers between calls.
- (7) probationers who have been licensed by the Ministerial Candidate Committee.
- (8) delegates from every properly-constituted church based on congregational membership as follows:

1-299 members	1 delegate
300-499 members	2 delegates
500-plus members	3 delegates

If a delegate(s) is unable to attend any meeting of BFC Conference, another delegate elected by that church's Board of Elders may be seated for those meetings, having informed the Registrar. If a church fails to seat a delegate, it forfeits his representation in his absence.

- (9) all members of the BFC Executive Board.

**505-2 Advisory Members.** Advisory members of BFC Conference shall not be included in the call of the roll. They shall not participate in the deliberations of the session except by permission of the Moderator. Advisory members of BFC Conference shall include:

- (1) ordained ministers working in non-BFC churches
- (2) ordained ministers on leave of absence.
- (3) probationers who have not been called to be the pastor of a church.
- (4) missionaries who hold membership in one of the churches and are under the supervision of the Board of Missions.
- (5) ordained ministers who are inactive.

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## **Article 506 - BFC Conference Registration**

**506-1** The Conference Moderator shall, prior to the adjournment of BFC Conference, appoint a Registrar and Assistant Registrar for the succeeding BFC Conference.

### **506-2 Duties of the Registrar**

- (1) He shall register all members who are qualified to be seated at BFC Conference and shall keep the attendance record of each meeting. A roll of qualified members of BFC Conference, including all delegates, shall be published in the minutes of the first meeting.
- (2) He shall prepare a list of the BFC Conference delegate(s) in each congregation from the information supplied to him on the BFC Conference Registration Form.
- (3) He shall verify that the BFC Conference delegate(s) are elders in their congregation and have been duly elected. This shall be accomplished by comparing the information supplied on the BFC Conference Registration Form with the official list of BFC Conference delegate(s) supplied to him from the Committee on Examination of Minutes of Particular Churches. Any discrepancies should be resolved prior to a delegate being seated at BFC Conference.
- (4) He shall provide for the registration of all advisory members of BFC Conference and for any official representatives from any other bodies or organizations. He shall notify the Moderator of the presence of such persons at the session.
- (5) Prior to the first meeting, all voting members shall sign in with the Registrar. Delegates serving at subsequent meetings shall sign in with the Registrar before being seated in replacement of another delegate. This action will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

**506-3** The Board of Church Health shall, prior to BFC Conference, furnish to the Registrar a list of duly elected BFC Conference delegates as they appear in the minutes of the Particular Churches.

**506-4** The Credentials Committee and the Ministerial Candidate Committee shall, prior to BFC Conference, furnish to the Registrar lists of those ministers qualified to be members of BFC Conference and those who shall be advisory members of BFC Conference.

**506-5** Prior to the first meeting, all voting members shall sign in with the Registrar. Delegates serving at subsequent meetings shall sign in with the Registrar before

being seated in replacement of another delegate. This action will be recorded in the minutes of the meeting.

**506-6 Requests to be Excused**

- (1) Any lay delegate desiring to be excused from a meeting which will result in his church lacking lay representation shall submit a request in writing to the Registrar. The Registrar shall present such requests to BFC Conference, which shall grant or deny the request.
- (2) Any pastor desiring to be excused from any meeting must present in writing the reason for such absence to the Secretary of the Committee on Credentials no later than two weeks prior to the commencement of BFC Conference (emergency excuses being the lone exception to the two week advance notice) and the Committee on Credentials will report to BFC Conference stating the validity of such excuses. Ordained Ministers in retirement or on permanent disability who do not attend BFC Conference are excused without a written request.

**506-7** The names of absentees shall be recorded in the minutes of each meeting, with indication as to whether the absence is excused.

**506-8** The registration records shall be submitted to the Secretary of BFC Conference after adjournment.

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## Article 507 - Officers of BFC Conference

These officers shall have a one year term beginning at BFC Conference and ending the day prior to the following BFC Conference.

### 507-1 Conference Moderator

A Conference Moderator shall be chosen by and from the membership of BFC Conference. He shall conduct the business of BFC Conference in an orderly and efficient manner.

#### Election

- (1) Before BFC Conference adjourns, it shall elect by ballot the Conference Moderator of the next BFC Conference.
- (2) A Moderator shall be eligible to succeed himself three times.
- (3) The BFC Executive Director is ineligible to serve as the Conference Moderator.

#### Duties

- (1) The Moderator, by his election, shall be considered to possess, by delegation from the whole body, all authority necessary to direct the meetings of BFC Conference according to the rules of the BFC and *Robert's Rules of Order*.
- (2) When there is a tie vote, the Moderator shall have the deciding vote. If he is not willing to decide, he shall call for a second ballot; if the vote is again tied, the issue shall be considered lost.
- (3) After the close of BFC Conference, the Moderator shall have the power to convene BFC Conference by circulating a written call for such a session, giving the members a four-week written notification.

### 507-2 Vice-Moderator

#### Election

Before BFC Conference adjourns, it shall elect by ballot a Vice-Moderator from its membership.

#### Duties

- (1) He shall function as Conference Moderator and fulfill all other duties in the absence of the Moderator
- (2) He is to act temporarily as Moderator when the Moderator requests to vacate the chair so as to speak on a given issue. He shall continue to preside until the issue in question has been decided.
- (3) He shall assist the Moderator by performing duties delegated by the Moderator.

**507-3 Secretary**

**Election**

Before BFC Conference adjourns, it shall elect by ballot a Secretary from its membership.

**Duties**

- (1) He shall record its transactions, preserve the record carefully, and prepare for publication the proceedings of BFC Conference.
- (2) He shall furnish certified excerpts from the minutes of BFC Conference when properly requested. When such excerpts are given, they shall be considered authentic evidence of the facts that they declare.
- (3) He shall receive and distribute petitions from Particular Churches to BFC Conference.
- (4) He shall be empowered to appoint any assistants that he needs.
- (5) He shall be Editor of the Yearbook (see section 513-1).

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## **Article 508 - Business Rules of BFC Conference**

### **508-1 Regular Order of Business**

Each meeting of the BFC Conference shall be opened and closed with prayer. Times for worship shall be provided in each day's agenda. The parliamentary procedure shall follow the rules of the BFC and *Robert's Rules of Order*. Business shall generally proceed according to an approved agenda. Minutes shall be recorded and approved for each meeting.

### **508-2 Addressing BFC Conference**

- (1) Anyone wishing to speak shall rise and respectfully address the Moderator.
- (2) In the event that more than one should address the Moderator at the same time, the Moderator shall decide who is entitled to the floor.
- (3) No one shall be allowed to speak more than ten minutes on any subject unless he receives permission from the Moderator.
- (4) No one shall speak a second time on a given motion unless permission is granted by the Moderator.

### **508-3 Reports of Boards and Committees to BFC Conference**

- (1) All BFC Conference boards and committees elected by ballot shall send copies of their reports to the place and by the time designated in the minutes of BFC Conference as recommended by the Committee on Agenda and Arrangements. Study Committees and other committees appointed by the Moderator shall follow the same procedure.
- (2) Reports that have previously been circulated shall not be read publicly unless requested from the Conference floor.
- (3) The reports may be questioned and corrected before being accepted by BFC Conference.
- (4) One corrected copy of each report shall be given to the Secretary of BFC Conference upon acceptance of each report for inclusion in the Conference Yearbook.

### **508-4 Election Procedures of BFC Conference**

- (1) Nominations shall be closed at the opening of each meeting for all elections to be conducted at that particular meeting.
- (2) The consent of an individual shall be obtained before nominating that individual for election at BFC Conference.
- (3) A ballot listing the names of all nominees shall be prepared by the Secretary/ Assistant Secretaries and necessary instructions for voting shall be given by the Moderator.

- (4) Each voting member of BFC Conference may cast his vote, and the Secretary/Assistant Secretary shall tabulate the results.
- (5) If a runoff ballot is needed, the Secretary/Assistant Secretary shall prepare the new ballot and tabulate the results. In the event where no candidate receives at least 50 percent of the vote, the candidate with the lowest number of votes shall be dropped until an election is reached.
- (6) Elections may be conducted by oral nomination and paper or digital ballot, with appropriate instructions being given to members of BFC Conference prior to voting.

#### **508-5 Study Committees**

- (1) **Purpose.** BFC Conference may form a study committee to address a specific topic or question which does not fall under the jurisdiction of one of the standing committees and which is too extensive to be adequately addressed through public debate alone. BFC Conference shall assign a study committee its work in writing by means of a resolution or resolutions.
- (2) **Composition.** BFC Conference may nominate and elect a study committee, or it may request the Moderator to appoint a study committee, subject to the ratification of BFC Conference. The number of members shall be determined by BFC Conference. The study committee shall exist until dissolved by BFC Conference. Vacancies of study committee membership may be filled by further elections or appointments by the Moderator. BFC Conference may add, remove, or replace members at any time.
- (3) **Reporting.** A study committee shall submit an annual written report to BFC Conference, and shall do so until it is dissolved by BFC Conference. The written report may include progress made toward the completion of its assignment, a position paper intended to complete its assignment, and any legislation offered to address the assignment. Legislation proposed by the study committee may be amended, but not replaced by substitute motion, prior to being voted on by BFC Conference.
- (4) **Dissolution.** A study committee is dissolved by vote of BFC Conference when, in the judgment of BFC Conference, its assignment is complete.

**508-6** Any exception to the implementation of the rules of the F&O other than the Articles of Faith may be allowed by vote of a three-fourths majority of BFC Conference. The reason for these exceptions shall be explained fully in the minutes. Such exceptions shall be subject to annual review until approved at second reading.

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## **Article 509 - General Rules of Elections and Resignations**

### **509-1 Categories**

- (1) There are three categories of nominees for election to boards and committees. They are ministers, elders, and laypersons.
- (2) Pastoral Staff members are not eligible to serve in the categories of elders or laypersons.

### **509-2 Ministers**

- (1) Ministers who have been called to minister by the rules of Pulpit Supply or who are laboring in any Department of the BFC shall be eligible for election or appointment to Conference offices, boards, or committees.
- (2) A minister who is without a call to a church is eligible to serve in an elective office and on Conference boards and committees as long as he remains on the list of Ordained Ministers Working Under the Direction of the BFC.
- (3) A minister who is granted a leave of absence may serve as a minister in any elected or appointed position only until the next BFC Conference, when a successor will be elected or appointed to fill the unexpired term.
- (4) All retired ministers willing to serve are eligible for election to boards and committees.

### **509-3 Elders**

Elders are men who are serving or who have served and remain eligible for service on the Board of Elders of a BFC.

### **509-4 Laypersons**

- (1) Laypersons are men or women who are members in good standing of a BFC.
- (2) Laypersons are eligible to serve on a board or committee unless the bylaws of the board or committee limit eligibility to ministers and/or elders. Laypersons need not be members of the BFC Conference in order to serve.
- (3) The Nominating Committee shall seek assistance from the pastors and boards of elders in obtaining capable candidates for these positions.

### **509-5 Resignation**

- (1) A resignation from a BFC Conference office shall be sent to the Secretary of BFC Conference. A copy shall also be sent to the Chairman of the Nominating Committee.
- (2) A resignation from a board or committee shall be submitted to the Secretary of the Board or Committee.

**509-6 Vacancy**

- (1) A vacancy on an elected board or committee occurs in the following cases:
  - (1.1) Death
  - (1.2) Resignation
  - (1.3) Discontinuation of BFC membership
  - (1.4) Divestiture of office according to the “Book of Discipline,” §300
  - (1.5) Declaration by BFC Conference upon appeal of the Board or Committee that the person is unwilling or unable to fulfill one’s committee responsibility
- (2) If a vacancy on an elected board or committee occurs during the year, the board or committee may elect a replacement who will serve until the subsequent BFC Conference. The board or committee shall report to BFC Conference any vacancies, shall recommend appropriate action and shall inform the Nominating Committee.

**509-7 Term**

The term of office of those elected and appointed to boards or committees by this body shall be for the term designated by our rules for that office (measured from the last day of the regular BFC Conference at which they are elected to the last day of the regular BFC Conference at which their term expires) or until successors are chosen.

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## **Article 510 - Appointments by the Conference Moderator**

### **510-1 Committees and Appointees for the succeeding BFC Conference**

#### **510-1:1 Committee on Agenda and Arrangements**

##### **Composition**

The Committee shall have seven members, at least two of whom shall be members of the Executive Board. The Committee shall include the BFC Executive Director, the BFC Conference Moderator and Vice-Moderator, and the BFC Conference Secretary. The remaining members shall be at-large members appointed by the Moderator of BFC Conference. The Head Page, the Overseer of the Pages, the Conference Registrar, the Chairman of the Communications Committee, and the Conference Host shall be considered ex-officio members of this committee.

##### **Duties**

- (1) It shall implement the BFC Conference program for worship and training that it receives from the Executive Director and BFC Executive Board.
- (2) It shall receive from any Particular Church or Conference entity requests for time on the agenda of BFC Conference. Such requests must be in writing and in the hands of the BFC Conference Secretary by March 1.
- (3) It shall develop the proposed agenda and program to recommend to the upcoming BFC Conference and shall establish the times of the meetings of BFC Conference.
- (4) It shall submit the proposed agenda of the upcoming BFC Conference to the Executive Director for inclusion in the Report Book.
- (5) It shall make provision for the meetings and accompanying hospitality for BFC Conference.
- (6) It shall appoint a committee on resolutions, a timekeeper and tellers for meetings of BFC Conference. Those appointed shall be notified of their appointment by the Secretary of the Committee prior to BFC Conference. Guidelines for those appointed shall be provided.
- (7) It shall recommend to BFC Conference the place and dates of the succeeding BFC Conference (F&O §502-7).
- (8) It shall recommend to the BFC Conference the collection point and deadline for reports for the succeeding BFC Conference.

**510-1.2 Registrar and Assistant Registrar (see §506-1, 506-2)**

**510-2 Committees and Appointees for the Current BFC Conference**

**510-2.1 Committee on Examination of BFC Conference Minutes**

**Purpose**

To certify that the Yearbook is an accurate account of the proceedings of BFC Conference.

**Appointment**

It shall have at least one experienced member being retained when possible.

**Duties**

- (1) It shall independently monitor the proceedings of BFC Conference in order to assist the Secretary of BFC Conference in producing accurate minutes.
- (2) It shall assist BFC Conference in correcting the Secretary's minutes. The Secretary's minutes, as corrected, become the official minutes of BFC Conference at the time of their approval.
- (3) Following the approval of minutes by BFC Conference, all corrections to the official minutes shall be certified by the Secretary, recorded by this committee, and reported to BFC Conference if judged by this committee to be substantive.
- (4) It shall examine the minutes as printed in the Yearbook and compare them with the official minutes of the Secretary of BFC Conference.
- (5) It shall receive notification from members of BFC Conference of any suggested correction in the Yearbook and shall research its validity.
- (6) It shall report in writing to the next BFC Conference any and all discrepancies between the Yearbook and the official minutes, and any other recommended corrections to the Yearbook. Recommended corrections take effect upon adoption of the report by BFC Conference.
- (7) It shall submit to BFC Conference two corrected copies of the Yearbook certified to contain an accurate account of the proceedings of the previous BFC Conference. These copies shall be placed in the BFC Archives.

**510-2.2 Parliamentarian**

He should be well-versed in the F&O of the BFC, the Bylaws for BFC Conference and *Robert's Rules of Order*.

**Duties**

- (1) He shall assist the Moderator and BFC Conference in following appropriate parliamentary procedure.
- (2) He shall render interpretations on proper parliamentary procedure when requested to do so by the Moderator. The parliamentary procedure shall

follow *Robert's Rules of Order* except when superseded by the Bylaws for BFC Conference.

- (3) He shall monitor the proceedings of BFC Conference and inform the Conference when discussion or motions are out of order.

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## **Article 511 - Boards and Committees Elected by BFC Conference**

### **511-1 Bible Fellowship Church Executive Board**

The Bible Fellowship Church Executive Board (BFC Executive Board) performs the executive function of the denomination. It shall have and exercise in the name and on behalf of the corporation all rights and privileges conferred by the charter creating the corporation. This activity must always be in conformity with the Faith and Order and with the rules, decisions, and directives of the BFC Conference. It shall provide leadership for the BFC by proposing strategic direction to the BFC Conference, implementing direction through the oversight of the BFC departments, and monitoring progress in the direction approved by the BFC Conference. It shall have the authority between the meetings of the BFC Conference to execute the decisions made by that body.

#### **511-1.1 Composition, Election, and Terms of Office**

- (1) The BFC Executive Board shall have thirteen voting members: a President (who is elected directly by the BFC Conference), the Executive Director (by virtue of his office), and eleven members (five ordained ministers and six elders).
- (2) The elected Classes shall be as follows:
  - Class I President, one ordained minister and two elders
  - Class II Two ordained ministers and two elders
  - Class III Two ordained ministers and two elders
- (3) Each member shall be elected for a term of three years.

#### **511-1.2 Meetings and Quorum**

- (1) Meetings. The BFC Executive Board shall establish a schedule of stated meetings, at which any business of the board may be conducted. Special meetings may be convened by the President on his own initiative, or at the call of the Secretary when requested by five members. Any special meetings must be held with at least a seven-day notice, and business must be limited to the announced purpose unless all thirteen members of the board are present and consent to transact other business.
- (2) Quorum. Eight voting members must be present to transact business of the BFC Executive Board.

#### **511-1.3 Organization**

- (1) President. The President shall be elected by the BFC Conference for a term of three years. He may be an ordained pastor or an elder. The Executive Director is ineligible to serve as President.
- (2) Other Officers. The BFC Executive Board shall elect annually from their number a Vice President, Secretary, Financial Secretary, Treasurer and

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any other officers as the business of the board may require. The Executive Director is ineligible to serve in these offices.

- (3) Vacancies. Vacancies in these offices shall be filled as soon as possible. In the event that the office of President is vacant, the Vice President shall serve until the next meeting of the BFC Conference.
- (4) Removal from Office. The President may be removed from office at any time by a majority vote of the BFC Conference. The other officers elected by the BFC Executive Board may be removed from office at any time by the majority of the whole BFC Executive Board.

#### **511-1.4 Duties of Officers**

##### **President**

- (1) He shall chair the meetings of the BFC Executive Board.
- (2) He shall serve as legal representation for the corporation, empowered to execute all contracts, deeds, mortgages, and other documents, as the business of the corporation may require. He may designate another officer of the BFC Executive Board to exercise this power in his place. He shall report all such executions to the board.
- (3) He shall carry out all other responsibilities as are usually conducted by the president of the corporation.

##### **Vice President**

- (1) He shall chair the meetings of the BFC Executive Board in the absence of the President.
- (2) If the President is unable to serve, he shall serve as President until the next meeting of the BFC Conference.

##### **Secretary**

- (1) He shall record and maintain minutes of the BFC Executive Board.
- (2) He shall provide for the safe preservation of the records and legal documents of the corporation.

##### **Financial Secretary**

- (1) The Financial Secretary shall maintain accurate records of all assets held by the corporation and all financial transactions of the corporation.
- (2) The Financial Secretary shall issue payment of all duly authorized financial obligations.

##### **Treasurer**

- (1) He shall ensure that all deposits of funds for which the BFC Executive Board is responsible are made in depositories approved by the Board.
- (2) He shall provide for an annual audit of all funds held by the BFC Executive Board.

**511-1.5 Duties of the BFC Executive Board**

- (1) It shall provide leadership for the BFC by presenting strategic direction to the BFC Conference. It shall seek approval of the BFC Conference to pursue this direction through the implementation of strategic plans.
- (2) It shall appoint the Executive Director, subject to ratification of the BFC Conference, and oversee his performance in carrying out the work of the BFC Executive Board.
- (3) It shall appoint the directors of the departments and establish the terms of their employment in consultation with the Department Committees. It shall have authority to terminate the employment of the directors of the departments.
- (4) It shall offer counsel, advice and direction, oversee the work of the departments in furthering the overall ministry of the BFC and shall ratify the elections of each department.
- (5) It shall administrate the BFC Annual Budget and make annual recommendations to the BFC Conference concerning the Budget and Church Assessment Rate.
- (6) It shall provide for and oversee the administrative aspects of the BFC including, but not limited to, education, accounting, auditing, pensions, publications, publicity, stewardship, and development.
- (7) It shall hold title to and have charge of all property, both real and personal, belonging to the corporation. It shall buy or sell property for the corporation only by the approval of two-thirds of its members of the board or by direction of the BFC Conference. It shall have the authority to borrow money, contract mortgages, or make loans against any property of the corporation by approval of two-thirds of its members or by direction of the BFC Conference.
- (8) It shall have oversight over all funds entrusted to it by the BFC Conference.
- (9) It shall have oversight of all insurance programs offered by the BFC Executive Board.
- (10) It shall act as the legal representative in the name of and on behalf of the corporation known as the Bible Fellowship Church (a nonprofit corporation in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania). Its activities must always be in conformity with the Faith & Order and with the rules, decisions and directives of the BFC Conference. It shall have all the rights and privileges, as well as responsibilities and liabilities, conferred by the charter creating the corporation.
- (11) It shall have oversight of the Pinebrook Educational Foundation.
- (12) It shall report annually to the BFC Conference.

**511-1.6 Executive Director of the Bible Fellowship Church**

The Executive Director shall be an ordained pastor or elder appointed by the BFC Executive Board to carry out the direction approved by the BFC Conference. He shall be appointed, with the terms of employment, for a term of three years, subject to ratification by the BFC Conference. He shall serve as a voting member of the BFC Executive Board.

**Duties:**

- (1) He shall implement the direction and strategic plans of the BFC Conference.
- (2) He shall represent the BFC in public ministry.
- (3) He shall encourage churches and pastors toward achieving the plans of the BFC Conference.
- (4) He shall encourage and coordinate BFC committees in achieving the plans of the BFC Conference.
- (5) He shall oversee the department directors and coordinate their work so as to advance the plans of the BFC Conference.
- (6) He shall oversee the daily operations of the BFC administration.
- (7) He shall report to the BFC Executive Board and the BFC Conference.

## **511-1.7 Sub-Committees Supervised by the BFC Executive Board**

### **511-1.7 (1) Communications Committee**

#### **Purpose**

To promote communication in the BFC through various media.

#### **Composition**

It shall be appointed by the BFC Executive Board in composition and terms of service determined by the BFC Executive Board.

#### **Duties**

- (1) It shall publish the annual Yearbook and other BFC literature.
- (2) It shall maintain and oversee the BFC website.
- (3) It shall perform the duties assigned by the BFC Executive Board.
- (4) It shall submit an annual written report to the BFC Executive Board.

### **511-1.7 (2) BFC Education and Training Committee**

#### **Purpose**

To provide for, promote, and/or support educational opportunities on behalf of the Bible Fellowship Church.

#### **Composition**

- (1) The committee shall select its own members in three-year classes, subject to the ratification of the BFC Executive Board.
- (2) It shall annually determine which of its members will serve as Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, and Financial Secretary.

#### **Duties**

- (1) It shall work with the Ministerial Candidate Committee in developing BFC-oriented material that can enable potential pastoral candidates to meet their academic prerequisites for ordination.
  - (2) It shall develop BFC-oriented materials that would provide biblical standards for new BFC Elders.
  - (3) It shall provide periodic training opportunities for new and existing BFC Elders to raise their level of biblical understanding.
  - (4) It shall develop and promote BFC-oriented materials (Articles of Faith, Biblical Principles for Living, etc.) for both adult and children's usage in BFC churches.
  - (5) It may present to the BFC Executive Board any new initiatives for biblical training for college age young people.
  - (6) It shall receive funds designated by BFC Conference and disburse them for the needs of its work.
  - (7) It shall submit an annual written report to the BFC Executive Board.
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### **511-1.7 (3) Youth and Young Adult Committee**

#### **Purpose**

The Youth and Young Adults Committee exists to glorify and honor God by primarily equipping churches to effectively reach and disciple students and young adults for Christ. This includes:

- (1) training leaders
- (2) providing relevant insights and trends in culture
- (3) hosting discipleship and outreach events
- (4) promoting unity among the churches

#### **Composition**

The committee shall elect its own members, subject to the ratification of the BFC Executive Board.

#### **Duties**

- (1) It shall offer guidance to Particular Churches in developing a ministry to youth and young adults.
- (2) It shall oversee denominational youth and young adult activities.
- (3) It shall provide training and resources for Particular Churches in equipping them for youth and young adult ministries.
- (4) It shall provide networking between youth and young adult ministries of Particular Churches with the BFC.
- (5) It shall submit an annual written report to the BFC Executive Board.

### **511-1.7 (4) Historical Committee**

#### **Purpose**

To preserve our heritage and to promote the study of the history of the BFC.

#### **Composition and Election**

- (1) It shall be composed of the archivist and eight persons (ministers, elders, or laypersons) elected by its own members, subject to the ratification of the BFC Executive Board.
- (2) They shall be elected for a term of three years in classes as follows:  
Class I - Three persons  
Class II - Three persons  
Class III- Two persons
- (3) Organization: The Committee shall elect annually by and from its membership a chairman and a secretary.

**Duties**

- (1) It shall develop and encourage the study of the history of the denomination.
- (2) It shall maintain denominational archives for the accumulation of materials and memoirs relating to the history of the denomination.
- (3) It shall maintain a website of relevant materials and information for research and reference.
- (4) It shall encourage each Particular Church and mission to maintain a file of important documents relating to the historical development of the local fellowship, and it shall encourage each church or mission to appoint a local archivist to maintain this file.
- (5) It shall appoint an archivist, who shall be responsible for the maintenance and oversight of the archives.
- (6) It shall assist the archivist in the collection of relevant historical materials.
- (7) It shall determine policy and procedure by which the archivist can maintain and supplement the historical material of the denomination.
- (8) It shall oversee a Bible Fellowship Church Historical Society made up of those who purchase annual memberships or receive honorary or gift memberships.
- (9) It shall appoint a coordinator and a treasurer for the Historical Society.
- (10) It shall make an annual report to the Executive Board of the Bible Fellowship Church.

**511-1.7 (5) BFC Life Committee****Purpose**

To promote spiritual growth and fellowship within the Bible Fellowship Church by providing ministry, training, and recreational opportunities within the denomination.

**Composition**

- (1) It shall be composed of individuals who have a heart for the committee's purpose and can provide valuable assistance to the Committee. Each committee member should have the desire and skill set to enable the ministry to accomplish its mission. The members of the Committee shall be members in good standing of a Bible Fellowship Church and shall be nominated by the Committee and ratified by the BFC Executive Board for a three year term before beginning service on the Committee. The number of members on the Committee shall be determined by the Executive Board, with no less than six members and no more than twelve members in equal classes. In order to coordinate and cooperate ministries, one of the Committee members shall be a member of the BFC Executive Board.

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- (2) It shall annually determine which of its members will serve as Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, and Financial Secretary.

**Duties**

- (1) It shall plan for, provide, and promote a Summer Conference program available to both the Bible Fellowship Church and the greater Christian community. The number of weeks, the actual program, and the goals of each week shall be determined by the Committee. Pinebrook Bible Conference shall be the primary venue for events, but other venues may also be considered. The cost for attending BFC Life events should be covered by those who participate, but may be supplemented by funds raised or received by this Committee.
- (2) It shall plan for, provide, and promote specific retreat opportunities for the Bible Fellowship Church. The purpose of these retreats should include spiritual enrichment, biblical knowledge enhancement, and fellowship opportunities. These could include retreats for special interest groups within the Bible Fellowship Church. Pinebrook Bible Conference should be considered as a preferred venue. The cost for attending BFC Life events should be covered by those who participate, but may be supplemented by funds raised or received by this Committee.
- (3) It is authorized to collect, retain, and disburse funds in the execution of their duties. The Financial Secretary shall provide the BFC Executive Board with quarterly financial reports of monies received by and expended by the Committee.
- (4) It may create any sub-committees necessary to carry out its responsibilities.
- (5) It may use various means to promote the events organized and arranged by this Committee.
- (6) It shall coordinate its program goals and events with the BFC Executive Board in order to promote the vision and strategy of the Bible Fellowship Church.
- (7) It shall submit an annual written report to the BFC Executive Board.

**511-1.7 (6) BFC Prayer Committee**

**Purpose**

- (1) To represent a declaration of the BFC's dependence upon God and desire to seek His face
- (2) To collaborate with BFC pastors and other like-minded resources for the purpose of cultivating a culture of prayer within the BFC
- (3) To provide an annual day of prayer for the BFC
- (4) To model how to lead people in public and corporate prayer

### **Composition and Election**

- (1) The BFC Prayer Committee shall be composed of members in good standing of a BFC church.
- (2) The committee shall elect its own members, subject to the ratification of the BFC Executive Board.
- (3) No member of the committee may serve more than two consecutive terms. A member may be elected to a new term after a minimum of one year's time following two consecutive terms.
- (4) The members of the committee shall be elected for a term of three years.
- (5) The committee shall organize itself at the call of the chairman of the previous year, at which time new officers shall be elected.

### **Duties of the Committee**

- (1) It shall plan and conduct an annual Day of Prayer.
- (2) It shall provide publicity and arrange registration for the Day of Prayer.
- (3) It shall receive and disburse funds for the Day of Prayer. The committee shall establish the amount of the registration fee for each attendee.
- (4) It shall provide an annual report of the BFC Prayer Committee to BFC Conference.
- (5) It shall elect officers by and from the committee.
- (6) It shall serve as a resource for BFC pastors and churches.

### **Duties of Officers**

#### **Chairman**

- (1) Must be a minister or elder in a BFC church.
- (2) He shall convene and preside over all meetings of the BFC Prayer Committee.

#### **Secretary**

- (1) (S)He shall keep an accurate record of all meetings of the committee.
- (2) (S)He shall conduct all correspondence for the committee.
- (3) (S)He shall prepare an annual report for BFC Conference.

**511-1.8 Pinebrook Educational Foundation****Section 1 - Establishment and Purpose**

The Pinebrook Educational Foundation was established as a division of the Bible Fellowship Church (“Church”) on October 18, 1994. The purpose of the Pinebrook Educational Foundation is to continue the ministry of Pinebrook Junior College (formerly Berean Bible School), to aid Christian individuals involved in higher education and Christian post-secondary institutions (“Purpose”). Said purpose will be construed broadly enough to include a wide spectrum of aid projects involving Christian post-secondary education, including but not limited to scholarship aid to students and grants to Christian post-secondary institutions.

**Section 2 - Overview**

The Pinebrook Educational Foundation shall receive, invest, and administer funds (“Funds”) in accordance with its stated purpose, and such funds shall be designated for such Purpose, segregated from the general funds of the Church, and administered and distributed by the Pinebrook Educational Foundation’s Board of Directors (“Foundation Board”) in conformity with said Purpose. Emphasis and priority will be given to individuals attending Christian institutions and to higher education endeavors closely related to the BFC. Special consideration shall be given to educational organizations with which the BFC Executive Board has affiliations.

**Section 3 - Control****A. Election and Composition of the Foundation Board**

The Pinebrook Educational Foundation shall be directed by the Foundation Board composed of six members (“Board Members”) elected by the Pinebrook Educational Foundation and subject to ratification by the BFC Executive Board. Board Members shall be elected in three classes and shall serve three-year terms of service. The three classes shall be composed of two Board Members each. Each Board Member shall serve until a successor is duly elected.

**B. Accountability**

The Foundation Board shall be accountable to the BFC Executive Board. The Foundation Board shall administer all activities and investments of Pinebrook Educational Foundation to ensure that all such activities and investments are financially and legally appropriate with respect to the status of Pinebrook Educational Foundation. The Foundation Board shall report semi-annually to the BFC Executive Board and shall report annually to the BFC Conference.

**C. Officers of the Foundation Board**

The Foundation Board shall elect annually from its number a Chairperson, a Vice-Chairperson, and a Secretary/Treasurer.

## **Section 4 - Administration**

### **A. Director/Chairperson of the Pinebrook Educational Foundation**

1. Director of Pinebrook Educational Foundation (“Director”) may be selected by the Foundation Board and ratified by the BFC Executive Board. The position may be paid or unpaid as determined by the BFC Executive Board.
2. The Director shall not be required to be a member of the Foundation Board or the BFC Executive Board. Membership on one of these boards will not, however, disqualify an individual from serving as Director. The Director shall not be an officer of the Pinebrook Educational Foundation.
3. The Director shall be responsible for the orderly conduct of the business of the Pinebrook Educational Foundation. Such duties as administration of the grant and scholarship application process, oversight of all financial activities, investments, administrative procedures, and communication shall be the responsibility of the Director. The Director shall consult with the Foundation Board’s Chairperson regarding general administration matters and with both the Chairperson and Secretary-Treasurer of the Foundation Board regarding financial matters.
4. If a a Director has not been selected by the Foundation Board, the Foundation Board’s Chairperson shall be responsible for the conduct of the business of the Pinebrook Educational Foundation and shall perform the duties identified in paragraph 3 above.

### **B. Foundation Secretary**

1. The Secretary of the Pinebrook Educational Foundation shall be selected by the Foundation Board subject to approval by the BFC Executive Board.
2. The Secretary shall report to and assist the Director (or Chairperson of the Foundation Board if a a Director has not been selected by the Foundation Board).
3. The Secretary shall be a volunteer or a part-time employee until the Pinebrook Educational Foundation activity requires more assistance and additional funding is available for full-time compensation, as shall be determined by the Foundation Board.
4. The compensation (if any) of the Secretary shall be determined by the Foundation Board and shall be subject to approval by the BFC Executive Board.

### **C. Auxiliary Groups**

Support groups previously affiliated with Pinebrook Junior College such as the Alumni Association may be encouraged to continue in existence or to be

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reactivated. The assistance of such support groups may be sought in raising funds and in providing other assistance to the Pinebrook Educational Foundation.

#### **D. Administration of Funds**

1. Pinebrook Educational Foundation Funds shall:
  - (a) be segregated from the general funds of the Church;
  - (b) be separately invested and administered by the Foundation Board; and
  - (c) not be disbursed for any purpose other than the Purpose of the Pinebrook Educational Foundation.
2. A professional investment firm or counselor may be chosen by the Foundation Board to carry out the investment of Pinebrook Educational Foundation Funds. Risk levels and investment criteria shall be determined by the Foundation Board and approved by the BFC Executive Board.
3. The Pinebrook Educational Foundation may be the transferee of funds:
  - (a) existing Pinebrook Junior College endowment funds;
  - (b) donations or bequests to, and annuity arrangements made for the benefit of Pinebrook Junior College (or the Berean Bible School);
  - (c) grants from foundations;
  - (d) proceeds from general and endowment investments; and
  - (e) other sources acceptable with respect to the tax-exempt status of the Church.
4. Funds shall be used to disburse grants, scholarships and/or loans in accordance with the Purpose of Pinebrook Educational Foundation and to pay administrative costs of the Pinebrook Educational Foundation.
  - (a) The Foundation Board shall formulate rules for the administration of all Funds. These shall be subject to review by the BFC Executive Board.
  - (b) Administrative costs shall be paid from the General Fund (as defined in Section 5 herein) subject to the approval of the Foundation Board and review by the BFC Executive Board.

#### **Section 5 - Aid Projects/Designated Accounts**

- A. The Pinebrook Educational Foundation shall be structured to include many types of aid to Christian higher education in accordance with its purpose. Specific programs of aid shall be designated by the Foundation Board as separately administered endowment or current gift “funds” or “accounts” (“Designated Accounts”) within the Foundation.
- B. A donation identified by a donor for the support of a specific Designated Account shall be used to fund such Designated Account. Designated Account Funds shall be expended by the Foundation Board in furtherance of the specific aid project(s) for which the Designated Account has been established.

- C. Undesignated donations shall go to a General Fund from which administrative costs shall be paid and Board directed grants, loans and scholarships shall be made.
- D. Donors shall be encouraged to contribute to Designated Accounts set up as endowments in order to insure a continuous stream of proceeds for the future. However, donations to Designated Accounts which expend non-endowment restricted (“current gift”) funds are also encouraged.
- E. Additionally, sizable initial gifts may be used to establish a Designated Account (as an endowment or current gift fund) of the donor’s choosing, subject to Foundation Board approval.
- F. There shall be compliance with donor limitations and/or restrictions on Funds received from (or donated, bequeathed, etc. to or for the benefit of) Pinebrook Junior College.

## **Section 6 - Miscellaneous Regulations**

### **A. Bylaws**

The Bylaws of the Foundation Board may be amended by majority vote of the total membership of the Foundation Board at a regular or special meeting.

### **B. General**

The Foundation Board shall be empowered to adopt policies and regulations in addition to its Bylaws. Such policies and regulations must be in conformity with the F&O of the BFC and within the rules, decisions, and directives of BFC Conference.

### **C. Quorum**

Four Board Members attending a duly announced meeting of the Foundation Board shall constitute a quorum. Unless otherwise specified, a majority vote shall mean a simple majority of those attending any meeting of the Foundation Board in which there is a quorum.

## **511-2 Nominating Committee**

### **511-2.1 Composition and Election**

- (1) After nominations have been closed for all other elections required by the bylaws, members of the Nominating Committee shall be elected to serve a term of three years.
- (2) No member of the committee shall be permitted to succeed himself.
- (3) It shall be composed of three classes as follows:
  - Class I Two ministers and one layperson
  - Class II One minister and one layperson
  - Class III One minister and one layperson

### **511-2.2 Duties**

- (1) It shall present nominees for election at BFC Conference.
- (2) It shall inform in writing all persons who are not present at BFC Conference of their election to Boards and Committees.

## 511-3 Ministerial Candidate Committee

### 511-3.1 Purpose

The objective of the Ministerial Candidate Committee shall be to provide the BFC with a minister that is called of God, true to the Word, filled with the Holy Spirit, dedicated wholeheartedly to Jesus Christ, and thoroughly furnished unto all good works.

### 511-3.2 Composition and Election

- (1) It shall be composed of seven ordained ministers.
- (2) They shall be elected for a term of three years in classes as follows:
  - Class I     Two ministers
  - Class II    Two ministers
  - Class III   Three ministers

### 511-3.3 Duties

- (1) It shall receive applications from all who offer themselves for service in the BFC.
- (2) It shall take under its supervision the candidates and probationers while in training.
- (3) It shall examine those who offer themselves for service in our Church and determine as far as possible the sincerity and genuineness of their call to the ministry.
- (4) It shall ascertain as far as possible whether the candidates and probationers have the Scriptural qualifications of a minister of the Word of God.
- (5) It shall safeguard the doctrinal purity of the church by exercising vigilance when examining prospective ministers concerning their beliefs and practices, endeavoring to approve only those who are committed without reservation to the authority of the Scriptures and the doctrines and practices of our church as the system of doctrine taught in the Scriptures.
- (6) It shall oversee the Equivalency Training Program.
- (7) It shall license probationers for BFC Conference prior to ordination.
- (8) It shall recommend qualified probationers to the Ministerial Credentials Committee for ordination examination.
- (9) It shall furnish prior to the BFC Conference to the Registrar a list of probationers who are eligible to be members of the BFC Conference.
- (10) It shall submit a written report to BFC Conference.

### 511-3.4 Terms

The terms used to designate the classification of those under the care of this committee shall be **applicant**, **candidate**, and **probationer**.

- (1) An **applicant** is a man who offers himself to this committee for service in the BFC.

- (2) A **candidate** is a man whose application is accepted and who remains under the guidance of this committee.
- (3) A **probationer** eligible for a call is a man who has been approved by this Committee, has passed the examinations required by the Committee, and is eligible to be called through the Rules of Pulpit Supply.
- (4) A probationer eligible for a call becomes a licensed probationer when one of the following occurs:
  - (4.1) he has been called through the Rules of Pulpit Supply to serve in a BFC;
  - (4.2) he has been called through the Rules of Pulpit Supply to serve in one of the denominational departments of the BFC;
  - (4.3) he is serving in a ministry approved by the Ministerial Candidate Committee in consultation with the Ministerial Credentials Committee.

### **511-3.5 Procedure**

The procedure to be followed by a man offering himself for service in the BFC shall be as follows:

- (1) Men who seek to be ordained in the BFC will fill out an application from the Committee.
- (2) The applicant will carry out a program of personal development and training developed in consultation with the Committee.
- (3) The candidate will be examined through a series of tests.
- (4) Upon satisfactory completion of the testing and approval of the Committee, the candidate will be recognized as a probationer eligible for a call and recommended to the Ministerial Relations Committee or BFC departments.
- (5) During the time of working in the BFC or in one of the denominational departments or other ministries, the probationer will be under the jurisdiction of this Committee as well as the department or ministry with which he works.
- (6) At the end of the probationary period, upon approval of this committee, the probationer will be recommended to the Ministerial Credentials Committee. Serving as a candidate and probationer does not guarantee being recommended for ordination examination.

### **511-3.6 Equivalency Training Program**

1. When an Applicant does not have three years of formal theological training, he may apply to the Ministerial Candidate Committee for admission to the Equivalency Training Program (ETP).
2. Applicants shall be accepted into the program as an ETP candidate if their life-limiting situation prohibits enrollment in a formal training program.
3. The Committee shall prepare an individualized plan of study that will qualify the ETP candidate to meet the equivalency of the three years of theological study requirement in 204-2.3 Educational Qualifications (1).

4. The ETP candidate shall be assigned to a Qualified Training Mentor who shall oversee the program of study.
  - (a) The Qualified Training Mentor (QTM) shall test and evaluate an ETP candidate's level of initial equivalence to a three-year theological education.
  - (b) The QTM shall develop an individualized plan for the ETP candidate to meet all the ETP requirements.
  - (c) The plan shall be presented to the Ministerial Candidate Committee for approval.
  - (d) Progress reports of the ETP candidate's development shall be submitted to the Ministerial Candidate Committee by the QTM.
  - (e) Upon satisfactory completion of the plan, the QTM shall recommend the ETP candidate to the Ministerial Candidate Committee for certification of his equivalency.

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## 511-4 Ministerial Credentials Committee

### 511-4.1 Composition and Election

- (1) The Ministerial Credentials Committee shall be composed of seven ordained ministers.
- (2) They shall be elected for a term of three years in classes as follows:

Class I	Two Ordained Ministers
Class II	Two Ordained Ministers
Class III	Three Ordained Ministers

### 511-4.2 Duties

- (1) It shall examine all candidates for ordination. This examination shall take place at least one month prior to BFC Conference.
- (2) It shall recommend candidates for ordination to BFC Conference. It shall recommend the place and time for the Ordination Service.
- (3) It shall have the oversight of all men who hold credentials with BFC Conference.
- (4) It shall annually send a F&O questionnaire to all ordained ministers of the BFC. All those desiring to retain credentials with the BFC must return the signed questionnaire by December 31. The F&O questionnaire shall contain the following:

**Do you subscribe, without reservation, to the Articles of Faith of the BFC? (yes or no)**

**If you have any reservations about any Article of Faith of the BFC, state them specifically.**

**Will you endeavor to follow the Rules of Order of the BFC? (yes or no)**

**If you desire to retain credentials with the BFC, this questionnaire must be returned by December 31. Failure to do so may result in withdrawal of your credentials.**

(4.1) No minister shall be allowed to hold credentials in the Bible Fellowship Church who does not subscribe to our Articles of Faith and endeavor to follow the Rules of Order except as allowed by the Ministerial Credentials Committee. Those who are allowed to hold reservations must teach in accordance with the Articles of Faith.

(4.2) No minister shall be allowed to hold credentials in the Bible Fellowship Church who does not attend a BFC church where possible as determined by the Ministerial Credentials Committee. A written request for an exception can be submitted, which will be reviewed and may be granted by the Ministerial Credentials Committee.

- (5) It shall process and approve all applications for the military chaplaincy, and its Chairman, or another BFC ordained minister other than the Chairman appointed by and under the authority of the Ministerial Credentials Committee, shall be the endorser of the BFC to the General Commission on Chaplains and Armed Forces Personnel.
- (6) It shall deal with charges brought against any ordained minister. The BFC Conference delegates to the Ministerial Credentials Committee the right to authoritatively interpret the Faith & Order as it relates to ordained men. Charges brought against any minister of the BFC must be in writing and presented to the Ministerial Credentials Committee. It shall request that the accused minister be present during the hearing of the case. If these charges involve departure from any doctrine or practice of the BFC, or any improper conduct, a thorough investigation shall be made. If the charge is of sufficient magnitude in the judgment of the Ministerial Credentials Committee, the accused minister may temporarily be suspended by the Committee and his name withheld from the Eligibility List for Pulpit Supply. A report of this action, with appropriate recommendations for disposition of the case, shall be made to the Conference Judicatory. The accused party shall have the right of appeal to the Conference Judicatory. If appeal is made to the Conference Judicatory by the accused minister, his name shall remain on the Eligibility List until the Conference Judicatory has passed judgment on the case.
- (7) It shall furnish to BFC Conference Registrar a list of the ordained ministers who are eligible to be members of BFC Conference and those who shall be advisory members of BFC Conference. This list shall be submitted annually prior to BFC Conference.
- (8) It shall receive all requests from those seeking retirement from ministry in the BFC. It shall set the effective date of the retirement, change the status of the minister on the conference records, and notify the BFC Executive Board, the Beneficiary Society and the Conference Pastor of the effective date of retirement.
- (9) It shall submit a report to BFC Conference.

#### **511-4.3 Categories of Ministry**

All ordained men who hold Ordination Credentials with the BFC shall be members in good standing in a Particular BFC and shall subscribe annually to the F&O.

The categories of ministry are as follows:

- (1) **Ordained Ministers Working Under the Direction of the BFC**
- (2) **Ordained Ministers Working Under the Direction of the Board of Missions of the BFC**

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(3) **Ordained Ministers Working in Chaplaincy Ministries Under the Sponsorship of the BFC.** The BFC qualifies to have men with its ministerial credentials to serve under the U.S. Armed Forces Chaplains Board as well as other chaplain ministries such as prison and hospital. Applications for such ministries shall be made through the Ministerial Credentials Committee. Chaplains may vote at the BFC Conference if approved by the Ministerial Credentials Committee.

(4) **Ordained Ministers Working in Other Christian Ministries.** An ordained minister of the BFC, consistent with his ordination vows and without prejudice to his ministerial standing, may properly, under certain circumstances and conditions, and approved by the Ministerial Credentials Committee, labor in organizations other than those of the BFC. He may vote at the BFC Conference if approved by the Ministerial Credentials Committee.

The following rules must be adhered to in such cases: Such labor shall not require the performance of functions inconsistent with his ordination vows required of ministers and other provisions of the F & O. They shall not be regarded as under the sole jurisdiction of the church in which they serve. Such a church must recognize that those who hold credentials with the BFC are under its discipline in their faith and life.

(5) **Ordained Ministers in Retirement or on Permanent Disability**

These are men who have retired under the provisions of 501-5 or men who are on permanent disability as determined by the Ministerial Credentials Committee (see definition below). A minister must serve a minimum of five years (cumulative) as an ordained minister in the BFC and be under the care of the Ministerial Credentials Committee at retirement or when they go on permanent disability in order to be a member of BFC Conference as a “Minister in Retirement or on Permanent Disability.” He must also be involved in the ministry of the BFC where possible as determined by the Ministerial Credentials Committee in order to be a voting member of the BFC Conference.

Pastors who are permanently disabled, but too young for retirement, are men who have a physical or mental handicap that is medically determinable and would prevent a man from performing his duties as a pastor in the Bible Fellowship Church. This disability would be determined by the Ministerial Credentials Committee in consultation with the pastor’s primary physician.

(6) **Ordained Ministers Between Calls.** When a minister leaves his church or ministry without a call to another BFC, he may be placed in either the “Between Calls” or “Leave of Absence” category, as determined by the

Ministerial Credentials Committee. A Minister who is in the “Between Calls” category is one who is presently seeking a call from a BFC. He may remain in this category for a maximum of two years. A written request for an extension will be reviewed and may be granted by the Ministerial Credentials Committee.

- (7) **Ordained Ministers on Leave of Absence.** A minister who is in the “Leave of Absence” category is not currently open to receiving a call from a BFC. He may remain in this category for a maximum of two years. A written request for an extension will be reviewed and may be granted by the Ministerial Credentials Committee. The combination of “Leave of Absence” and “Between Calls” in any consecutive period shall not exceed five years total, except under unusual circumstances as determined by the Ministerial Credentials Committee.
- (8) **Ordained Inactive Ministers.** A minister who has exhausted his stay in the “Between Calls” and/or “Leave of Absence” categories will be placed in the “Ordained Inactive Ministers” category. He may remain in this category for a period not to exceed ten years, of which time spent in the “Between Calls” and/or “Leave of Absence” categories is counted. At the end of ten years, he loses his credentials with the BFC. In this case, or in any situation where a man loses his credentials, if he wishes to return to active ministry within the BFC, he must reapply to the Ministerial Credentials Committee.
- (9) **Ordained Ministers Working in Non-BFC Churches.** An ordained minister of the BFC, consistent with his ordination vows and without prejudice to his ministerial standing, may properly, under certain circumstances and conditions, and approved by the Ministerial Credentials Committee, labor in churches other than those of the BFC. He may remain in this category for a period not to exceed ten years. A written request can be submitted each year for an extension which will be reviewed and may be granted by the Ministerial Credentials Committee.

## **511-5 Ministerial Relations Committee**

### **511-5.1 Purpose**

The purpose of the Ministerial Relations Committee is to foster a healthy relationship between pastors and churches, to help to resolve problems in the pastoral relationship, and to assist churches in calling pastors.

### **511-5.2 Composition and Election**

- (1) The Board shall be composed of four ordained ministers who have served or are serving as pastors and three elders.
- (2) They shall be elected for a term of three years in classes as follows:
  - Class I     One minister and one elder
  - Class II    Two ministers and one elder
  - Class III   One minister and one elder

### **511-5.3 Duties**

- (1) The committee shall provide counsel and advice to churches and pastors upon their invitation. The committee may be invited to assist a church in this way upon request of the Board of Elders, the Pastoral Relations Committee of the church, an individual Elder or Elders, or the Pastor.
- (2) The committee may initiate involvement and call a meeting with the Pastor, Pastoral Relations Committee, or Board of Elders if the committee concludes there are matters threatening the health of the pastoral relationship which are not being adequately addressed by the Particular Church. This request for a meeting shall be in writing, stating the reasons that the Ministerial Relations Committee has for requesting it.
- (3) The committee shall seek to resolve difficulties in the pastoral relationship whether they have been invited or have initiated involvement in the Particular Church. This involvement may take the form of meetings with the Pastor, Elders or Members, with the Pastoral Relations Committee, with the Board of Elders, or with the Congregation.
- (4) The committee shall oversee the resignation of a pastor according to our rules.
- (5) The committee shall meet with the Elders and/or Pastoral Search Committee with respect to temporary pulpit supply, the pastoral search process, and the calling of a pastor. It shall oversee the calling of a pastor according to our rules.
- (6) The committee shall refer any problems concerning pastoral relationships that it cannot resolve to BFC Conference for final resolution. This referral may or may not have recommendations concerning resolution.
- (7) The committee shall submit a report to BFC Conference, including recommendations concerning compensation for pastors called under our rules.

### **511-5.4 Conference Pastor**

#### **Election**

- (1) The Conference Pastor shall be an ordained minister of the Bible Fellowship Church. He may, at the discretion of the Ministerial Relations Committee, serve either full-time or part-time.
- (2) He shall be elected for a three-year term by the Ministerial Relations Committee and his election shall be ratified by the BFC Conference. He shall not be a member of the Ministerial Relations Committee but shall serve under the direction of the committee, where full authority shall reside.

#### **Duties**

- (1) He shall, in the performance of his duties, work according to policies and directives of the Ministerial Relations Committee.
- (2) He shall, as requested by the committee, represent the Ministerial Relations Committee in its dealings with pastors and churches.
- (3) He shall be a pastor to the pastors in order to encourage the men and to maintain a harmonious relationship between each church and pastor.
- (4) He may meet with boards of elders and pastoral search committees to aid them in their search for a pastor. He shall:
  - (4.1) Be knowledgeable of men available as potential candidates, including men newly approved as probationers by the Ministerial Candidate Committee.
  - (4.2) Communicate to potential candidates information on open churches.
  - (4.3) Keep pastoral search information current.
- (5) He shall encourage ongoing ministry training for pastors, including regional ministeriums for pastors and wives.
- (6) He shall be available as a resource to local pastoral relations committees in the fulfillment of their duties.
- (7) He shall be available to meet with boards of elders for consultation, evaluation, and advice.

## **Article 512 BFC Departments**

### **512-1 BFC Departments**

**512-1.1** The BFC, both through its particular churches and the BFC Conference, may enter into joint endeavors to further the cause of Christ in the world. Concerns such as church-planting and cross-cultural missions, education and publication, camps and conferences are addressed more effectively by working together than by working alone.

**512-1.2** In order to work together in these joint endeavors, the BFC Conference shall establish departments. The departments shall perform as the servants of the Bible Fellowship Church, shall operate in accordance with the guidelines of the BFC Conference, and shall be directly accountable to the BFC Executive Board.

**512-1.3** Each department shall be headed by a department director. The department director is appointed by the BFC Executive Board, who shall implement and oversee a program which will advance the goals for the department. The department director is overseen by the BFC Executive Director.

**512-1.4** Each department is served by a department board, which shall assist the department director in achieving the goals of the department. The department board is elected internally, subject to the ratification of the BFC Executive Board. The number and terms of office for each department board is established by its bylaws.

**512-1.5** Each department shall administer its own finances in conformity with policy approved by BFC Conference. Budgeting, fund-raising, and auditing will be overseen by the BFC Executive Board. All gift annuities established by the departments shall be approved by the BFC Executive Board and reported annually.

**512-1.6** All funds administered by the departments are held in trust for the BFC Conference. The Bible Fellowship Church denomination takes title to all acquired real estate used by the departments.

**512-1.7** Each department shall submit an annual written report to the BFC Executive Board, which will in turn report annually to the BFC Conference on the status of each department.

## **512-2 Board of Church Extension**

The Board of Church Extension governs Church Extension Ministries, which consists of the Board of Church Extension, the Executive Director of Church Extension Ministries, church planters serving under the direction of the Board, all other employees of the Board, and mission churches under jurisdiction of the Board.

### **512-2.1 Purpose**

Church Extension Ministries exists to expand the Bible Fellowship Church by planting new churches and incorporating existing (non-BFC) churches.

New churches are planted by evangelizing in communities where Bible Fellowship Churches do not exist, forming and nurturing them to maturity.

Existing churches desiring to affiliate with the Bible Fellowship Church will meet with Church Extension Ministries to determine the church's doctrinal and organizational compatibility and its future viability. If approval is granted, the church would come under the care of Church Extension Ministries until recommendation can be made that it be presented for recognition as a particular church to the BFC Conference.

### **512-2.2 Composition and Election**

- (1) The Board of Church Extension will be composed of the Director of Church Extension Ministries, and selected ministers and members of BFC churches.
- (2) The Director shall be appointed by the BFC Executive Board.
- (3) The Board of Church Extension will select members to serve on the board who have a heart for Church Extension Ministries and can provide valuable assistance to the board. The number of members will be determined by the Director after consultation with the BFC Executive Board. Members will be presented to the BFC Executive Board for ratification to a three year term of office before beginning service on the board. All members must be members in good standing of a BFC.

### **512-2.3 Duties**

- (1) It shall have authority to establish and oversee the development of mission churches.
- (2) It shall issue calls to church planters credentialed by the BFC.
- (3) It shall have authority to hire church planters not credentialed by the BFC, but they must be under the care of the Ministerial Candidate Committee and be seeking credentials in the BFC. In such cases, a contract for ministry shall be established.
- (4) It shall function as a Board of Elders in behalf of mission churches.

- (5) It shall receive applications for admission to BFC Conference from daughter churches or congregations outside the BFC.
- (6) It shall require all mission churches to adhere to the F&O.
- (7) It shall receive and disburse monies designated for Church Extension Ministries.
- (8) It shall make recommendations to the BFC Executive Board on the approval and consummation of legal transactions for the purchase of real estate and/or the erection of buildings for purposes of Church Extension Ministries.
- (9) It shall make recommendations to BFC Conference on the admission of mission churches and daughter churches to membership in BFC Conference.
- (10) It shall make a written report of its activities to the BFC Executive Board.
- (11) It shall promote the program of Church Extension Ministries and develop a broadening financial base for its ministry.

**512-2.4 Director of Church Extension Ministries**

The Director of Church Extension Ministries shall be an ordained minister of the BFC. He shall, by virtue of his office, be a member of the Board of Church Extension and shall be accountable to the BFC Executive Board.

**512-2.5 Rules Relative to the Recognition of Churches**

- (1) Any congregation that has a relationship with the BFC but has not yet met the standards for recognition as a particular church shall be called a mission church (see §504-2).
- (2) When, in the opinion of the Board of Church Extension, a mission church is prepared for recognition, the Board shall recommend to BFC Conference that this mission church be recognized as a Particular Church and that it be admitted to the membership of BFC Conference. This recognition will be by a majority vote of BFC Conference.
- (3) Churches which have been recognized by the BFC Conference are no longer under the jurisdiction of the Board of Church Extension and are no longer eligible for financial aid from the Board. Churches recognized by the BFC Conference shall not again come under the jurisdiction of the Board of Church Extension but may seek counsel from the Ministerial Relations Committee and assistance from the Board of Church Health.

## **512-3 Board of Missions**

### **512-3.1 Purpose**

The Board of Missions is delegated by BFC Conference to direct and promote the missions program of the BFC, and to select, oversee, and care for its missionaries who serve in foreign countries and in the United States of America in ministries other than Bible Fellowship Churches and Departments, except where cooperative ventures in cross-cultural church planting have been developed with the Board of Church Extension.

### **512-3.2 Composition and Election**

- (1) The Board of Missions shall be composed of the Director of Missions, the Financial Secretary, and selected ministers and members of BFC Churches.
- (2) The Director shall be appointed by the BFC Executive Board.
- (3) The Financial Secretary shall be selected by the Board of Missions in consultation with and subject to ratification of the BFC Executive Board.
- (4) The Board of Missions will select members to serve on the board who have a heart for missions and can provide valuable assistance to the board. The number of members will be determined by the Director after consultation with the BFC Executive Board. Members will be presented to the BFC Executive Board for ratification to a three-year term of office before beginning service on the board. All members must be members in good standing of a BFC church.
- (5) The Chairman and Vice Chairman (who both must be either ordained ministers or elders), Secretary, and Treasurer of the Board of Missions shall be elected annually by and from the Board of Missions at its organizational meeting. The Director is not eligible to serve in these offices. The Officers of the Board and the Director shall comprise the Executive Committee of the Board of Missions.

### **512.3.3 Duties of the Board of Missions**

- (1) To formulate objectives and policies for the missions program of the BFC as directed by BFC Executive Board.
- (2) To interview and examine all prospective candidates for missionary service and to make decisions pertaining to approval and support of individuals who are committed to follow the F&O of the BFC.
- (3) To cooperate with the elders of a Particular Church, the Ministerial Credentials Committee and the Ministerial Candidate Committee (for men holding ordination or license within the BFC) and sending agency, in the oversight and spiritual care of the missionaries and appointees serving under the direction of the Board of Missions.

- (4) To maintain, within the missions program of the BFC, standards compatible with the F&O of the BFC.
- (5) To supervise and care for financial and administrative matters pertaining to the Board of Missions. It shall solicit, receive, safeguard, and disburse funds related to its mission program.
- (6) To promote interest and involvement in missions in conjunction with the Particular Churches (e.g., assisting Missions Committees and missionary organizations within the local church).
- (7) To submit a written report to the BFC Executive Board.
- (8) To appoint committees as needed for regional and Conference-Wide missionary meetings and/or events.

#### **512.3.4 Duties of the Board Officers**

- (1) Chairman. He shall be responsible to convene and preside over meetings and to initiate implementation of policies and decisions made by the Board of Missions and to carry out the responsibilities as outlined in the Policy Handbook of this Board.
- (2) Vice-Chairman. He shall fulfill the duties of the Chairman in the absence of the Chairman.
- (3) Director. He shall be responsible under the supervision of the Executive Board for the development of vision, strategy and mobilization for world evangelization among Bible Fellowship Churches and to carry out the responsibilities as outlined in the Policy Handbook of this Board.
- (4) Financial Secretary. Under the Director and the BFC Executive Board, he shall be responsible for overseeing monies received, disbursed, and invested, and to circulate appropriate statements and other reports as directed by the BFC Executive Board.

#### **512-3.5 Contributions**

All financial contributions shall be made payable to “BFC Board of Missions” and sent to the Board of Missions.

## **512-4 Board of Church Health**

### **512-4.1 Purpose**

The Board of Church Health serves the Bible Fellowship Church by promoting strong Church Health. It does this by helping Particular Churches evaluate the health of their own church, by helping new Particular Churches develop healthy ministries, and by assisting struggling churches (both Particular Churches and Church Plants as requested) to regain a healthy condition.

### **512-4.2 Composition and Election**

- (1) The Board of Church Health will be composed of the Director of the Board of Church Health, and selected ministers and members of the Bible Fellowship Church.
- (2) The Director shall be appointed by the BFC Executive Board.
- (3) The Board of Church Health will select members to serve on the board who have a heart for healthy churches and can provide valuable assistance to the Board. The number of members will be determined by the Director after consultation with the BFC Executive Board. Members will be presented to the BFC Executive Board for ratification to a three year term of office before beginning service on the board. All board members must presently be serving or have served as a credentialed pastor or elder within the Bible Fellowship Church.

### **512-4.3 Duties**

- (1) The Board of Church Health shall monitor the health of Particular Churches.
- (2) It shall oversee the compilation of an annual BFC statistical report of the churches which will assist them in this work.
- (3) It shall examine the minutes of congregational meetings of Particular Churches. It shall ensure that Particular Churches are conducting meetings in conformity with the BFC Faith & Order. It shall determine annually, by use of the Suggested Format for Congregational Meetings (see § 403-3), the adequacy of the minutes of each Particular Church. It shall notify any Particular Church of inadequacies found in the minutes, along with suggested corrective measures.
- (4) It shall provide counsel and resources for the self-assessment of the health of Particular Churches.
- (5) It shall provide a list of recommended consultants to Particular Churches needing assistance in moving toward stronger church health.
- (6) It shall offer training and seminars to promote church health.
- (7) It may recommend to the BFC Executive Board that a Particular Church

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be placed under the supervisory care of the Board of Church Health. When a Particular Church is under the supervisory care of the Board of Church Health, the Director has the right to appoint interim elders to the church. By simple majority, the Executive Board in this case may place the Particular Church under the supervisory care of the Board of Church Health. If a Particular Church resists being placed under the supervisory care of the Board of Church Health, the Executive Board will recommend its placement to the BFC Conference for its consideration. This action by BFC Conference shall be by a simple majority.

- (8) A Particular Church is removed from the supervisory care of the Board of Church Health by a simple majority vote of the BFC Conference.
- (9) It shall inform the Ministerial Relations Committee if a matter threatening the pastoral relationship becomes evident at a Particular Church receiving Board of Church Health assistance and shall assist a Particular Church at the request of the Ministerial Relations Committee.
- (10) It shall, in cooperation with the BFC Executive Board, assist Particular Churches to close when necessary.
- (11) It shall provide a report on the closing of a Particular Church to BFC Conference.
- (12) In the event of a church closing it shall consult with the Director of Church Extension Ministries regarding the feasibility of planting a new church in the same area.
- (13) It shall develop sources of financial assistance for Particular Churches who cannot afford church health resources.
- (14) It shall receive and disburse monies designated for the Board of Church Health.
- (15) It shall work in cooperation with the Training and Education Committee to provide Pastoral Internships at Churches under the care of the Board of Church Health or when requested by a Particular Church or Church Extension Ministries, and shall oversee the financial arrangements for the Pastoral Internship.
- (16) It shall make a written report of its activities to the BFC Executive Board.

#### **512-4.4 Church Health Director**

The Church Health Director shall be an ordained minister of the Bible Fellowship Church. He shall, by virtue of his office, be a member of the Board of Church Health and shall be appointed by and accountable to the BFC Executive Board. He may serve in either a full-time or part-time capacity.

**Duties**

- (1) He shall, in the performance of his duties, work under the direction of the BFC Executive Director in accordance with the policies and directives of the Board of Church Health.
- (2) He shall represent the Board of Church Health in its dealings with pastors, elders, and churches.
- (3) He shall oversee the Pastoral Internships under the care of the Board of Church Health.
- (4) He shall be available as a resource to local churches regarding Church Health.
- (5) He shall be available to meet with pastors, boards of elders, and congregations for consultation, evaluation, exhortation, and advice.
- (6) He shall give a full report to the Board of Church Health at each of its meetings, and report to the BFC Executive Board as requested.

## **512-5 Board of Victory Valley**

### **512-5.1 Composition and Election**

- (1) The Board is composed of a Director and other members.
- (2) The Director shall be appointed by the BFC Executive Board.
- (3) The Victory Valley Board will select members to serve on the board who have a heart for Victory Valley Camp and can provide valuable assistance to the board. The number of members will be determined by the Director after consultation with the BFC Executive Board. Members will be presented to the BFC Executive Board for ratification to a three year term of office before beginning service on the board. Because of the various ministries of Victory Valley Camp, the Board shall be composed of persons, two-thirds of whom are members in good standing of a BFC. The remaining persons must be in sympathy with the Articles of Faith and be members in good standing of Bible-believing churches.

### **512-5.2 Duties**

- (1) It shall formulate objectives and policy for the camp.
- (2) It shall plan the year-round camp program.
- (3) It shall develop and maintain the site of the camp.
- (4) It shall formulate and maintain the standards of the camp.
- (5) Along with the Director it shall secure and provide for the training of the camp staff.
- (6) It shall supervise the financial and business matters of the camp.
- (7) It shall promote the camp to the public.
- (8) It shall evaluate the camp and its program.
- (9) It shall submit an annual written report to the BFC Executive Board.



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## **Article 513 Miscellaneous Bylaws of BFC Conference**

### **513-1 Yearbook**

- (1) The Secretary of BFC Conference shall be editor of the Yearbook, in which the official minutes of BFC Conference shall be published.
- (2) The Yearbook shall contain the annual reports of boards and committees.
- (3) If a pastor or missionary dies during the year, a photograph honoring the pastor or missionary's ministry shall be inserted in the Yearbook in the next year.
- (4) If a church or parsonage is built or purchased during the year, a photograph of it shall be taken and a picture inserted in the Yearbook in the next year.

### **513-2 Past Minutes of Boards and Committees**

The past minutes of BFC Conference boards and committees shall be deposited for storage and preservation in the denominational archives.



## **600 Regionalization**

### **600-1 Purpose**

The purpose of regionalization is to strengthen the corporate testimony of the BFC through the development of groups of sister churches within geographic regions. Regional groups are not legislative bodies, but gatherings of sister churches for fellowship, prayer, and joint endeavors.

### **600-2 Organization**

The Executive Board shall organize all of the BFC churches and missions into regions, subject to the approval of BFC Conference, and shall list the regions each year in the Yearbook. This organization shall take place as often as necessary.

### **600-3 Duties**

- (1) The pastors of each region shall endeavor to meet for prayer and fellowship on a regular basis.
- (2) The churches of each region shall endeavor to work together on projects of common interest for the purpose of worship, fellowship, discipleship, evangelism, diaconal service, missions and evangelistic church planting.

# **Part III**

# **Amendments**

## **700 Amendments to the Faith & Order**

### **701 Amendments to the Articles of Faith**

**701-1** BFC Conference may propose to the churches amendments or changes in the Articles of Faith of the BFC by a two-thirds majority of those voting.

**701-2** After the approval of a first reading of the proposed change, the pastor and delegate of each Particular Church shall be responsible to inform their Board of Elders of the proposed change.

**701-3** The Board of Elders of each church shall vote on the proposed change, and an affirmative vote by a majority of the total number of elders shall be required for approval.

**701-4** Before BFC Conference can consider a second reading of the proposed amendment of change in the Articles of Faith, approval of the proposed change must be reported within 24 months to the Secretary of BFC Conference by the Board of Elders of at least two-thirds of the churches.

**701-5** The amendment will be declared to be in effect when approved by two-thirds majority of those voting on a second reading of the amendment at any one of the three succeeding BFC Conferences.

### **702 Amendments to the Principles of Order**

**702-1** Amendments to the Principles of Order may be proposed to the churches by a two-thirds majority of those voting at BFC Conference.

**702-2** After the approval of a first reading of the proposed change, the pastor and delegate of each Particular Church shall be responsible to inform their Board of Elders of the proposed change.

**702-3** The amendment will be declared to be in effect when approved by two-thirds majority of those voting on a second reading of the amendment at any one of the three succeeding BFC Conferences.

**702-4** Failure to consider the amendment for second reading at any one of the three succeeding BFC Conferences requires resubmission for consideration as first reading.

### **703 General Rules on Amendments**

**703-1** If an amendment receives the votes of a two-thirds majority at first reading but receives only a simple majority vote at second reading, it may be resubmitted at the following BFC Conference to be reconsidered for second reading.

**703-2** If the amendment is not resubmitted at the next BFC Conference, or if it fails again to receive the votes of a two-third majority, it is lost. Any resubmission must be considered a first reading.

**704 Special Rules on Amendments**

**704-1** A special rule is an enactment of BFC Conference limited to one year of application.

**704-2** It may not violate the F&O.

**704-3** It may be reenacted on an annual basis.

**704-4** It may be placed in the F&O by simple majority vote of BFC Conference after being enacted at three successive sessions of BFC Conference.

# **Part IV**

# **Resources**

## **Beneficiary Society**

**Preamble** - The Beneficiary Society of the Bible Fellowship Church is a mutual aid society of the ordained and/or licensed ministers engaged in the ministries of the BFC. We seek to aid one another in the time of death or when disability may cause one of our brethren to be laid aside. This aid is not only for the minister but extends to his family as well. We suggest that every minister and his wife read the rules and regulations and become aware of their responsibilities and benefits.

### **Organization**

- (1) The Beneficiary Society shall meet at least once a year to transact business relative to the Society. This meeting shall be held at the time of BFC Conference.
- (2) The annual report and the financial report shall be submitted at this meeting.
- (3) At this annual meeting officers shall be elected by and from the members of the Society. They shall be elected for terms of three years. These terms shall be staggered so normally one officer is elected each year. The elected officers shall be privileged to organize as chairman, secretary and treasurer.
- (4) The accounts of the treasurer shall be submitted for review by the BFC Executive Board prior to BFC Conference.
- (5) The officers of the Beneficiary Society shall be authorized to invest the funds of the Beneficiary Society according to the BFC investment policy.
- (6) The officers shall be authorized to conduct all necessary business of the Society throughout the year.
- (7) All three officers' names shall be on record at the financial institutions chosen by the officers. The treasurer is authorized to carry out investments and arrange with financial institutions for financial transactions when benefits for members of the society are necessary. If the treasurer is unable to carry out his duties, the two remaining officers together are authorized to engage in financial transactions with the financial institutions. Benefits for members are paid by check.

### **Rules and Regulations**

**Membership.** On becoming licensed as a probationer in the ministry of the BFC, one shall become a member of the Beneficiary Society beginning at the succeeding BFC Conference, at which time one shall be responsible to pay into the fund. Every probationer/ordained man licensed or ordained by the BFC must be a member of the Beneficiary Society of the BFC, except those excluded in the next paragraph.

Only active and retired ministers of the BFC can continue to be part of the Society. Ministers of the BFC who are working with other Christian ministries and inactive ministers are not members of the Beneficiary Society and are not eligible for benefits from the fund.

**Dues.** The dues of all members of the Beneficiary Society shall be set at the annual meeting and shall be paid at BFC Conference. Dues may be paid in two installments: ½ due at BFC Conference and the remaining ½ due by November 1. If dues are not paid within thirty days after the due date, the pastor and his family are disqualified from being eligible to receive benefits until all unpaid dues are paid.

Ministers receiving Ministers' Retirement Fund benefits, ministers on disability, and ministers who have retired at age 65 or later are members of the Society but are exempt from dues. Members who continue on active service are exempt from dues after they have paid dues for forty years. Ministers over age 65 who choose to continue to serve as pastors or under ministries of the BFC must pay dues until they reach the age of 72 or have paid dues for forty years. Ministers who retire before age 65 are required to pay dues until age 65.

**Benefits.** Each member of the Society is eligible for death benefits for himself, his wife and his children. Each child is included until he or she reaches the age of nineteen. If a pastor-member of the Beneficiary Society is called home to be with the Lord, his children are included until their nineteenth birthday. The widow of a deceased member shall not be eligible if she remarries. If a minister marries after he retires, his wife is not eligible for benefits.

These benefits, as recommended by the officers of the Society, are determined by the members of the Society at their annual meeting. Benefits are subject to annual review.

A member must pay into the Beneficiary Society Fund for at least 10 years to receive full benefits. If a member pays into the fund less than 10 years the benefits are as follows:

1-4 years – 1/4 of the prescribed benefits

5-9 years – 1/2 of the prescribed benefits

**Miscellaneous Rules.** The term of office for officers elected or appointed to this Society shall be for the term designated by our rules for that office or until successors are elected.

Once a member leaves the active ministry of the BFC (except for retirement or disability under the Conference rules and regulations), he is no longer a member of the society. This is a mutual aid society and there are no refunds.

If a man has paid into the Beneficiary Society Fund for 30 or more years and leaves the ministry of the BFC to labor in a full-time ministry with some other Christian organization, he may, if he desires, continue as a member of the Society by making the regular yearly payments to the fund.

If a retired or disabled man 65 years or older chooses to forfeit his potential benefits, he should contact the Beneficiary Society and declare in writing his desire to remove his name from the Society and forgo any future benefits. His gratuitous gesture will remain anonymous to the members of the Society (except for the officers) and a letter of appreciation will be sent by the Secretary to the man thanking him for blessing the Society with the funds paid by him during his time as a member of the Beneficiary Society. This act of kindness enables the Society to retain its fiscal solvency further into the future.

## **Ministerial Convention**

### **Purpose**

- (1) To provide an annual continuing educational experience for the improvement of ministerial skills of pastors in the BFC
- (2) To provide a time of spiritual renewal for Bible Fellowship pastors and their wives
- (3) To promote fellowship, familiarity, and unity among the pastors of the BFC and their wives
- (4) To provide a forum for study and discussion of subjects of mutual interest directly relevant to the needs of ministry within the BFC
- (5) To provide a time for the physical and emotional refreshment of pastors and their wives

### **Composition and Election**

- (1) The Ministerial Convention Committee shall be composed of six men who are ordained ministers or probationers in the BFC.
- (2) The members of the committee shall be elected at an annual business meeting during the Ministerial Convention by the ordained ministers and probationers in attendance.
- (3) The members of the committee shall be elected for a term of three years in classes as follows:

Class I	Two Pastors
Class II	Two Pastors
Class III	Two Pastors
- (4) No member of the committee may be elected to consecutive terms.
- (5) The committee shall organize itself at the call of the chairman of the previous year prior to the conclusion of the Ministerial Convention, at which time officers shall be elected.

### **Duties of the Committee**

- (1) It shall plan and conduct an annual Ministerial Convention.
- (2) It shall work in cooperation with the Ministers' Wives' Fellowship in planning for the Ministerial Convention.
- (3) It shall provide publicity and arrange registration for the Ministerial Convention.
- (4) It shall receive and disburse funds for the Ministerial Convention. The committee shall establish the amount of the registration fee for each pastor and wife. The committee shall receive the allowance for the convention provided in the Administrative Budget. The committee shall return any excess funds to the Treasurer of the BFC Executive Board.

- (5) It shall conduct an annual business meeting during the Ministerial Convention for the election of committee members and for the consideration of any recommendations from those who attend the Convention.
- (6) It shall report at each Ministerial Convention the program for the Convention of the succeeding year.
- (7) It shall provide an annual report on the Ministerial Convention to BFC Conference.
- (8) It shall elect officers by and from the committee.

### **Duties of Officers**

#### **Chairman**

- (1) He shall convene and preside over all meetings of the Ministerial Convention Committee.
- (2) He shall convene and preside over meetings and sessions of the Ministerial Convention.

#### **Vice-Chairman**

- (1) He shall serve in the absence of the chairman.

#### **Secretary**

- (1) He shall keep an accurate record of all meetings of the committee.
- (2) He shall conduct all correspondence for the committee.
- (3) He shall prepare an annual report for BFC Conference.

#### **Treasurer**

- (1) He shall be in charge of registration for the Convention.
- (2) He shall see that all expenses are paid.
- (3) He shall provide a financial report for the report to BFC Conference.

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## History of the Bible Fellowship Church

### A Fellowship of Evangelical Mennonite Revivalists

Seven Mennonite revivalists, under pressure from their Bishops to give up their style of evangelism, huddled at a farm house in Milford Township, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania. It was Friday, September 24, 1858, just two weeks before the next high council. Should they acquiesce to restrictions upon the freedom of expression they enjoyed in their revival and prayer meetings? No, they would not. And so they established the **Evangelische Mennoniten Gemeinschaft** (Evangelical Mennonite Society). In their new fellowship which would remain Mennonite in doctrine, they would continue enthusiastic evangelism. Within two weeks all seven--Elder William Gehman, Bishop William N. Shelly, Preachers David Henning, and Henry Diehl, and Deacons David Gehman, Joseph Schneider and Jacob Gottschall--were outside the New Mennonite Association (now the General Conference Mennonite Church). One year later, the first Tuesday in November 1859, they held their first semi-annual Preachers Conference in the Evangelical Mennonite Meeting House in Haycock Township, Bucks County. Eleven days later they dedicated a new meeting house in Upper Milford Township, Lehigh County. Thus began the Bible Fellowship Church.

**The prayer meeting crisis.** The crisis which led to this new fellowship of Mennonite revivalists had erupted in the Upper Milford Mennonite Meeting House, "number two." **Nummer zwee**, as the congregation was called in the local dialect, was one of the new progressive congregations which had come out of the Franconia Conference of the (Old) Mennonite Church in 1847. John H. Oberholtzer, Bishop of the Swamp Mennonite Congregation, had resisted the pressure to wear the traditional unrolled coat collar. He also urged the Conference to allow written minutes and a constitution (German, *Ordnung*). Division followed. Some congregations separated from the Conference and a few new congregations emerged. Into the progressive Upper Milford Congregation came a young convert named William Gehman. Evidently a magnetic individual, he was soon selected Preacher by vote and by lot.

Gehman preached and conducted prayer meetings wherever he gained entrance. In 1853 the high council of the "New" Mennonites discussed their type of prayer meetings and allowed them to continue. Some, evidently, remained suspicious of these enthusiastic meetings. More discussion ensued. In 1856, the Bishops restricted these prayer meetings. The following year Bishop William N. Shelly, one of the Bishops who had enjoined the prayer meetings, had a change of heart and entered a formal protest. He attempted to demonstrate to the Council that these prayer meetings were in accord with the Gospel. The vote went against Shelly. These prayer meetings had to cease. Thus, his name was stricken from the

list of preachers in May, 1858, and the others had until October to conform.

**Unacceptable restrictions.** A controversy over the ownership of the Upper Milford meeting house followed. The Congregation, by one vote, rejected Gehman's claims on the meeting house. Through a financial settlement and contributions, he and his followers began to erect their own meeting house, which was known as "nummer drei" (number three), in the Valley. In it, he preached, prayed, exhorted and from there went forth to homes and nearby churches spreading the joy of the message he loved. He inspired many young men from his congregation to follow him into ministry. Possibly, the most significant was his cousin, Jonas Musselman, whose three sons became preachers.

**The Fellowship reaches out.** In 1861, Eusebius Hershey, a traveling preacher from Rebersburg, Center County, Pennsylvania, joined the Evangelical Mennonite Society. He inspired many as he traveled widely conducting protracted meetings and prayer meetings throughout Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Ontario, Canada. He also kindled interest in overseas missions. After years of travel in America and as an old man, he moved on to Liberia, West Africa, where he preached the Gospel and soon laid down his life.

As the other young men joined the preachers in revival, the organization developed. In 1866, they published their *Glaubenslehre*, which contained a statement of faith and church order along with a constitution for their mission society. The articles of faith were essentially the Mennonite Dortrecht Confession of Faith of 1632. The organization was doubtless derived from the Ordnung of the East-Pennsylvania Conference of Mennonites. The missions constitution may have been their own creation. It certainly was what they were all about. Their mission was to proclaim the Good News everywhere they could and to help others do the same where they could not go. They added meeting houses and preaching stations from Coopersburg, Pennsylvania, to Wadsworth, Ohio. Congregations in the Lehigh Valley survived; Wadsworth passed away. It was just too far away for proper nurture.

### **Mennonite Brethren in Christ, Pennsylvania Conference**

**Union with like-minded Brethren.** Other Mennonites were influenced by the same revival winds which blew through southeastern Pennsylvania. In Canada, Daniel Hoch spread the Word. He encouraged the Evangelical Mennonites, but many opposed him in Canada. Other Mennonites in Canada and the Midwest came under the spell of the revival tides. Among these were Solomon Eby of Ontario and Daniel Brenneman of Indiana and their followers who were excommunicated. They joined forces to become the Reformed Mennonites (1874). Some New Mennonites, followers of Daniel Hoch, united with these Reformed Mennonites to become the United Mennonites (1875). These kindred spirits found the

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Evangelical Mennonites of Pennsylvania and together became the Evangelical United Mennonites (November 1879).

With the new union came a church paper, greater structure and new theological emphases. The *Gospel Banner*, edited by Daniel Brenneman, provided reports of evangelistic activities, stories to challenge the heart, and doctrinal articles which developed a new way of thinking. When the Preachers Conference excommunicated those who refused to relinquish their life insurance policies, the Banner cheered. Reports from camp meetings challenged people to seek entire sanctification and healing. Articles selected from Methodist sources pointed away from Mennonite emphases. A new understanding of the Return of Christ to establish His earthly kingdom gained acceptance.

William Gehman, the only active preacher of the founding seven, was elected the first Presiding Elder of the Pennsylvania Conference in 1880. At the time, there were five active congregations: Zionsville, Cooperburg, Quakertown, Fleetwood, and Springtown. It was about this time, that a stationing committee began to assign preachers to the congregations.

In 1883, a small group in Ohio which called itself Brethren in Christ merged with the Evangelical United Mennonites to form the Mennonite Brethren in Christ. This was the last merger of the Pennsylvania Conference. At the time, many wondered whether it was time to drop Mennonite from the name of the Denomination. Tradition and the concern to allow young men to be certified conscientious objectors in Canada preserved the name.

**Leadership for the new century.** New leadership arose in the final decade of the nineteenth century, from which issued the leadership for most of the first half of the twentieth century. They launched new efforts at evangelism and Church planting. Tabernacle or tent meetings were conducted in various places where homes were not obtainable. The first Sunday School Convention was held in 1889.

In 1892, William Brunner Musselman became the second Presiding Elder. A man of boundless energy, he developed the first Denominational hymnal; created the Gospel Worker Society, an organization for women's ministries; inaugurated a new magazine, the *Gospel Worker Society Herald*; and began a printing organization known as Union Gospel Press. Later, he moved the Press and his organization to Williamsport, Pennsylvania, and eventually to Cleveland, Ohio.

Charles Henry Brunner, writer, poet, and musician, succeeded his cousin as Presiding Elder and Chairman of Annual Conference. C.H. and his wife established the Gospel Herald Society for men. Together with the Gospel Workers they planted many new congregations on the edges of Conference. He promoted foreign missions in the Pennsylvania conference through the newly-formed Christian and Missionary Alliance in which he became an honorary Vice President. He edited

the *Gospel Banner*, and for many years, the Annual Conference Yearbook (1896-1941).

The Conference began to commission missionaries to diverse parts of the world; Henry and Kate Weiss to Chile, Calvin and Phoebe Snyder to China, and Rose Lambert to Armenia, Turkey. Others soon followed. For the early decades of the twentieth century, the majority of missionaries were associated with The Christian and Missionary Alliance.

New articles of faith were debated and approved. The Wesleyan emphasis on a “Second Blessing” or second work of grace, was evident in the article on Entire Sanctification. According to this teaching, the sin nature could be eradicated and the sanctified person be free from all conscious or intentional sin. The new articles on the Return of Christ reflected the widespread preoccupation with the impending end of the age.

The leadership of the Pennsylvania Conference until the fourth decade of the twentieth century was essentially the same. Presiding Elders, Harvey Brunner Musselman and William George Gehman, controlled every aspect of the Conference. Musselman chaired Annual Conference and Gehman governed the Gospel Herald Society during a period of growth. Interest in outreach and missions increased. The vision of reaching beyond the old boundaries and into nearby urban areas inspired many.

World War One, the Great Depression, and the outbreak of World War Two did not dampen the spirit of evangelism. By 1920 the Conference was double what it had been in 1900. In the next twenty years it doubled again.

Loyalty was a central theme during this era. Most people trusted and submitted to their leaders with little resistance. Disloyalty was unacceptable. A drift from the Wesleyan doctrine of the late nineteenth century grew as the twentieth century progressed. The Wesleyan notion of eradication of the sinful nature was replaced by the idea that the tendency to sin was counteracted by living victoriously in the Spirit as taught by Keswick sources. This was the beginning of an emphasis on the process of sanctification rather than on a second work of grace. Pastors began to write Sunday School lessons for the Uniform Lesson Series which were published by the Union Gospel Press. The Conference had its own hymnal, *Rose of Sharon*. The first history of the denomination, *History of the Mennonite Brethren in Christ*, edited by Jasper Huffman, was published in 1920.

**New leadership and new directions.** The end of an era began with the death of W.G. “Daddy” Gehman in 1941. Four years later H.B. Musselman became emeritus. Paul Timothy Stengele and Timothy D. Gehret provided transition to a new, post war era. Relations with the other Mennonite Brethren in Christ Conferences were not good. Doctrinal and ecclesiological disagreements were

magnified by personality differences. When General Conference in 1947 voted to change the name of the denomination to United Missionary Church, the Pennsylvania Conference resisted. Pennsylvania was allowed to use the old name, but five years later voted to separate from the other Conferences. The official reasons included differences over the doctrine of holiness, foreign mission programs, educational plans, financial autonomy, church government, and objection to a projected merger with The Missionary Church Association.

The Gospel Herald Society became the Home Mission Society. Later it became the department of Church Extension. Other changes followed. Berean Bible School was opened in 1950 to prepare Pastors, Missionaries and Christian workers for the Church. A shortage of Ministers was stemmed and new Missionaries were commissioned. After eighteen years as a three-year Bible School, the School became Pinebrook Junior College. The College closed in 1992. College and Seminary had become the preferred preparation for ministry. To compete with existing theological institutions which were considered acceptable did not seem wise to many.

### **The Bible Fellowship Church**

In 1959, the Conference adopted a new name, Bible Fellowship Church. New articles of faith were ratified; which reflected more accurately the beliefs of the Fellowship. The practice of feet washing was dropped. The title of Presiding Elder which had recently become District Superintendent became Conference Superintendent when there was only one such officer for the Denomination. Finally, when a more Presbyterian structure of government was adopted, the position was dropped altogether.

An important feature of the Conference was camp meeting. This was the place where the whole Conference came together. Here, they heard other Preachers and met Brothers and Sisters from other Congregations. They worshiped, prayed, fellowshiped and ate together. The first site was Chestnut Hill, near Coopersburg, in 1881. Other locations were used until the purchase of Mizpah Grove in East Allentown in 1910. There and at Edgewood Grove, near Shamokin, many encountered God in special ways and made lasting commitments. Evangelism, Bible teaching, reports from Missionaries, children's meetings, and youth meetings inspired the campers. A children's camp, Victory Valley, near Zionsville, opened in 1956. In 1968, the Fellowship sold Mizpah Grove and purchased Pinebrook Bible Conference. Pinebrook became the center for Summer and Winter spiritual vacations and retreats.

A home for the aged and for orphans was begun in Center Valley around the turn of the century. Few aged and fewer orphans lived in the home. A new home for the aging was opened in Nazareth in 1960. Two years later, the original home

and farm were sold. The original home in Nazareth could accommodate only six to eight residents. An additional 1.5 acre tract was purchased in Nazareth, and a 28 bed nursing facility was dedicated in September 1968. Twenty years later the Home in Nazareth was converted to a Personal Care facility when a 121 bed skilled nursing facility was dedicated in Whitehall, Pennsylvania on a 42 acre tract. The tract continues to be developed for various types of housing and care for Elderly and indigent people.

The pursuit of a Biblical basis for every facet of the Denomination characterized Annual Conferences and Ministerial Conferences. A multitude of study papers, discussions, and recommendations focused on a wide range of topics such as eschatology, inerrancy, finance, ordination, church government, the relationship between Annual Conference and the Particular Church, divorce and church membership, church discipline, total abstinence, and church membership, and the role of women in the church. Abortion, homosexuality, the AIDS crisis, and other social issues were addressed.

From a loose association of Mennonite revivalists, influenced by the Holiness movement to a Wesleyan denomination to a Reformed fellowship holding to believers' baptism, the Bible Fellowship Church stands today. Once, each Congregation was autonomous. Later they came under the strong hand of Presiding Elders in a modified Episcopal system. Today Particular Bible Fellowship Churches are ruled by local Elders. Each Particular Church sends Elders along with their pastors to Annual Conference. New churches continue to be built, education facilities are being added and new congregations and daughter churches planted.

**For further reading**— Shelly, Harold P., *The Bible Fellowship Church: Formerly Mennonite Brethren in Christ, Pennsylvania Conference, originally die Mennoniten Gemeinschaft von Ost-Pennsylvanien*. Bethlehem, PA: Historical Committee, 1992.

## **Historical Society of the Bible Fellowship Church**

### **I. Purpose**

The Historical Society of the Bible Fellowship Church shall promote interest in the history and heritage of the Bible Fellowship Church.

### **II. Membership**

The membership will include those who subscribe through the payment of an annual fee to be determined by the Historical Committee of the BFC. The Historical Committee may give complimentary memberships as it determines.

### **III. Leadership**

- A. The Historical Society will exist under the leadership and oversight of the Historical Committee.
- B. The Historical Committee shall appoint a Coordinator of the Historical Society from its membership. The Coordinator will be responsible to direct the activities of the Historical Society. The Coordinator shall report on the activity of the Historical Society to the Historical Committee.
- C. The Historical Committee shall appoint a treasurer of the society from its membership. The treasurer shall collect dues and disburse funds as directed by the Historical Committee. He shall deposit the funds received for the Historical Society in a bank approved by the Historical Committee. He shall make an annual report of the receipts and disbursements of the Historical Society to the Historical Committee.

### **IV. Activity**

- A. The Historical Society shall hold at least one meeting annually, at which presentations relevant to the history and heritage of the Bible Fellowship Church shall be offered.
- B. The Historical Society shall periodically publish materials of historical interest to the membership.

## **Guidelines for the Church in Handling Suspected Spousal Abuse Situations**

As those who minister in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are called to bear forth the hope of the gospel to the hurting and oppressed. And we are not only to represent Christ in bringing his message, but also by displaying his manner. We need to be ready with a word of truth, but we must also readily show forth Christ in love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. As pastoral under-shepherds, we must hunger for justice and be quick to the cause of the oppressed.

Following are guidelines for churches in addressing suspected spousal abuse situation. Note: these are only basic guidelines. A good resource for Elders dealing with domestic violence may be the National Domestic Violence Hotline (1-800-799-7233, <http://www.thehotline.org/>). Each church should develop a policy for managing the process of responding to domestic abuse situations in their church.

When an Elder receives a report of spousal abuse, those first moments of interaction with the accuser (and sometimes the accused) are critical.

- Pause to pray. Seek the Lord's wisdom. Situations involving suspected spousal abuse are among the most challenging an Elder can face, and call for great discernment.
- Listen attentively and take seriously the initial report of the accuser about the alleged abuse. We must be ready, without reservation, to come to the aid of the oppressed. All reports of domestic violence should be received and believed as presented. However, the Elder should remain committed to pursuing the truth in the situation.

At the onset of ministering in a spousal abuse situation, the Elder needs to make clear to the accuser the process with regard to the accusation and continue throughout to inform her/him of progress in its resolution. The Elder must be committed to continue to give pastoral care, bringing healing and reconciliation when possible to the accuser, the accused and their respective families. Perhaps most importantly, the Elder must be careful not to move to reconciliation of the marriage without the repentance of the accused (and perhaps the accuser).

In cases of the report of immediate physical (or sexual) abuse:

- If possible before authorities are contacted, secure the safety of the accuser. Protect and care for the accuser when the accuser is, for whatever reason, unable to care for her/himself and her/his family.
- The authorities ought to be contacted, preferably with the accuser's consent. If the accuser will not consent to involving the authorities, much wisdom

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is needed. If there is sufficient reason to believe the accuser is in danger, shepherds must act to protect those who are being oppressed.

- If a safe place for the accuser to stay has not already been arranged, make such arrangements.
- Inform the accuser that he/she may wish to seek legal counsel.
- Minister comfort to the accuser (see below).
- Where possible, minister to the accused. It should be the desire of the shepherd to seek to speak the gospel into the life of the accused as well as the accuser, but this is not always possible. If the accused is an unbeliever, he/she needs to be shown his/her wickedness and see the hope of the gospel. If the accused is a believer, he/she needs to be pursued in accordance with Matthew 18.

In cases where an Elder receives a report of a history of abuse (physical, sexual, emotional, neglect), but there is no immediate physical violence:

- Ensure the safety of the accuser and establish appropriate protections. Make sure that the accuser has a safety plan in place (<http://www.domesticviolence.org/personalized-safety-plan/> or <http://www.thehotline.org/help/path-to-safety/> ).
- If there is sufficient reason to believe the accuser is in danger, suggest the involvement of authorities. (The Elder may need to involve the authorities even if the accuser is against this idea. Again, great wisdom is needed here.)
- Inform the accuser that she/he may wish to seek legal counsel.
- Minister comfort to the accuser (See **Tripp, Paul David; Powlison, David; Welch, Edward T., "Queries and Controversies: How should you counsel a couple in a case of domestic violence,"** *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 1997, pp. 51-55).
- If the accuser is a woman, it would be wise to have another woman present as comfort and counsel is given.
- Hear the cries of the oppressed. The Psalms are a great place to turn to hear confident cries of those who are helpless.
- The helpless needs to hear that she/he is not powerless in the situation.
- The victim of abuse needs to hear that she/he is not at fault.
- Bring them to hope in God in the midst of their sufferings. God doesn't forget us. He knows our sufferings. He loves His people. He is a God of justice.

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- Teach them how to disarm their oppressor. The accuser must resist going toward either timidity or revenge. They must not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good (see Rom. 12:21). The accuser should seek to disarm her/his tormenter with gentleness and love (Prov. 15:1). The accuser should be directed toward pursuing peace with her/his spouse (Rom. 12:18). Accusers should also be encouraged to confess their own sins, and be ready to forgive.
  - Confront the accused (See **Tripp, Paul David; Powlison, David; Welch; Edward T., “Queries and Controversies: How should you counsel a couple in a case of domestic violence,”** *The Journal of Biblical Counseling*, Vol. 15, No. 2, 1997, pp. 51-55).
  - Elders must represent Christ in message and manner to one accused of abuse.
  - Elders should recognize a common need of grace. We are not so very different from one accused of abuse. Paul Tripp, in an article in the *Journal of Biblical Counseling*, writes, “Every argument is, in principle, on a continuum with outbreaks of actual violence.”<sup>1</sup> However the Elders should not be reticent to confront sin in the accused.
  - Elders should expect that the accused is not the only sinner in the home.
  - Elders should be aware of common personality traits of those who are oppressors:
    - Evasiveness. Violent people don’t know themselves, and don’t want others to know them. They live in self-deceit, and are liars, hidiers, and manipulators. They are winsome and smooth talkers. Elders should expect to find patterns of pseudo-confession/repentance.
    - Selfishness at the core. The abuser is fixated on his pleasure, his agenda, his desires, and his demands.
    - Manipulative. Those who oppress others tend to manipulate their victims.
  - Ministering to the accused:
    - Their heart issues that motivate violence (desire for power, love, control, comfort...) need to be exposed. Oppression of others is primarily not about those who are oppressed, but about the sin of the oppressor.
    - Be prepared to deal with minor versions of the major sins. Judgmentalism, grumbling, and bickering can be preludes to violence. The oppressor must repent of these.
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- Point them to Christ. Christ died for the ungodly, the wicked. They also need to know the fear of the Lord and His righteous wrath.
- Bring them to God-centered repentance.
- Show them God-honoring alternatives to their behavior.

## **Suggested Forms**

The following forms are suggested for use in Particular Churches. The services normally are to be led by the pastor, but may be conducted by another person authorized by the Board of Elders.

### **Admission of Members**

See F&O, Article 18: The Church, and Qualifications and Duties of Church Membership

The exact words of the form on Admission of Members are not required, but the spirit and substance is required.

#### **Questions to Candidates**

- (1) Can you testify that through repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ you have experienced the forgiveness of your sin and enjoy peace with God? If so, answer “Yes.”**
- (2) Do you believe the Bible to be the inspired, infallible Word of God and the sole authority for the way of salvation, and do you take this Word to be your rule of faith and conduct? If so, answer “Yes.”**
- (3) Will you endeavor by God’s help to be responsible for faithful attendance of public worship, daily reading of the Scripture, prayer, praise, and systematic giving? If so, answer “Yes.”**
- (4) Are you willing to submit to the authority of (name of church) Bible Fellowship Church and to live in keeping with the Faith and Order of the Bible Fellowship Church? If so, answer “Yes.”**
- (5) Since the time that you were born again, have you been baptized by immersion as instructed in the Word of God? If so, answer “Yes.”**

#### **Act of Admission**

The Minister shall say, “ (name of candidate), I extend to you the right hand of fellowship in the name of Christ and His Church and welcome you as a member of (name of church) Bible Fellowship Church.”

## **Baptism**

See Articles of Faith, Article 20: Ordinances

The exact words of the form on Baptism are not required, but the spirit and substance is required.

A time of singing and prayer and a brief message by the officiating pastor shall be followed by the questioning of the candidate(s).

Question to Candidate

**“Can you testify that through repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ you have experienced the forgiveness of your sin and enjoy peace with God? If so, answer “Yes.”**

Act of Baptism - The Minister shall immerse the candidate, saying:

**“(Name of candidate), upon the confession of your faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, I baptize you in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, Amen.”**

## **Dedication of Children**

See Declaration on Particular Issues, Article 151: Dedication of Children.

**To the Congregation**

**Inasmuch as these parents are presenting this child (these children) to the Lord, let us join with them in their act of dedication. Only those parents who are born again and are living in fellowship with Christ may present their children in dedication to the Lord. This act has no saving power, but it is a public declaration by the parents that they will rear their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Dedication becomes meaningful to the extent that these parents train their children in the Lord through spiritual admonitions and exemplary living.**

**To the Parents**

- (1) Inasmuch as God has given you this child (these children), do you consecrate him (her, them) to God and His service, and do you publicly acknowledge that in so doing, you are submitting yourselves to God’s will for this child, whatever it may involve? If so, answer “We do.”**
- (2) Will you be responsible to bring this child (these children) regularly to the house of God and teach him (her, them) reverence to the Lord and respect for His house and worship? If so, answer, “We will.”**

- (3) Will you instruct this child (these children) in the Word of God and encourage him (her, them) to memorize portions of it? If so, answer, “We will.”**
- (4) Will you endeavor to lead your child (children) to a saving knowledge of Christ? If so, answer, “We will.”**
- (5) Will you teach this child (these children), as soon as he (she, they) is (are) able to understand, the nature and purpose of this dedication? If so, answer, “We will.”**
- (6) Do you dedicate yourselves as parents to live a godly life so that this child (these children) will see Christ in you? If so, answer, “We do.”**

(The minister shall continue).

**Inasmuch as (name of parents) have dedicated (name of child) to God and His service, let us join in prayer that God’s blessings may be upon them.**

(The minister shall then pray, and may give the following benediction:)

**“The Lord bless thee and keep thee; the Lord make His face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee; the Lord lift up His countenance upon thee, and give thee peace” (Num. 6:24-26, KJV).**

## **Marriage**

See Biblical Principles for Living, Article 103-3: Marriage & Singleness; Article 103-4: Family; and Article 103-5: Divorce

Prior to the ceremony, the minister should arrange for counseling with the couple concerning marriage.

At the time appointed for the marriage ceremony, the persons to be married shall stand together, the man on the minister’s left and the woman on the right.

### **The Service**

**(1) Dear friends, we are gathered here in the sight of God and in the presence of this company to join together this man and this woman in holy matrimony, which is an honorable estate, instituted of God in the time of man’s innocency, signifying to us the mystical union which is between Christ and His church, which He purchased with His own blood at Calvary.**

**(2) As Christ’s love for the church is sacred, in like manner marriage is sacred, is not to be entered into in advisedly, but reverently, discreetly, and in the fear of God. Be well assured that if**

**any persons are joined together otherwise than God's Word allows, their marriage is not blessed of God. Into this holy estate these two persons come now to be joined.**

**(3) Who gives this woman to be married to this man?** (Appropriate reply, such as "I do," or "Her mother and I do," etc.)

**(4) Take her right hand and place it in his right hand signifying that you surrender her to his care and keeping for life.**

**(5) (To the groom) Do you, (name of groom), take this woman whose hand you now hold to be your true and wedded wife, and do you solemnly promise before God and these witnesses to love, cherish, honor, and protect her, and her only, forsaking all others for her sake, as long as you both shall live? If so, answer, "I do."**

**(6) (To the bride). Do you, (name of bride), take this man who now holds your hand to be your true and wedded husband, and do you solemnly promise before God and these witnesses to love, honor, cherish, obey, and protect him; to forsake all others for his sake; and to cleave to him and him only, so long as you both shall live? If so, answer, "I do."**

**(7) (The minister shall then ask the groom to repeat after him the following:). I, (name of groom), take thee, (name of bride), to be my wedded wife to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish till death do us part.**

**(8) (The minister shall then ask the bride to repeat after him the following:). I, (name of bride), take thee, (name of groom), to be my wedded husband; to have and to hold, from this day forward, for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love, cherish, and obey till death do us part.**

**(9) (Exchange of rings) (To the groom) What pledge do you give of the sincerity of your vows? "This ring." (To the bride) Do you accept this ring as a pledge of the sincerity of his vows? "I do." (As the groom places the ring on his bride's finger, he shall repeat after the minister the following:.) As a pledge and in token of the vows between us made...with this ring I thee wed and with all my worldly goods I thee endow; in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen. (The minister shall say:.) And may this circlet of gold, which has no end, be henceforth the chaste and changeless symbol of your evermore pure and changeless affection.**

(To the bride) **What pledge do you give of the sincerity of your vows? “This ring.”** (To the groom) **Do you accept this ring as pledge of the sincerity of her vows? “I do.”** (As the bride places the ring on her groom’s finger, she shall repeat after the minister the following:) **As a pledge and in token of the vows between us made,...with this ring I thee wed, pledging my constant faith and abiding love, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.** (The minister shall say:) **And may this circlet of gold, which has no end, be henceforth the chaste and changeless symbol of your evermore pure and changeless affection.**

**(10) Inasmuch as (name of groom) and (name of bride) have consented together in holy wedlock, and have witnessed the same by these sacred vows in the presence of God and this company, and have confirmed the same by the giving and receiving of rings, now therefore by the authority conferred upon me as a minister of the Church of Jesus Christ, and by the laws of the state of (name of state or commonwealth), I pronounce that you are husband and wife, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

**(11) In this new relationship let me remind you that you are one in interests, one in reputation, and above all, one in affection. These, therefore, whom God has joined together, let not man put asunder.**

**(12)** (Prayer may be offered, if desired.)

**(13)** (To the groom) **You may kiss the bride.**

**(14)** (To the congregation) **May I now present Mr. and Mrs. (full name of groom).**

## **Funeral**

### **The Service**

**(1) Beloved: We are gathered together in the name of Christ to honor the memory of (name of deceased). The comfort of this hour is found in the Holy Scriptures. Let us hear what they say.**

**(2)** (The Scripture reading may be followed by prayer, hymns, poems, and an appropriate message, words of comfort, and a closing prayer.)

**(3) As we depart, let us be reminded that every man will stand before God in a day of judgment. Blessed is the one whose heart is prepared to meet God.**

**(4) We invite you to join us for the service of committal at (name of cemetery) cemetery.**

### **The Committal Service**

**(1) “I am the Resurrection and the Life; he that believeth in Me, though he were dead, yet shall he live; and whosoever liveth and believeth in Me shall never die.”**

**(2) “Verily, verily I say unto you, he that heareth My Word, and believeth on Him that sent Me hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation, but is passed from death unto life. Verily, verily I say unto you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God; and they that hear shall live.” “Marvel not at this; for the hour is coming, in the which all that are in the graves shall hear His voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good, unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil, unto the resurrection of damnation.”**

**(3) “Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow and continueth not.” (John 11:25, 26; 5:24, 25, 28, 29; Job 14:1, 2 - KJV)**

**(4) Inasmuch as it has pleased the Lord, in whose power are life and death, to remove our departed (name of deceased) from our midst, we therefore commit the body to the earth; Earth to earth! Ashes to ashes! Dust to dust! awaiting the resurrection through Jesus Christ our Lord, by Whom each must come forth in his own order when this corruptible must put on incorruption and this mortal must put on immortality, and all shall appear in His presence, according to the mighty working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself.**

**(5) “And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me... Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth; Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them.” (Rev. 14:13 - KJV).**

## **Dedication of a Church Building**

See Articles of Faith, Article 18: The Church

(Officiating pastor). **Beloved, in this solemn hour, in the presence of the Lord, the God of Heaven and Earth, the Source and Giver of all good, Who has given us the desire and ability to build this house, we now give thanks for its completion and dedicate it to His service and glory.**

(1) Our blessed Redeemer gives us the precious assurance that He will meet with His people where they assemble themselves together.

(2) Thus encouraged and strengthened in faith, we have confidence that the Most High, Who inhabits eternity and dwells also in those who are born in His Spirit, will accept this house which we have built to His glory, and regard it with good pleasure, to the salvation and benefit of those who here assemble to magnify His holy name.

(3) **Having this confidence, we now designate this house as (name of church) Bible Fellowship Church of (location of church), unto the Triune God. We dedicate this house to the singing of His praise, the offering of thanksgiving, prayer, reading, expounding, and preaching His Word, the administration of the ordinances, and the observance of such other devotional services as are according to the rules adopted and practiced in public worship by the Bible Fellowship Church agreeable with His Word. Here may His name be magnified and His church increase through the maturing of the saints and the salvation of men.**

**Responses. (Pastor) God, our Heavenly Father, has prospered us and enabled us by His grace to complete this house of worship. We are gathered here this day to dedicate this building to the honor and service of our Lord. Within His house of worship the Word of God will be truly preached, His ordinances faithfully administered, prayer and praise freely offered unto Him Who, above all, is worthy. We desire that this shall be His house and the place of His presence. We are thankful unto Him and bless His name.**

(People) The Lord is Good, His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endureth to all generations.

(Pastor) To God, the Everlasting Father, in Whom we live and move and have our being, and from Whom cometh every good and perfect gift, by Whose mercy and grace we are saved,...

(People) We now with gratitude solemnly dedicate this house of worship.

(Pastor) To the service of Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior, Who loved us and gave Himself for us, Who rose again and lives forevermore, to Him Who is the Way, the Truth, and the Life,...

(People) We dedicate this house of worship.

(Pastor) To the ministry of the Holy Spirit, our Comforter and Guide, by Whom alone is wrought the renewal of heart, Who leads us to repentance, and enriches us through His work,...

(People) We dedicate this house of worship.

(Pastor) For the comfort of those who mourn, for strength to those who are weak, for instruction in the truths of the Word of God, for the sanctification of the family and the promotion of Christian character, for the giving of hope to one and all,...

(People) We dedicate this house of worship.

(Pastor) For the carrying out of the Great Commission to the end that the Gospel may be preached to the ends of the earth through its constituency,...

(People) We dedicate this house of worship.

**(Pastor and people) We, the members and friends of (name of church) Bible Fellowship Church of (location of church), grateful to God for our Christian heritage, consecrate ourselves anew, and all that we are and possess, to Him as His people, for His service, and dedicate this house of worship in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.**

## Installation of a Pastor

Suggested Outline and Elements of a Service of Installation of a pastor of the BFC.

Prelude

Call to Worship

Statement of Purpose of Meeting

Hymn

Invocation

Greetings from Invited Guests

Community Leaders

Representatives of the Bible Fellowship Church

Evangelical Leaders of Church and Parachurch Organizations

Recognition of the presence of other pastors and missionaries

Offering

Special Music

Message or Sermon

Installation of pastor

**Leader (Delegate to BFC Conference) takes podium, as pastor stands before the congregation.**

Leader: Do you, \_\_\_\_\_, confess that Jesus Christ is your Lord and Savior and that He alone is the Redeemer and Head of the church?

Pastor: (Brief affirmation)

Leader: Are you inwardly persuaded that you are called of God to the proclamation of the Gospel and to the office of pastor and teacher?

Pastor: (Brief affirmation)

**Leader: On (date) \_\_\_\_\_, (name of church) \_\_\_\_\_ voted to call you as its pastor to serve under the FAITH & ORDER of the Bible Fellowship Church and the bylaws of this body. Do you believe that this call is the will of God, and do you accept this call?**

Pastor: (Brief affirmation) (Takes his seat in front pew)

Charge to the Congregation: (By designated person; charge should not take more than three minutes)

Question: Will you as a congregation, on the basis of the evidence given as to the validity of the call of \_\_\_\_\_, receive and honor him as your minister and pastor?

If so, answer “We will” (Congregation responds.)

Charge to Elders and Deacons: (By designated person, who directs the elders and deacons to stand in front of the congregation.) (Charge should take no more than three minutes.)

Question: Will you, the elders and deacons of this congregation, assume your God-given responsibilities and support the pastor in the carrying out of his and your sacred stewardship? If so, answer, “We will” (Elders and deacons respond.)

Charge to the Pastor: (by designated person; charge to be no longer than three minutes) (He directs pastor to stand before the elders and deacons.)

Question: Will you as pastor-teacher solemnly affirm that you will take heed to yourself and to all the flock, over which the Holy Spirit has made you an overseer, to feed the church of God, which He has purchased with His own blood?

Pastor: By God’s help, I will!

Installation Prayer: (Pastor kneels, with elders, deacons, and other designated participants around him. Designated person(s) will lead in prayer)

Response from the Pastor

Hymn

Benediction

Reception

## **Local Church Recognition of Ordination**

Prelude

Call to Worship

Statement of Purpose

Hymn

Invocation

Special Music

Greetings from Invited Guests:

Community Leaders

Representatives of the Bible Fellowship Church

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Evangelical Leaders of Church and Parachurch Organizations

Recognition of the Presence of Other Pastors and Missionaries

Offering

Sermon

Declaration by Credentials Committee of the Bible Fellowship Church

Announcement of Date and Place of Ordination

(Announcement of Recognition of Previous Ordination, if pastor was ordained when he was accepted by the Bible Fellowship Church)

Hymn

Benediction

Celebration/Reception/Refreshments (optional)

### **Chartering Ceremony for a New Church**

This ceremony shall be a worship service held in the community of the church. It shall be planned by the Particular Church and may include the following:

Singing of Hymns

Reading of Scripture

Ministry in Music

Prayers

Presentation of the Charter by an Officer of BFC Conference

Reception of the Charter by an Officer of the Local Church

Signing of the Charter by all Members who are Present

Presentation of the Minutes of the Transitional Leadership Team by a member of the Transitional Leadership Team

Reception of the Minutes by the Secretary of the Board of Elders

The Offering

The Sermon

Declaration of Commitment by the Congregation

Prayer of Commitment

Installation of the Pastor (if he has been called)

The Benediction

## **Index**

abortion, 1:56, 1:61, 1:77  
adultery, 1:63, 1:80  
affiliations, 1:81  
Agenda and Arrangements, Committee on, 2:145, 2:155, 2:159  
alcohol, 1:78  
alternate delegates, 2:151  
amendments to Faith and Order, 2:145, 2:200  
appeals of Conference Judicatory decision, 2:100-101, 2:109  
assessment, budgetary, 2:126, 2:147  
Assistant Registrar, 2:151

baptism, 1:26, 1:42, 1:66, 2:222  
Beneficiary Society, 2:205-207  
BFC Life Committee, 2:168-169  
Bible. *See* Scriptures  
Book of Discipline, 2:95-110  
building dedication, 2:227  
bylaws for BFC Conference, 2:139-196  
bylaws for Particular Churches, 2:113-133

chartering ceremony, 2:231  
child dedication, 1:76  
Christ. *See* God the Son  
christian liberty, 1:53, 1:73-74  
Church, 1:23, 1:25, 1:42, 1:65-66  
church discipline. *See* Book of Discipline  
Church Extension, Board of, 2:186-187  
church, role and structure of local, 2:83-93  
Church Health, Board of, 2:148, 2:190-192  
church properties, 2:118, 2:128  
church staff, 2:93

---

civil government, 1:30, 1:71  
Communications Committee, 2:166  
communion. *See* Lord's Supper, The  
Conference Pastor, 2:184  
congregational meetings, 2:114, 2:119-121  
creation, 1:8, 1:10, 1:34, 1:70  
Credentials Committee. *See* Ministerial Credentials Committee

daughter churches, 2:149, 2:187  
deacons, 2:92-93, 2:116-117, 2:120  
delegates to BFC Conference, 2:115, 2:150, 2:151  
disabilities, Christians with, 1:65-66, 2:152, 2:181, 2:205-206  
discipline. *See* church discipline  
divorce, 1:63-64, 2:90, 2:91  
domestic abuse. *See* spousal abuse  
drugs, 1:79  
drunkenness, 1:78

Education and Training Committee, 2:166  
Elder Requests to Conference, 2:123  
elders, 1:23, 1:53, 2:88-89, 2:114-117  
election, doctrine of, 1:15  
election procedures at BFC Conference, 2:155-156  
Equivalency Training Program, 2:176-178  
evangelism, 1:25, 1:42, 2:86, 2:118  
excommunication, 2:107  
Executive Board, 2:162-165  
Executive Director, 2:165

family, 1:60-62, 1:63  
firing a pastor, 2:134-135  
funeral, 2:225-226

---

*Index*

---

gender, 1:10, 1:56, 1:58, 1:80

giving, 1:42, 1:68

God the Father, 1:4, 1:52, 1:54, 1:65

God the Holy Spirit, 1:1, 1:3, 1:5, 1:7, 1:16, 1:18, 1:19, 1:21, 1:22, 1:39, 1:46, 1:54, 1:57, 1:78

God the Son, 1:3, 1:5, 1:16, 1:20, 1:31, 1:32, 1:34, 1:52, 1:54, 1:65, 1:73

healing, 1:29, 1:52

heaven, 1:5, 1:36, 1:70

hell, 1:36, 1:54

Historical Committee, 2:167-168

Historical Society of the Bible Fellowship Church, 2:216

History of the BFC, 2:210-215

holiness, 1:50, 1:56, 1:58-59

Holy Spirit. *See* God the Holy Spirit

homosexuality, 1:58-59, 1:80, 2:215

humility, 1:53

immigration, 1:82

installation of pastor, 2:229-230

integrity, 1:54

Jesus. *See* God the Son

judgment, 1:12, 1:31, 1:33, 1:36

Judicatory, Conference, 2:100-108

jurisdiction, original and appellate, 2:100-101

justice, 1:51, 1:52, 1:71

justification, 1:20

Kingdom of God, 1:32, 1:34, 1:47, 1:62

---

liberty, 1:53, 1:73-74  
Licensed Probationer, 2:140, 2:177  
Lord's Day, The. *See also* Sabbath, 1:28, 1:42  
Lord's Supper, The, 1:27, 1:42, 2:87

marriage, 1:58, 1:60, 1:63, 1:80, 2:217, 2:223-224  
membership, local church, 1:63, 1:80, 1:81, 2:87, 2:106, 2:119, 2:221  
membership of Conference, 2:145, 2:148-149, 2:150  
mercy, 1:52, 1:59, 1:65  
Millennium, 1:9, 1:31, 1:32, 1:34  
Ministerial Candidate Committee, 2:151, 2:176  
Ministerial Convention, 2:208  
Ministerial Credentials Committee, 2:102, 2:144, 2:177, 2:179-182  
Ministerial Relations Committee, 2:100, 2:129-137, 2:183-184, 2:187, 2:191  
minutes of Particular Churches, 2:119-121, 2:123, 2:126  
Mission Churches, 2:148, 2:186-187  
Missions, Board of, 2:188-189  
Moderator of Conference, 2:136, 2:146, 2:153

Nominating Committee, 2:158, 2:175

oaths, 1:81  
offerings. *See* giving  
ordination, 2:91, 2:141-142  
ordination, recognition of previous, 2:142

Parliamentarian, 2:161  
Particular Churches, 2:148  
pastoral call, 2:131  
pastoral relations committee, 2:118, 2:120, 2:134, 2:183  
pastoral resignation, 2:133-134, 2:136, 2:157  
pastoral search committee, 2:129-130, 2:183-184

---

## *Index*

---

pastoral staff, 2:92-93, 2:115, 2:157  
perseverance of the saints, 1:15, 1:22, 1:44  
petition to BFC Conference, 2:123  
Pinebrook Educational Foundation, 2:171  
prayer, 1:29, 1:42  
Prayer Committee, 2:169-170

regeneration, 1:19, 1:21  
regionalization, 2:197  
Registrar, Conference, 2:151  
remarriage, 1:63-64  
repentance, 1:7, 1:18, 1:57, 1:59, 2:106  
resignation of pastor, 2:133-137  
resurrection, of Christ, 1:28, 1:31, 1:34, 1:44  
resurrection, of Christians, 1:31, 1:32  
restitution, 1:57  
retirement from ministry, 2:144

Sabbath. *See also* Lord's Day, The, 1:42, 1:70  
salvation, 1:13, 1:15, 1:16, 1:22, 1:57  
sanctification, 1:21  
Satan, 1:9, 1:34, 1:46-47  
Scriptures, 1:1, 1:7, 1:39  
Second Coming of Christ, 1:32, 1:34  
secret societies, 1:81  
Secretary of Conference, 2:154  
sex, 1:58, 1:60  
sexual holiness, 1:58, 1:60, 1:68, 1:80  
sexual immorality, 1:80  
sin, 1:9, 1:10, 1:12, 1:18, 1:20, 1:50, 1:51, 1:57, 1:59, 1:79  
singlehood, 1:61  
spiritual gifts, 1:68

---

spousal abuse, 1:60-61, 2:217-220

stewardship, 1:68

study committees, 2:156

taxes, 1:71

tithing. *See also* giving, 1:68

tobacco, 1:79

total depravity. *See also* sin, 1:12

transgenderism, 1:80

Trinity. *See also* God the Father; God the Son; God the Holy Spirit, 1:3

Trust Clause, 2:128

Vice-Moderator of Conference, 2:153

Victory Valley Camp, 2:193

voting members of BFC Conference, 2:150

women in the church, 2:89, 2:90, 2:122, 2:157

work and rest, 1:70

worship, 1:23, 1:28, 1:42, 1:44, 2:86

Yearbook, 2:154, 2:155, 2:160, 2:166, 2:195, 2:197

Youth and Young Adults Committee, 2:167