

**bedford road baptist church**

# defining documents

**APPROVED**  
November 2, 1010

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**ADDITIONAL DOCUMENTS**  
June 1, 2016



# DEFINING DOCUMENTS

*Bedford Road Baptist Church, Merrimack, NH*

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# PREFACE TO THE FIRST EDITION

When Heritage Baptist Church and Grace Baptist Church began the merger process in December 2009, we the joint elders purposed to allow the Spirit of God to direct our path. This was a risk, a challenge. It required that we lay down our personal preferences and ideas, seeking instead the Spirit's direction in Jesus' vision for us.

One of our primary focuses was to determine the identity Christ wanted us to adopt as a congregation. We adopted a vision statement which appears in these documents. We also narrowed down the ideas for the name of the new congregation and believe that Bedford Road Baptist Church reflects the direction of the Lord and our congregation. (We have adopted this name throughout the document although the approval of the name will be part of the final merger vote process.)

But a vision statement and a church name were not the most important things we had to seek the Lord's direction in.

Very early in our merger process, it became immediately apparent to us that our existing constitutions reflected a measure of scars and wounds from the past. While these sections were necessary at the time, they had served their purposes and were even possibly restricting our growth as one body. Part of our healing as a body was the painful process of looking over these measures and building a better set of ruling documents – documents that both protected the congregation but also provided a foundation for growth.

With this in our minds, we took what we believe to be a spiritual risk and took the time to rethink and reset much of our ruling documents. As a result, much of the document you now hold in your hands is freshly set but reflective of the heritage we receive from both of the congregations now joined together.

We went about our revisions with four guiding principles:

- **BIBLICAL PRIORITY** – it was evident that in many places, we had allowed cultural norms to reframe Biblical truth. Perhaps the most obvious change you will notice in this vein is the revamp of the role of deacon. We have removed the concepts of trustees and a deacon/trustee board. We have attempted to view deacons as truly ministers of grace in the congregation and free them to fulfill these varied tasks as necessary.
- **MINIMALIST PRESENTATION** – we have, to the best of our ability, eliminated ambiguity and complexity alike. We have often adopted very direct, even laconic wording in many places. You may notice this in our *Statement of Faith*, which is both orthodox and streamlined.
- **POSITIVE STATEMENT** – where the documents mandated action in the negative, we have striven to rephrase concepts in the positive, with a particular focus on fulfilling Jesus' vision for our body. Thus, some familiar concepts are renamed such as the Annual Congregational Meeting becoming the Annual Congregational Meeting. This is because we are patently not a business but we most definitely are the Body of Christ and need to continually reaffirm His Vision among us.
- **OBVIOUS TEACHABILITY** – these documents are meant to be teaching documents. Our aim was to use wording and thought processes that would allow anyone to read this document and know immediately and unequivocally who Bedford Road Baptist Church is and what we believe.

Revising the ruling documents with these principles in mind was a difficult task. Over the course of several discussions, Ray Brown and Erik DiVietro asked refining questions about the structure. The elders as a whole then went over the documents in detail during a weekend retreat. The document was then edited and re-edited over the course of two months.

We believe that the end results are documents which create a solid, biblical foundation for ministry while remaining flexible enough to meet ministry needs as they arise. It protects against abuses but also places trust in spiritual leadership.

You will find that the ruling documents now consist of four main sections:

- STATEMENT OF FAITH – this is a direct statement of what we believe and what anyone can expect the members of this congregation to embrace. The phrasing is both direct and pliable. Where the Scriptures are absolute, we have made absolute statements. Where the Scriptures are silent, we have striven to be wise and be like the Scriptures.
- COVENANTS – These two covenants are completely new. They are to be affirmed upon entering membership and leadership in the congregation. They are annually reaffirmed by every member at the annual Vision Update.
- CORPORATE CONSTITUTION – this is a legal document which defines who we are before the law of the land. It contains little in the way of procedures or details.
- BY-LAWS – These are the detailed living out of the constitution, naming the roles of membership and leadership. You will notice however that these are also minimalist.

You may notice that many of the detailed procedures are absent from our defining documents. Since these procedures do not affect the makeup of our congregation and need revision far more often than the defining documents, we elected to create a separate Procedures Manual. This document includes both the detailed procedures and the ministry descriptions for volunteers and staff members. The Procedures Manual will be available separately.

Having submitted these documents to a rigorous review and examination, we now present them to you the congregation for your consideration, discussion and affirmation.

The Joint Elders of Grace Baptist Church and Heritage Baptist Church  
September 19, 2010

## PREFACE TO THE SECOND EDITION

It became increasingly evident that the first edition of our defining documents addressed some of the key matters involved in the merger of Heritage Baptist Church and Grace Baptist Church but did not fully address the nature of the covenant of membership we were observing.

On January 19, 2014, the members of the congregation voted unanimously to revise the membership covenant detailed in these documents. The revised covenant was adopted immediately.

Erik DiVietro, Teaching Pastor  
April 1, 2014

# PREFACE TO THE STATEMENT ON THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE AND BIBLICAL SEXUALITY

Our congregation has approved the “Statement on the Sanctity of Marriage and Biblical Sexuality” which is included in this edition of our defining documents, although it is not a component of them.

Our purpose in creating this document was to make clear our views on the biblical and natural role of marriage and sexuality. The statement was first presented to the congregation for consideration in 2014 and was discussed and revised over the span of two years before being approved in our May 2016 Annual Vision Meeting.

Erik DiVietro, Teaching Pastor  
June 1, 2016





# STATEMENT OF FAITH

*Bedford Road Baptist Church, Merrimack, New Hampshire*

## INTRODUCTION TO OUR FAITH

We unashamedly declare ourselves to be followers of Jesus Christ, united under His authority and the authority of his original, chosen apostles who gave us the New Testament as a standard for faith and practice as a church.

### *GOD THE FATHER*

We believe God the Father is the Creator, Preserver and Ruler of all things.

- He is perfect in holiness and love, infinite in wisdom and measureless in power.<sup>1</sup>
- He is the one true God who has revealed himself generally in creation and specifically in the Scriptures.<sup>2</sup>
- Since before time, He has ordained a path of redemption for mankind through Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup>

### *JESUS CHRIST, GOD THE SON*

We believe Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God who created and sustains all things.<sup>4</sup>

- He became fully man, born of a virgin and lived a holy and sinless life.<sup>5</sup>
- He died for our sins, was raised from the dead and ascended to heaven.
- He is the Head of the Church.<sup>6</sup>
- He is now the mediator between God and men.<sup>7</sup>
- He will return to the earth as our coming King.<sup>8</sup>

### *GOD THE SPIRIT*

We believe that the Spirit proceeds from the Father and He is sent by Jesus to draw us to him and to guide us actively in our lives. This Spirit is a person of the divine nature.

- He is credited with the creation of the world, the giver of both physical and spiritual life<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Deuteronomy 4:35, 39, 6:4; Nehemiah 9:6; 1 Chronicles 29:11, 12; Exodus 15:11-13; Isaiah 28:29;

<sup>2</sup> Psalm 19:1-4; Romans 1:20

<sup>3</sup> Ephesians 1:7

<sup>4</sup> Colossians 1:16-17

<sup>5</sup> Romans 8:3

<sup>6</sup> Ephesians 1:22, 5:23; Colossians 1:18

<sup>7</sup> 1 Timothy 2:5

<sup>8</sup> Revelation 20:4

<sup>9</sup> Genesis 1:2, Genesis 2:7, 1 Peter 3:18

## STATEMENT OF FAITH

- He convicts the world of sin and righteousness.
- He indwells all believers<sup>10</sup>
- He baptizes all believers into Christ's body<sup>11</sup>
- He unites believers into the one church<sup>12</sup>
- He produces spiritual fruit in the believer's life<sup>13</sup>
- He guides the believer into truth<sup>14</sup>
- He inspired the writing of the Scriptures so they might be read and understood in all ages.

## THE DIVINE NATURE

As these three – God the Father, Jesus, and the Spirit – are credited with the same divine activities and are still revealed as distinct persons; we believe they exist in a divine community [classically called the *Trinity*] that transcends our understanding. We affirm that they are one in essence but three in person.<sup>15</sup>

## THE SCRIPTURES

We believe the Bible (defined as the 66 books that make up the Old and New Testaments) is the verbally inspired Word of God which points us to Jesus Christ, the living Word of God. It is inerrant and complete, the supreme and final authority in all matters to which it speaks.<sup>16</sup>

## MAN AND SIN

Man was created in the image of God by direct creation, for God's pleasure. He sinned and thereby incurred both physical and spiritual death. All men by nature and by choice are sinners. Apart from Christ, man would be forever separated from God.<sup>17</sup>

## SALVATION

All who believe in Jesus Christ are declared righteous before God on the grounds of His shed blood. Salvation is by grace through faith, not of works. All who by faith receive Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are born again of the Holy Spirit, becoming children of God and having eternal security (saved).<sup>18</sup>

## THE CHURCH

The Church is Christ's body. It is a community of his disciples that transcends all human differences

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<sup>10</sup> Romans 8:9

<sup>11</sup> 1 Corinthians 12:13

<sup>12</sup> Ephesians 4:3-6

<sup>13</sup> Galatians 5:22-23

<sup>14</sup> John 16:7-15

<sup>15</sup> Matthew 3:13-17, 28:18-20; 1 Corinthians 2:13; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:16-21

<sup>16</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16-17, 1 Corinthians 2:13, 2 Peter 1:16-21

<sup>17</sup> Genesis 1:26, 2:17; Romans 3:23, 5:12-17

<sup>18</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:3,4; Revelation 1:5; Ephesians 2:8,9; John 1:12, 3:3,7

and culture. The local church is the organized, visible assembly of believers, empowered by God's Holy Spirit and headed by Christ.

As its Head, Christ leads the church directly through His Spirit, and brings believers into fellowship and unity of purpose and belief. He gives each local church a vision for ministry in their community, calls leaders and gives spiritual gifts to all those in the church to fulfill this vision. Christ unites local churches for the purpose of sharing the Gospel.<sup>19</sup>

#### *THE MINISTERS OF THE CHURCH*

We believe the Church is united under Christ's authority. He appointed His original, chosen apostles to give us the New Testament as the standard for faith and practice as a church.

God's Spirit moves each local church to recognize His calling of elders as ministers of the Word, shepherds and overseers of the flock.<sup>20</sup>

Deacons are chosen from among the congregation and confirmed by the elders to meet needs as they arise in the church's ministry.<sup>21</sup>

#### *THE ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH*

We believe that every believer should be baptized by immersion in water as an outward profession of faith. Though baptism has no saving merit, it symbolizes the believer's faith in and union with the crucified, buried, and risen Savior.<sup>22</sup>

We believe the Lord's Supper is symbolic of Christ's broken body and shed blood. Those who have been saved partake of the Lord's Supper in memory of the suffering and death of their Lord, and in celebration of the Church's everlasting fellowship with Him. Its observance is to be preceded by faithful self-examination.<sup>23</sup>

#### *THE END OF ALL THINGS*

We believe that Jesus will keep his promise to return to earth as our Lord, King and Judge. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the saved and the lost, and the final judgment of all people to either eternal joy in the presence of God or to eternal punishment in the Lake of Fire.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> John 20:22-23; Acts 2:1-12; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 12:13; Galatians 1:2; Ephesians 1:22-23, 4:3-6; Colossians 1:18

<sup>20</sup> 1 Timothy 3:1-6, Titus 1:5-9

<sup>21</sup> Acts 6:1-7, 1 Timothy 3:8-12

<sup>22</sup> Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 2:38, 41, Romans 6:3-5, Mark 16:16

<sup>23</sup> Luke 22:19,20; I Corinthians 11:23-30

<sup>24</sup> Job 19:25-27; Matthew 25:41; Luke 16:19-31; John 5:28-29, 14:3; 1 Corinthians 15:20-24; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17; Revelation 20:11-15, 21:8

# FELLOWSHIP COVENANTS

*Bedford Road Baptist Church, Merrimack, New Hampshire*

## VISION

Creating environments where people encounter Jesus and journey together.

## MEMBER'S COVENANT

Having accepted Christ as our Savior, we unite together as a congregation - committed to the beliefs of our Statement of Faith and submitted to the leadership of our elders, as guided by the teachings of Jesus.

Believing we are members together of this local assembly of believers, we covenant before our Lord to create environments where people encounter Jesus and journey together.

We embrace Jesus Christ's vision for this congregation without reservation and covenant with both Christ and our fellow believers to make this vision a reality. To that end, we join together to:

- Seek God's glory and the magnification of Jesus Christ in all things.
- Yield to the direction of the Holy Spirit as he guides us to live and speak the Gospel.
- Faithfully and actively participate in our congregation's worship and ministry, serving those both inside and outside of the church with a humble spirit.
- Support the ministry of our congregation financially, as the Lord gives us the means.
- Resolve conflicts with others peacefully in a way that demonstrates love to all who see.

As the Lord enables me, I will strive to consider and renew our covenant of membership as necessary. If at any time I can no longer commit to this covenant, I will notify the Elders of Bedford Road Baptist Church.

## ELDER COVENANT

We join together as a leadership community and lay down any claim to human authority, accepting our calling into Christ's ministry of leadership in the congregation.

- We covenant with our Lord to be ministers of His Word, leading first by submitting to the Word's absolute authority in the Church.
- We covenant with one another to work peaceably as a leadership community in directing Christ's body toward the vision He, as our Head, sets for us.
- We covenant with the congregation to boldly direct us toward Christ, to build the congregation up and equip them with the tools necessary to minister the Gospel to the world.

# CORPORATE CONSTITUTION

*Bedford Road Baptist Church, Merrimack, New Hampshire*

## PREAMBLE

In order to affirm and preserve the principles of our faith, to guarantee that this body may be governed in an orderly and efficient manner consistent with Scripture, and for the purpose of preserving the unity of this congregation, the liberties inherent in each individual member and the freedom of action of this body with respect to its relation to other congregations of the same faith, we do declare and establish this constitution and its correlating documents.

## ARTICLE I: ORGANIZATION

The name of this organization as incorporated under the laws of the state of New Hampshire shall be Bedford Road Baptist Church, with Merrimack, Hampshire as its principal place of worship.

### *SECTION 1: CHURCH FOUNDATION AND VISION*

- 1.1: FOUNDATION: The foundation of this congregation is the Lord Jesus Christ – the Living Word and the Son of God [1 Corinthians 3:11]. The congregation shall be guided in all its affairs by the Word of God, and we do here affirm our faith that the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the inspired, written Word of Almighty God which manifest Jesus Christ [Isaiah 40:8, 2 Timothy 3:16]
- 1.2: VISION: The priorities of ministry of this church flow from the vision of God's glory revealed in Jesus Christ. We live this vision out by creating environments where people encounter Jesus and journey together. [John 4:23; 1 Corinthians 14:26b; 1 Peter 2:9, 3:15; 2 Peter 3:18; Matthew 28:18-20; 5:16]

### *SECTION 2: MEMBERSHIP*

The membership of this church shall consist of persons who:

- Publicly confess faith on the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior through baptism by immersion.
- Demonstrate submission to Christ as Lord by joining in the work of the Gospel.
- Live a life transformed by the Gospel, with Jesus as their model.
- Annually reaffirm the Member's Covenant.
- And have these things confirmed and recognized by the congregation.

### *SECTION 3: ORGANIZATIONAL ROLES*

- 3.1: CONGREGATION: The congregation of members shall be the corporate authority within the local church, under the eternal authority of Jesus Christ and the Word of God. Their responsibilities shall include:

- 3.1.1 Maintaining a membership in keeping with Section 2 above.
- 3.1.2 Affirm, dismiss or discipline officers, both vocational and non-vocational.

## *CORPORATE CONSTITUTION*

- 3.1.3 Approve an annual budget; authorize expenditures not covered by the budget and to approve any dealings with real property.
- 3.1.4 Accept, reject or dispose of any matter submitted by the Elders or raised by proper motion at a regular or special Congregational Meeting.
- 3.1.5 Adopt, amend, or repeal amendments to the Constitution and By-Laws.
- 3.2: OFFICERS: The Elders shall serve as the principal officers of the organization and shall be equal in authority but specialized in function.

### *SECTION 4: CORPORATE CONTINUITY*

- 4.1 CONSOLIDATION: Should conditions arise where a consolidation with another church of like faith would be advisable, the Elders shall be authorized by the Church to negotiate the terms of such consolidation in so far as the property of this Church is concerned and present the consolidation for congregational discussion and vote.
- 4.2 Division: In the event of division in this congregation, the parties shall submit the issue to an agreed upon third party arbiter, preferably the leaders of a church of like faith. The objective of arbitration shall be reconciliation. If the division is deemed irreconcilable, the arbiter's decision for disposition of property shall be final.
- 4.3 DISSOLUTION: In the event of the dissolution of this corporation, all debts shall be satisfied and any remaining assets shall be distributed as the congregation deems will benefit the greater Church. Pursuant to the laws of the state of New Hampshire, an act of dissolution shall require a 100% vote of the active membership.

## ARTICLE II: AMENDMENTS, REVISIONS AND CONSISTENCY

### *SECTION 1: ADOPTION*

This constitution shall be considered adopted and in immediate effect if and when ratified by seventy-five percent (75%) of the voting membership. This vote shall be taken not less than 30 days after formal presentation of the constitution to the congregation.

### *SECTION 2: AMENDMENTS AND REVISIONS*

This constitution may be amended or revised at any regular CONGREGATIONAL MEETING by a seventy-five percent (75%) of the voting membership. Copies of the amendments must be provided to the entire voting membership, and written and public notice of the meeting must be given at least two [2] weeks in advance.

### *SECTION 3: CONSISTENCY*

The regular operation of the congregation will be guided by this constitution and articulated in the bylaws. The bylaws are dependent upon the constitution for structure and purpose, and as such must be in harmony with the constitution itself. A copy of the constitution and by-laws shall be available from the church office or Clerk.

### *SECTION 4: REPLACEMENTS*

This constitution abolishes, supersedes, and takes the place of any constitution, rules, and bylaws

and amendments – of both Grace Baptist Church of Merrimack, New Hampshire and Heritage Baptist Church of Hooksett, New Hampshire – that preceded it.

# BY-LAWS

*Bedford Road Baptist Church, Merrimack, New Hampshire*

## ARTICLE I: MEMBERSHIP

### *SECTION 1: VOTING MEMBERSHIP PROCEDURE*

- 1.1 **ADMISSION OF MEMBERS:** At any of the regular meetings for worship, the congregation may, without special notice, receive new members by majority vote, upon recommendation of the elders. Individuals applying for membership in the church must be able to agree with the Member's Covenant without reservation.
- 1.2 **MEMBERSHIP ROLL:** The Church Clerk shall maintain an up to date list of Active and Special Membership, and the Elders shall review this list twice annually for accuracy prior to the regular vision meetings of the church.
- 1.3 **WITHDRAWAL:** Individuals who remove from this congregation to another church of like faith shall notify the Elders who shall present their name to the congregation for removal.
- 1.4 **DISMISSAL:** Individuals no longer conforming to the Member's Covenant shall be removed from membership. After due diligence to restore individuals to fellowship, the Elders shall present the names for removal to the congregation. A seventy-five percent (75%) vote of the membership is required for dismissal of a member. Dismissal is the last step of church discipline [Matthew 18; 1 Corinthians 5-7].
- 1.5 **RESTORATION OF MEMBERSHIP:** Those who withdraw their membership or are dismissed from the membership of the church may be restored by majority vote of the membership by reaffirmation of the Member's Covenant and the Elders' recommendation.
- 1.6 **MINISTRY AND LEADERSHIP:** Only voting members may serve in leadership (elders and deaconate) and teaching positions in the church.

### *SECTION 2: SPECIAL MEMBERSHIP*

- 2.1 **DEFINITION:** The Special Membership roll shall be composed of people such as children under age 18, students, those in military service, and those who due to extraordinary personal circumstances are prevented from regular participation in the congregation for a period of three consecutive months, but who express interest in remaining members of the congregation.
- 2.2 **SPECIAL MEMBERSHIP ROLL:** Any regular member whose status changes sufficiently to come under this section shall be automatically placed on the Special Membership Roll by the Clerk. Notification shall be made to the member.
- 2.3 **PARAMETERS:** Special members shall not hold voting privileges or cannot serve as officers. Special membership shall never allow for multiple church memberships.
- 2.4 **RESTORATION TO ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP:** A person on the special membership roll who returns to fulfilling the Member's Covenant on a regular basis, after consideration from the Elders, shall be restored to Active Membership.



## ARTICLE II: CHURCH GOVERNMENT

### SECTION 1: DEFINITIONS

- 1.1 ELDERS: Men called by God, through the congregation, as shepherding leaders. Working as a leadership community, elders are equal in authority but diverse in gifting and function.
- 1.2 PASTOR: An elder who has devoted his vocational life to the ministry of God's Word and prayer. The Elders and the congregation may designate one pastor as Senior Pastor for the purposes of teaching and vision-casting.
- 1.3 DEACON: Men and women who are full of the Spirit and wisdom, appointed by the congregation and affirmed by the elders to fulfill specific ministry needs. Some needs may be considered permanent (treasurer, financial secretary, deaconess, etc.) and others are more specific and limited. [Acts 6:1-6 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13]
- 1.4 SUPPORT STAFF: There are many support positions required to maintain the day-to-day operations of the congregation such as Secretary, Sexton and other paid or volunteer positions. The Elders shall select individuals to fulfill these positions and present them to the congregation for approval at the Annual Congregational Meeting.

### SECTION 2: QUALIFICATIONS, *CALLING AND WORK OF THE ELDERS*

- 2.1 CALL OF ELDERS: Elders and nominees for Elder shall be qualified for the office as specified in the Bible. [1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4].  
  
When the need for additional elders is evident, the Elders shall oversee the nomination and appointment of new Elders.
  - The Elders shall ask the congregation to present candidates for the office of Elder.
  - The Elders shall conduct interviews with the candidates to determine if they meet the Biblical qualifications.
  - They shall then prepare a recommendation for the congregation and present it in advance.
  - The vote to affirm incoming elders shall be conducted at the Annual Congregational Meeting. Seventy-five percent (75%) affirmation of the voting membership is required.
- 2.2 ELDERS' MEETINGS: The Elders shall meet regularly as needed to achieve the vision God has given this congregation. The Senior Pastor or his delegate shall act as moderator for these meetings.
- 2.3 REAFFIRMATION OF CALLING: The Elders shall reaffirm their calling to leadership at the Annual Congregational Meeting. If an Elder chooses not to reaffirm his office, he must wait one (1) year before being nominated for the Eldership again. It is recommended that Elders serve no more than five (5) years consecutively.
- 2.4 RESIGNATION: Eldership is a calling not to be taken lightly, but should an Elder need to step down from ministry during the year, he may do so after discussing his reasons with the Elders and submitting a letter of resignation.

- 2.5 DISMISSAL OF ELDERS: An elder may be dismissed if found to be in serious error in conduct or doctrine. Such dismissal shall be by vote of the congregation in a Special Congregational Meeting [as above for Call of Elders] at the majority recommendation of the elders after all options of restoration have been exhausted [Matthew 18; Galatians 6].
- The recommendation of the Elders must be accepted by at least seventy-five percent (75%) of the voting members present. Fifty percent (50%) of the voting membership shall constitute a quorum at this special meeting.
- 2.6 CALLING OF VOCATIONAL PASTORS: To further the vision God has given the Church and at the recommendation of the Elders, the congregation may call vocational pastors. Pastors may be called at Annual or Special Congregational Meetings.
- 2.6.1 The Elders shall annually provide all vocational pastors with written job descriptions and establish commensurate compensation packages.
- 2.6.2 As the needs of the congregation warrant, the Senior Pastor and Elders may recommend to the congregation the call of additional vocational pastors. They shall meet the qualifications of an elder and shall serve as Elders during their tenure.

## ARTICLE III: CHURCH MEETINGS

### *SECTION 1: WORSHIP GATHERINGS*

- 1.1 The church shall always meet regularly for a corporate worship gathering on the Lord's Day, the first day of the week. These meetings will focus on preaching, instruction, evangelism and the worship of almighty God.
- 1.2 The Senior Pastor shall be the primary teacher in the Worship Gatherings and shall oversee the worship ministries involved in these gatherings.
- 1.3 Exceptions to regular meetings (in the case of adverse weather or unavoidable circumstance) can be made by recommendation of the Elders.
- 1.4 Other meetings may be scheduled based on need and opportunity. Decisions to hold other gatherings will be made by the Elders.

### *SECTION 2: CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS*

- 2.1 ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING: The Annual Congregational Meeting shall be held during the second week of May. It is expected that all voting members will attend.
- 2.1.1 During the Annual Congregational Meeting, members shall reaffirm their commitment to the Member's Covenant. Elders shall likewise reaffirm their commitment to the Elders' Covenant.
- 2.1.2 The annual report and forecast, including investment budget shall be prepared and distributed to the membership well in advance of the Annual Congregational Meeting so members may review it before the meeting.
- 2.1.3 The budget shall be affirmed. Other business may be presented during the meeting.
- 2.2 SEMI-ANNUAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETING: A semi-annual Congregational Meeting shall be held during the second week of November to consider the progress of ministries. A

- semi-annual report shall be presented to the congregation by the Elders.
- 2.3 SPECIAL CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS: Special Congregational Meetings may be called by the Elders for a specific reason. During the Special Congregational Meeting only the topics outlined in the notice can be voted on.
- 2.3.1 Notice of the subject, date, time and location must be made in writing to the membership at least two (2) weeks before the meeting and announced verbally in a weekly worship gathering at least once prior to the day of the meeting.
- 2.3.2 In the event of alleged gross negligence and/or abuse of authority by the Senior Pastor or Elders, a Special Congregational Meeting can also be called by a two-thirds petition of the voting membership. [1 Timothy 5:19-20]
- 2.4 MODERATOR AND CLERK: A moderator shall oversee the flow of the Congregational Meetings and ensure the orderly movement of activities. In all meetings, the Clerk shall record the minutes.
- 2.5 RULES OF ORDER: All meetings will be conducted in a loving, informal, and orderly atmosphere. An effort will be made by the Moderator to maintain purpose and direction and still allow the Spirit time to move through the meeting. Just before and during all regular and special Congregational Meetings where a vote will be required, a list of the Active and Special membership will be posted and copies made available to all present.
- 2.6 QUORUM: A quorum consists of a majority of the elders and 50% of the voting membership of the church except where stated otherwise.

## ARTICLE IV: FINANCIAL MATTERS

### *SECTION 1: FISCAL YEAR*

The fiscal year of the church shall begin with the first day of May. The congregation shall continue to operate on the previous year's budget until the Annual Congregational Meeting.

### *SECTION 2: ANNUAL BUDGET*

- 2.1 GENERAL: Bedford Road Baptist Church shall maintain an operating budget and shall operate, whenever possible, without indebtedness or excess. The Elders shall direct the treasurer to make disbursements according to the budget as necessary.
- 2.2 APPROVAL OF THE BUDGET: The treasurer shall prepare and present a budget for the coming year to the Elders. It shall be included in the Annual Report and Forecast. The budget shall be set by vote of the congregation during the Annual Congregational Meeting.
- 2.3 UNBUDGETED EXPENDITURES: The membership shall vote on major expenditures that are not in the budget at a special or regular Congregational Meeting. This includes the purchasing of buildings, property, etc. Emergency financial decisions may be made by the Elders, and notification shall be provided to the membership as soon as possible.

# STATEMENT ON THE SANCTITY OF MARRIAGE AND BIBLICAL SEXUALITY

*Originally presented June 1, 2014, Approved as Revised Below May 9, 2016*

The statement below is adopted to articulate the beliefs of this congregation for the purposes of clarity on the matter of the sanctity of marriage and biblical sexuality.

1. We believe that the Church of Jesus Christ must draw its direction and intent from the Scriptures, and that when interpreted reasonably and normally, they provide direction for beliefs and the application of those beliefs.
2. We believe the violation of the created order to be sin, which separates us from God.
3. We believe that sin is forgiven in Christ, but this forgiveness does not give us permission to continue in or condone sinful behavior. (Romans 6:1; 1 John 2:4-6)
4. We believe the Scriptures explicitly teach the sacredness of marriage as a covenantal, physical union of a single man and single woman and that marriage as an expression of God's created intent, it is the reasonable and uniquely ordained expression of the sexual nature of human beings. (Genesis 1:27)
5. We believe that when the Scriptures speak to homosexual behavior, it is both explicitly and implicitly viewed as a violation of the created order.
6. It is therefore our belief that homosexuality and any sexual behavior or identification that is out of keeping with the witness of Scripture is a sin.
7. Our congregation will always welcome any who wish to worship with us, regardless of their lifestyle choice; and it is our desire for them to grow and be transformed by the gospel.
8. This being said, in keeping with the intent of the Church to honor the Scriptures, we cannot extend the covenant of membership (as articulated in our by-laws) or the recognition of marital union to those in homosexual relationships.
9. This statement is not a political position or a legal treatise on the affairs of human government, nor is it a demand that those outside this congregation conform to it.