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8<sup>th</sup> Revision - November 2008

9<sup>th</sup> Revision – September 2013 (Statement on Marriage and Sexuality)

10<sup>th</sup> Revision – October 2023 (Statement on Gender added to Marriage/Sexuality Statement)

## **PREAMBLE**

We, the members of Maranatha Bible Church of Comstock Park, Michigan in our desire to establish a church to the Glory of God do ordain and establish the following articles as a form to regulate and govern the affairs and business of the church to which articles we voluntarily submit ourselves.

## **ARTICLE I**

The organization shall be known as Maranatha Bible Church, of Comstock Park, Michigan.

## **ARTICLE II**

### **Purpose**

#### **Section A - Phases of Its Ministry**

The object of this church is the ministry of the Word of God for the salvation of souls, the dedication of Christians, the worldwide proclamation of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, the promotion of Godly worship, the defense of the "Faith Once Delivered," and cooperation with Christian activity.

#### **Section B - Independence and Autonomy**

It is the purpose of the original incorporators of this church that it shall be, and forever remain, an independent and autonomous organization adhering to the fundamental and premillennial doctrines of the Christian faith, as set forth in the Holy Bible and as defined in the Statement of Faith and Doctrine of the Independent Fundamental Churches of America, as amended April, 1963.

#### **Section C - Undenominational Character**

It is likewise the original purpose of this church, in accordance with the New Testament example and teaching, that it shall forever remain free from denominationalism. It shall, for this reason, avoid identification with denominations or associations of churches by means of its name, or by the observance of traditions peculiar to such denominations or associations. It shall never change its name or its policy so as to effect such identification. I Cor. 1:11-13; 3:1-9

## **ARTICLE III**

### **Fellowship**

#### **Section A - Fellowship with other Local Churches**

Fellowship with other local independent churches shall be maintained by this church. It may also enter into such cooperation with other fundamental churches as shall not jeopardize its undenominational and fundamental position. To this end the church may be a member of and affiliate with the Independent Fundamental Churches of America, as long as such membership does not jeopardize its independence or fundamental character.

## **Section B - Affiliation with Local Church Council**

Affiliation or cooperation with local church councils, etc., shall not compromise the fundamental doctrinal position of this church.

### **ARTICLE IV**

#### **Statement of Doctrine**

#### **Section A – Doctrine of the Bible**

##### **Revelation of the Word**

The Word of God consists of God's disclosure of Himself to mankind and contains the 66 books of the Old and New Testament which were finished with the completion of the New Testament (1 Cor 14:37; 2 Tim 3:16-17; Jude 3, Heb 1:1-2; 2:3-4; 2 Pet 3:15-16; Rev 22:18,19). It contains that which is necessary to know God and be rightly related to Him (Rom 10:17).

##### **Inspiration of the Word**

The Holy Spirit worked through the individual personalities and different styles of the human authors so that they composed and recorded God's inspired Word to man. Inspiration extends to the very selection of the words of Scripture (2 Pet 1:20-21, 2 Tim 3:16-17).

##### **Inerrancy of the Word**

The Scriptures are absolutely without error in any part in the original (Ps 19:7-9; Is 30:8; Matt. 5:18, John 10:35; 17:17; 2 Tim 3:16). As a result, the Word is alive (Heb 4:12), what God uses to accomplish His purposes (Is 55:10-11), and that which saves souls (James 1:18; 1 Pet 1:23) and changes lives (2 Tim 3:16-17).

##### **Authority of the Word**

The Word is completely sufficient for all of life and ministry (2 Pet 1:3) and is that which alone determines what to believe and how to live to the glory of God (Acts 17:11). It stands as absolute truth to be known and applied in every area of life. As such, Scripture is the very foundation upon which the church is built and comprises not only the content of the message that the church proclaims but also the methods by which the church operates.

##### **Interpretation of the Word**

Each passage of Scripture contains only one correct interpretation, namely that intended by the author (2 Pet 3:16). This meaning must be determined by employing the literal-grammatical-historical method of interpretation through diligent study (2 Tim 2:15) and dependence on the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 2:12; 1 John 2:27). Any legitimate application of a passage of Scripture, of which there are many, must be based on the one correct interpretation.

#### **Section B – Doctrine of God**

##### **Existence of God**

The Scriptures clearly teach that there is but one true and living God (Deut 4:35; 6:4; Is 46:9; 1 Cor 8:4; Eph 4:6) who has eternally existed from before the foundation of the world (Gen 1:1; Ps 90:2; John 1:1). As a Trinity, God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are same in substance (John 10:30) but distinct in subsistence (Is 48:16; Matt 3:16-17). God is the all-powerful creator of all things (Gen 1:1-31; Ps 89:11; Is

42:5; Acts 17:24) and the sovereign ruler over His entire creation (1 Chron 29:11; Ps 103:19; 115:3). He consistently works all things after the counsel of His will (Eph 1:11) accomplishing what He has ordained in eternity past (Is 46:8-11) for the praise of His glory (Eph 1:6, 12, 14; Rom 11:36), even using the sin of men to accomplish His purposes (Gen 50:20).

### **Character of God**

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God is holy (Lev 19:2; Is 6:3), perfect (Matt 5:48), immutable (Mal 3:6), true (Num 23:19; Heb 6:18), gracious (Eph 2:8), loving (John 3:16; Rom 5:8), merciful (Rom 11:32), kind (Rom 2:4), patient (2 Pet 3:9), righteous (Ps 145:17; Hab 1:13), jealous (Ex 20:5), and just (Rom 1:18). He is also self-existent (John 5:26), omniscient (Ps 139:4-6; 147:5; Is 40:28), and omnipresent (Ps 139:7-10; Jer 23:24). Because God is glorious (Ps 24:10) and majestic (Ps 8:1, 9), He is worthy of worship (Ps 95:6), praise (Ps 150), and blessing (Ps 103:1, 2) and should be treasured (Ps 16:11) and delighted in (Ps 37:4) by His children.

## **Section C – Doctrine of Christ**

### **Deity of Christ**

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Jesus Christ is the second person of the Trinity, possessing all the divine attributes and being coequal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father (John 1:1; 10:30). Christ is omnipotent (Matt 28:18), omnipresent (Matt 28:20), omniscient (John 16:30), and immutable (Heb 13:8). Because all deity dwells in Christ (Col 2:9), He is the exact representation of God's nature (John 1:18; Heb 1:3), the One through whom God made and sustains all creation (John 1:3; Col 1:16-17; Heb 1:2), and the One through whom He will judge the world (John 5:22; Acts 17:31).

### **Humanity of Christ**

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As the God-man, He was born of a virgin, conceived in the womb of Mary by the supernatural, miraculous work of the Holy Spirit without a human father (Is 7:14; Matt 1:18-25; Luke 1:35). In His incarnation, Christ willingly set aside the full expression of His divine attributes (Phil 2:5-8), but did not divest Himself of His divine essence. He possesses not only divine but also human attributes such as human growth (Luke 2:52), human emotions (Matt 9:36; John 11:35), and human functions (John 19:28). Despite very real temptations (Luke 4:1-13), Christ lived a sinless life (Heb 4:15).

### **Ministry of Christ**

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Jesus came to seek and save the lost and rescue fallen man from the curse of sin (Luke 19:10). He died on a cross as a substitute for the sins of men (1 Cor 15:3; 1 Pet 2:24; 2 Cor 5:21), receiving the full fury of God's wrath against the sin of mankind (Rom 3:25; 1 John 2:2; 4:10). Because death could not hold Him (Matt 28:1-7; Mark 16:1-8; Luke 24:1-12), Christ rose again bodily from the dead (Rom 4:25; 1 Cor 15:17; 1 Pet 1:3). He ascended into heaven (Acts 1:9; Phil 2:9) where He intercedes on behalf of His people (1 Tim 2:5; Heb 7:25; 9:24), and will return one day to rule and reign with all authority (Matt 25:31; Titus 2:13; 1 Pet 1:13; Rev 22:20).

## **Section D – Doctrine of the Holy Spirit**

### **Deity of the Holy Spirit**

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As the third member of the Trinity, the Holy Spirit is a divine Person (John 14:26; 16:13), not merely a force, who has intellect (1 Cor 2:11), emotion (Eph 4:30), and will (1 Cor 12:11). He is coequal and consubstantial with the Father and the Son (Matt 28:19; Acts 5:3-4) possessing omnipresence (Ps 139:7), omniscience (1 Cor 2:11), and eternity (Heb 9:14).

## **Ministry of the Holy Spirit**

He was instrumental in the creation of the world (Gen 1:2) and the inspiration of the Word of God (2 Pet 1:21). Additionally, His ministry is to convict unbelievers of sin (John 16:8), regenerate the hearts of the elect (John 3:5; Titus 3:5), indwell believers once at the moment of conversion (1 Cor 3:6), incorporate them into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13), seal them for a future inheritance (Eph 1:13; 2 Cor 1:22), fill them for daily obedience (Gal 5:22-25; Eph 5:18), teach them God's truth (1 Cor 2:12), guide them (Rom 8:14), pray for them (Rom 8:26), and bestow believers with spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12:7).

## **Section E – Doctrine of Man**

### **Creation of Man**

In the beginning, God created the heavens and earth and all it contains out of nothing (Gen 1:2; Heb 11:3) in six literal 24-hour days (Gen 1:1-31; Ex 20:11), not as the result of an evolutionary process involving chance and time. Mankind was created in the image of God (Gen 1:27) on the sixth day of creation (Gen 2:7) with both a material (Rom 12:1; 1 Cor 15:44) and an immaterial (Ezek 18:4; Ps 51:10; Jer 17:9) aspect to his nature. In his original state, man was innocent, without sin, and holy (Gen 1:27, 31; 2:25). God's purpose in creating man was not because He was lonely and desiring fellowship, but rather to bring Himself glory (Is 43:7; Rom 11:36; Col 1:16; Rev 4:11).

### **Fall of Man**

Despite this design, however, man rationally and volitionally chose to rebel against his Creator (Gen 3:6-7) by disobeying God's specific instructions (Gen 2:16-17). This act of rebellion plunged the human race into sin and death (Rom 5:12) resulting in mankind's separation from God (Is 59:2). Because of Adam's sin, he passed down a sin nature to his progeny (Rom 5:12, 17-19) that renders all men fallen sinners who naturally rebel against God's loving rule and authority in their life (Ps 14:1-3; Rom 3:10-12). All men (Rom 3:23) are born in sin (Ps 51:5) which causes them to be enslaved to their sin (Rom 6:17; Titus 3:3), spiritually blind (2 Cor 4:4), darkened in their understanding (Eph 4:18), alienated and hostile in mind (Col 1:21), and spiritually dead (Eph 2:1-3). The natural man is totally depraved and incapable of producing works to commend him to God (Is 64:6). As a result, mankind is worthy of the wrath of God (Rom 1:18; 5:6; Col 3:6) and eternal death (Rom 6:23) and, therefore, hopelessly lost (Eph 2:12).

## **Section F – Doctrine of Sin**

First John 3:4 defines sin as "lawlessness" which is any violation in thought, word, or deed of God's perfect moral standard. Because God embodies perfect holiness and righteousness, He cannot tolerate sin and must judge it (Hab 1:13; Heb 9:27). Although Scripture does not clearly indicate how Satan fell (although see Is 14:12-15; Ezek 28:12-17), it does teach that Satan is a fallen angel, the open and declared enemy of God and man (Matt 4:1-11; Eph 2:2; Rev 12:9-10), and the origin and source of sin and death (Gen 3:1-5; John 8:44). All men are shut up under sin (Gal 3:22) since all men are unrighteous (Rom 3:10) and all unrighteousness is sin (1 John 5:17). Sin renders all men hostile toward God (Rom 8:7) and results in death, both spiritual and eternal (Gen 2:17; Ezek 18:4; Rom 6:23).

## **Section G – Doctrine of Salvation**

### **The Salvation of Believers**

Man is in desperate need of salvation because of the sin nature within that alienates him from God (Is 59:2) and renders him spiritually dead (Eph 2:1-3). Yet, as an act of grace

and mercy, God lovingly offers salvation as a free gift (Rom 3:24) and not on the basis of works (Rom 3:28; Eph 2:9; 2 Tim 1:9; Titus 3:5). This offer is for all (Matt 11:28-29) and God desires all to be saved (1 Tim 2:4; 1 John 2:2).

### **The Election of Believers**

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Before the foundation of the world, God chose those whom He would save from sin (Rom 8:28-30; Eph 1:4-11; 2 Thess 2:13; 2 Tim 2:10). This choice, not based on God looking down the corridors of time to see who would choose Him, was entirely unconditional (Rom 9:11; Eph 2:4-9) and designed to bring Him glory (Eph 1:5-6) as the One who graciously bestows mercy on whom He desires (Rom 9:14-24). The truth of election does not nullify man's responsibility to believe the Gospel and embrace Christ as Savior (John 3:16-18; 5:40), nor does it negate the church's responsibility to proclaim Christ and call sinners to repentance (Matt 28:18-20; 2 Cor 5:20).

### **The Redemption of Believers**

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The redemption of sinners is based on Christ's atonement for sin on the cross and His subsequent resurrection from the dead (Rom 5:6-11; Eph 1:7; 1 Pet 2:24; 3:18). Christ's death satisfied God's wrath against sin (1 Thess 1:10), made it possible for that sin to be removed (Col 1:21-22), and serves as the basis for Christ's righteousness being granted to believers (2 Cor 5:21). Christ's death was sufficient to pay for the sins of the world, but becomes effective only for those who believe. All whom the Father draws to Himself will come in faith, and all who come in faith the Father will receive unto salvation (John 6:37-40, 44; Acts 13:48). Since the atonement will result in what God has determined, namely the salvation of a definite group of people, the faith and repentance necessary for salvation have been purchased by Christ's death and are granted as gifts to the elect (Acts 11:18; Eph 2:8; Phil 1:29; 2 Tim 2:25).

### **The Regeneration of Believers**

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Because man is dead in sin (Eph 2:1-3) and not inclined to seek after God (Rom 3:11), God must break through the hard heart of man and overcome his resistance to the Gospel. This God does in the act of regeneration which is that instantaneous work of the Holy Spirit through the truth of the Word of God which enables persons to believe the Gospel (John 1:13; 3:3-8; Rom. 10:17; Titus 3:5; James 1:18; 1 Pet 1:23). Regeneration produces a new nature in the believer such that he is a new creation (2 Cor 5:17) and is no longer able to live in continual and unbroken patterns of sin (1 John 3:9; 5:18). Although it is not possible for him to completely eradicate sin in his life (1 John 1:8-10), his new nature results in a life characterized by righteousness and love (1 John 2:29; 4:7-8).

### **The Conversion of Believers**

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In order to be saved and possess eternal life, a person must repent of their sins and believe in Christ. Numerous elements are necessary for genuine conversion to take place: 1) Knowledge of the facts - Faith must be based on the facts of the Gospel found in the Word of God (Rom 10:17, 1 Cor 15:3-5, 2 Tim 3:15); 2) Assent to this knowledge - A person must agree that the facts of the Scriptures are true (Heb 11:6); 3) Repentance - Saving faith includes a turning from sin and turning towards God (Acts 2:38; 20:21; 26:20, 1 Thess 1:9); 4) Submission to Christ - True saving faith implicitly involves a subjection to the person and will of Christ with a desire and willingness to know, love and obey Him (Luke 6:46; John 3:36; 17:3; 20:28; Acts 2:36; Rom 10:9; Phil 2:9-11; James 2:14-26; Rev. 19:16).

## **The Justification of Believers**

Justification is the legal act of God in which He declares the believing sinner to be righteous in His sight on the basis of Christ's work of redemption (Luke 18:14; Rom 3:21-4:9; Gal 2:16-21; Phil 3:7-11). Justification involves the imputation of the believer's sin to Christ (2 Cor 5:21; Col 2:14; 1 Pet 2:24; 3:18) and the imputation of Christ's righteousness to the believer (1 Cor 1:20; 2 Cor 5:21) and it results in a peace with God in which the believer no longer stands guilty and condemned by God (Rom 5:1; 8:1).

## **The Sanctification of Believers**

Those whom God justifies He will also sanctify. Positional sanctification occurs at the moment of conversion when the believer is declared holy and perfect based on the finished work of Christ on the cross (Heb 10:14). Progressive sanctification refers to the Holy Spirit's ministry of progressively bringing the believer into conformity with the character of Christ (John 17:17, 19; 2 Cor 3:18; Eph 5:26; Rom 8:29). As such, believers are to live holy and godly lives as evidence of their being new creations in Christ (1 Cor 6:20; 1 Pet 1:14-16).

## **The Security of Believers**

Those who are truly redeemed are kept in the power of God and are therefore secure in Christ forever (John 5:24; 6:37-44; 10:27-30; Rom 5:9-10; 8:1, 30-39; 1 Cor 1:4-8; Eph 1:13-14; 4:30; Phil 1:6; 1 Thess 5:23; 2 Tim 1:12; Heb 7:25; 13:5; 1 Pet 1:5; Jude 24). It is therefore impossible for a genuine believer to forfeit his salvation. Those individuals who profess faith in Christ but later abandon the faith have not lost their salvation. Instead, they are demonstrating by their apostasy that they were never truly saved to begin with (Matt 7:21-23; 13:19-23; 1 John 2:19), for those who genuinely believe will persevere in the faith (Col 1:21-23; Heb 3:6, 14; John 8:31-32).

## **Section H - Doctrine of the Church**

### **Identity of the Church**

The church, the body of Christ (Eph 4:14-16), constitutes God's primary vehicle through which He works in this age. Christ anticipated the church age when He promised that He would build His church (Matt 16:18), a reality that was initiated on Pentecost (Acts 2). Every true believer is baptized by the Holy Spirit at the moment of conversion and placed into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13). The church, therefore, is a unique, living, spiritual organism (Eph 2:11-3:6; 1 Pet 2:5) comprised of genuine believers who willingly submit to Christ as their head (Eph 5:24). Contrary to the teaching of covenant theology, the church is distinct from the nation of Israel (Rom 11:11-32).

### **Purpose of the Church**

The church exists primarily for the purpose of displaying the glory of God by making known His manifold wisdom and greatness (Eph 1:3-14; 3:9-10; 1 Pet 4:10-11). Thus, everything that takes place in the body of Christ should be an act of worship to God (1 Pet 2:5). This takes place by faithfully preaching the Word (2 Tim 4:2), edifying the saints (Eph 4:11-16), and evangelizing the lost (Matt 28:19-20; 1 Pet 2:9). Since the establishment of local assemblies is clearly taught in Scripture (Acts 14:23; Gal 1:2; Phil 1:1; 1 Thess 1:1), believers are instructed to engage fully in the life of a local church (Heb 10:24-25). This is done for the purpose of loving (1 John 4:7), serving (Gal 5:13), and spurring one another (Heb 10:24-25) on toward maturity in Christ (Eph 4:15-16).



## **Gifts of the Church**

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Every believer (Rom 12:3; 1 Cor 12:7; 1 Pet 4:10) possesses an array of gifts given to him by the Holy Spirit (1 Cor 12:11) for the purpose of edifying the body (1 Cor 12:7; 1 Pet 4:10). All gifts are equally important to the building up of the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:12-25) and believers are responsible to understand and exercise their gifts to build up the body (Rom 12:3-8; 1 Pet 4:10). The attitude that must dominate when all the gifts are expressed is love (1 Cor 13).

Three categories of gifts are evident in the passages that describe spiritual gifts (Rom 12:3-8; 1 Cor 12:4-31; 1 Pet 4:10-11): 1) Speaking gifts (teaching, prophecy, exhortation, etc.); 2) Serving gifts (service, giving, leading, mercy, etc.); and 3) Sign gifts (healing, miracles, tongues, etc.). While speaking gifts and serving gifts are still in operation today, the sign gifts have ceased and are no longer in operation within the church (1 Cor 13:8-10). The primary reason for this is that the sign gifts were foundational to the establishment of the church (Eph 2:20) but once the foundation was laid the need for the gifts ceased. While God still heals today, miraculous gifts of divine healing were given in the apostolic era for the purpose of authenticating the message of the apostles (2 Cor 12:12; Heb 2:3-4), but with the canon closed, Scripture is the sole test of truth and, thus, sign gifts are no longer necessary. Likewise, tongues functioned in the early church as a sign of judgment to unbelieving Israel (1 Cor 14:21-22), an authentication of God's work in establishing and expanding the early church (Acts 2:4, 11; 10:46; 19:6), and as a secondary means of revelation when accompanied by an interpreter (1 Cor 14:2-28). However, the gift of tongues was only temporary and has since ceased (1 Cor 13:8-10).

## **Organization of the Church**

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The one supreme authority over the church is Christ Himself who exists as head of the church (1 Cor 11:3; Eph 1:22-23; Col 1:18), the Chief Shepherd of His body (1 Pet 5:4). It is He to whom the whole body submits (Eph 5:24) and in whom the body grows (Eph 4:15) and is held together (Eph 4:16).

Under Christ's headship, elders and deacons comprise the two primary offices that God has prescribed for leading and shepherding the church. Regarding elders, the church is to be led by a plurality (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5) of qualified men (1 Tim 3:2-7; Titus 1:6-9) who unanimously, equally, and autonomously serve the local body of believers. The elders are to teach the Word (1 Tim 3:2; 4:11; 5:17; 2 Tim 4:2), guard the truth and protect the people from error (Acts 20:28-31; Titus 1:9), exercise oversight (1 Pet 5:2), shepherd those entrusted to their care (Acts 20:28; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 3:4-5; 5:17; 1 Pet 5:2; Heb 13:17), equip the saints for the work of ministry (Eph 4:12; 2 Tim 2:2), devote themselves to the Word and prayer (Acts 6:4), and be examples for the flock to imitate (1 Tim 3:1-7; 4:12; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Pet 5:3).

Regarding deacons, they must be those who are examples of godliness (1 Tim 3:8-13), who are tested before being entrusted with responsibilities (1 Tim 3:10), and who serve well (1 Tim 3:13). They are to administrate the affairs of the church in special areas of service so that the needs of the body do not go unmet and the elders are freed up to shepherd and oversee (Acts 6:1-4).

The congregation is to esteem, appreciate, obey, and joyfully submit to the elders (1 Thess 5:12; Heb 13:17) so their task is a joyful one.

## **Ordinances of the Church**

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Two ordinances have been committed to the church: baptism and the Lord's supper. Believer's baptism is necessary because Christ gave us the example (Mark 1:9) and because Christ commanded it (Matt 28:19-20). Baptism illustrates Christ's death and

resurrection (1 Cor 15:3-4) and is symbolic of what takes place in a person's life when they are saved (2 Cor 5:17). When a person goes under the water, it is symbolic of the washing away of their sin. When a person comes up out of the water, it is symbolic of their new life in Christ. Baptism is only for believers (Acts 2:41) and is to be practiced by immersion since Jesus was baptized that way and every baptism in the Bible was by immersion (Acts 8:38-39). All true believers in Christ should be baptized soon after conversion as a first step of obedience. Infant baptism is not a legitimate expression of baptism as outlined in Scripture.

The Lord's supper is to serve as a memorial of Christ's death and resurrection. Christ himself instituted this practice when he said, "Do this in remembrance of Me" (Luke 22:19). It should be celebrated regularly (Acts 2:42) and always be preceded by a time of self examination (1 Cor 11:27-34). In observing this ordinance, the church is to proclaim the Lord's death until He comes (1 Cor 11:26), thereby remembering the sacrifice of Christ and celebrating His victory over sin and death.

### **Discipline of the Church**

Believers who demonstrate patterns of unrepentant sin are to be lovingly disciplined (Matt 18:15-17; 1 Cor 5:1-13) for the purpose of restoring them to fellowship (Gal 6:1-2) and maintaining the purity of the bride of Christ (Acts 5:11; 1 Tim 5:20). Matthew 18:15-17 lays out a very specific process to follow when confronting a sinning brother or sister. An elder found to be in sin on the basis of two or three witness is to be publicly rebuked (1 Tim 5:19-20).

### **Giving to the Church**

All believers are to regularly, purposefully, proportionally, individually and joyfully contribute financially to the work of the ministry. The New Testament does not specifically prescribe believers to give 10% to the Lord. Rather, it lays out principles for giving for believers: it should be regular (1 Cor 16:2), it should be sacrificial (Luke 21:1-4; 2 Cor 8:2-3; 9:6), and it should be cheerful (2 Cor 9:7).

## **Section I – Doctrine of End Times**

### **Death of Believers and Unbelievers**

When people die, there is a separation of the material and immaterial aspects of the person, but no loss of the immaterial consciousness. For believers, their souls pass immediately into the presence of Christ upon death (Luke 23:43; Phil 1:21-24; 2 Cor 5:8) and remain there in joyful fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ forever. For unbelievers, their souls pass immediately into hell upon death (Job 3:11-19; Luke 16:19-26; Rev 20:13-15) and remain there in torment forever, cut off from the life of God (Dan 12:2; Matt 25:41-46; 2 Thess 1:7-9).

### **Rapture**

The Rapture refers to the supernatural removal of the church out of this world. We believe that the Scriptures teach a pre-tribulational Rapture position which states that Christ will return at any moment prior to the Tribulation to take believers with Him (John 14:3). The dead in Christ will be raised first, followed by those believers who are still alive (1 Thess 4:13-17). As a result of this resurrection (Dan 12:2; John 5:28-29), bodies of believers will be reunited with their souls, completely transformed, and instantaneously brought into conformity to Christ (1 Cor 15:51-52; Phil 3:21). All those not raptured will remain on the earth and enter the Tribulation.

### **Judgment Seat of Christ**

Following the rapture and in heaven, New Testament believers will stand before Christ to be judged, not to be condemned for sin (Rom 8:1), but for the quality of their works

while on earth (Rom 14:10; 2 Cor 5:10). Works that stand this judgment will result in reward; works that do not will result in loss of reward (1 Cor 3:10-15).

### **Marriage Supper of the Lamb**

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At this joyous occasion, church-age believers, the bride, will be formally united with Christ, the bridegroom, forever as the complete union of Christ and His church will be established for eternity (Rev 19:7-9). When this occurs, the promises of John 14:3 and 1 Thessalonians 4:17 will be fulfilled.

### **Tribulation**

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After the Rapture there will be a seven year period of great conflict and distress on the earth as an expression of God's wrath against sinful man known as the Tribulation. It is referred to as the day of the Lord (Is 30:23-25; 34:1-8; 35:1-10; Joel 2:28-32; 3:1-21; Zeph 3:8, 16-20; Zech 14:1-21; 1 Thess 5:2; 2 Thess 2:2; 2 Pet 3:10), the great tribulation (Deut 4:30; Matt 24:9, 21, 29; Rev 7:14), the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer 30:7), and the seventieth week of Daniel (Dan 9:24-27; Rev 11:2-3; 12:6, 14; 13:5). During this time, the Antichrist (Dan 7:8-26; 9:26-27; 11:36-45; 2 Thess 2:3-10; Rev 13:1-9; 17:8-14) will make and break a covenant with Israel (Dan 9:27). This will be a significant time of persecution for the whole world, but particularly for Israel (Matt 24:9-24; Rev 12:6, 13-17) for the primary purpose of turning their hearts back to the Lord and preparing the way for the return of Christ (Zech 12:10; 13:8-9).

### **Return of Christ**

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The Tribulation will end with the immediate and triumphant return of Christ in His Second Coming (1 Cor 1:7; 1 Thess 1:10; 2:19; 3:13; Rev 22:20). Although no man knows the timing of Christ's return (Matt 24:44; 25:13; Acts 1:6-7), it will be marked by supernatural displays (Matt 24:27-30) and he will come to make war with his enemies (Rev 19:11-16). The battle of Armageddon will occur (Rev 16:13-14, 16) and all those who assemble to make war with Christ will be executed (Rev 19:17-19). The Antichrist and false prophet will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev 19:20-21) and both Jews (Matt 25:1-30) and Gentiles (Matt 25:31-46) will be judged such that only believers enter the Millennium. The Jews will accept Christ as their Messiah (Zech 12:10; 13:9; Rom 11:26), Old Testament and Tribulation saints will be resurrected (Dan 12:2; Rev 20:4-6), Satan will be bound (Rev 20:1-3), and Christ's kingdom on earth will be established (Matt 24:36; Acts 1:11; 1 Cor 15:23-24; 2 Thess 1:7-10; Heb 9:28).

### **Millennium**

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Following these events, Christ will rule and reign on earth for a literal one thousand years (Rev 20:1-7) and glorified saints will rule and reign with him (Rev 5:10; 20:4). During this time, the promises God made to Israel will be fulfilled (Jer 31:31; 33:15; Ezek 36:24-28; 37:21-28). Also, because Christ will be reigning there (Is 24:23; Jer 23:5-6; Mic 4:7), Jerusalem will be the center of world worship (Is 2:3; 60:2-3; Mic 4:1-2) and there will be a reinstitution of temple worship and sacrifices (Is 56:6-8; Jer 33:15-18; Ezek 40-48). This will be a time of great blessing such as no war (Is 2:4; Mic 4:3), health and long life (Is 35:5-6; 65:20), peace among animals and humans (Is 11:6), and perfect justice executed by Christ (Is 11:3-4; Jer 23:5).

### **Final Rebellion and Judgment**

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At the end of the Millennium, Satan will be released from the abyss and will gather a large number of people who will rebel against Christ during the Millennium to make war against Christ (Rev 20:7-9). This rebellion will be short-lived and completely unsuccessful such that those who participate in it will be immediately killed and Satan will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev 20:10). All unbelievers of all time will be resurrected (Dan 12:2; John 5:26-29; Rev 20:5) to face the Great White Throne Judgment

(Rev 20:11-13) and will be cast into the lake of fire (Rev 20:14-15) where they will endure everlasting torment (Matt 25:46).

## **Eternal State**

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Following these events, the earthly millennial kingdom of Christ will merge with the eternal kingdom of God which will include a new heavens and earth (2 Pet 3:7, 10-13; Rev 20:11; 21:1-2) and a new heavenly city of Jerusalem (Rev 21:10-21). Believers will enjoy eternal, unhindered fellowship with God (Rev 21:3, 22; 22:4) and there will be no sorrow, death, or mourning (Rev 21:4) and no sin (Rev 21:27; 22:3).

## **ARTICLE V**

### **Ordinances**

We recognize two ordinances of the Church for this age - The Lord's Supper and Water Baptism. They are not to be regarded, however, as a means of salvation, nor as means of grace by which special merit is obtained. Eph. 2:8, 9

#### **Section A - The Lord's Supper**

This ordinance shall be observed monthly and as often as the elders shall decide on special occasions. All who have accepted Jesus Christ as personal Savior and are walking in fellowship with the Lord shall be welcome to join in this service - unless they are under the discipline of the church, as defined in Article VI, Section D, Par. 2. I Cor. 11:17-34

#### **Section B - Water Baptism**

When administered by this church, baptism shall be by immersion at the request of those who have personally acknowledged Christ as Savior. This ordinance is a necessary requirement for membership and we strongly recommend that all members prayerfully consider the following Scriptures: Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:41; 8:36-39; 10:47-49.

## **ARTICLE VI**

### **Membership**

#### **Section A - Qualifications of Members**

Persons who give testimony to their faith in Christ as Savior, who give assurance of their willingness to follow and submit themselves to the Word of God as their only rule of faith, doctrine, and practice, and who indicate their agreement with the Constitution of this church shall be eligible for membership. No person holding membership in a secret oath-bound society shall be eligible for membership in Maranatha Bible Church.

#### **Section B - Reception of Members**

1. Christians who desire to associate themselves with this church and who have successfully completed the membership class or its equivalent shall make application to the elders. They shall then meet with the elders for examination and approval.
2. Applicants who have been approved for reception into the membership shall be recommended to the church by announcement from the pulpit or in the bulletin for two

consecutive Sundays. If no valid objections are received by the elders during that period, the right hand of fellowship shall be extended to them at a following Sunday morning service. Their membership shall then be in force.

### **Section C - Status of Membership**

The membership of this church shall consist of three groups, namely; Active Membership, Associate Membership, and Inactive Membership.

1. Active Membership shall consist of such Christians as have been received in accordance with the provisions of this Constitution and who are not members of any other church.

- a. Active members will consist of those individuals who have reached 18 years of age.
- b. No minimum age shall be set for membership. The fitness of each applicant who is under 18 years of age shall be determined by the elders.

2. Associate Membership shall be extended to those who meet the qualifications of Active Membership, but who are not permanent residents of this area, such as students and missionaries, who may hold regular membership elsewhere. They shall be permitted to teach a Sunday School class or participate in a similar ministry.

3. Inactive Membership shall consist of the following

- a. Those who no longer have residence in this area, but still desire to hold their membership in this church.
- b. Those who have been absent from the services of the church for a period of six months without giving a satisfactory reason for such absence.
- c. Those who have come under some disciplinary action of the church.

### **Section D - Discipline of Members**

(a) The threefold purpose of church discipline is to glorify God by maintaining purity in the local church (1 Corinthians 5:6), to edify believers by deterring sin (1 Timothy 5:20), and to promote the spiritual welfare of the offending believer by calling him or her to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct (Galatians 6:1).

(b) Members of this church and all other professing Christians who regularly attend or fellowship with this church who err in doctrine, or who engage in conduct that violates Scripture as determined by the Board of Elders, shall be subject to church discipline, including dismissal according to Matthew 18:15–18. Before such dismissal, however,

(1) it shall be the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of the erring individual's heresy or misconduct to warn and correct such erring individual in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration. If the erring individual does not heed this warning, then,

(2) the warning church member shall again go to the erring individual, seeking his or her repentance, but accompanied by one or two individuals who shall confirm that the sin has occurred or is continuing to occur, and/or that the erring individual has been

appropriately confronted and has refused to repent. The first and second warnings may occur with no specified time interval. If the erring individual still refuses to heed this warning, then,

(3) it shall be brought to the attention of the Board of Elders. If the Board of Elders determines – after thorough investigation in accord with the procedures prescribed by pertinent Scripture, including Matthew 18:15–18 and 1 Timothy 5:19 – that there is corroborating evidence that the erring individual has sinned or is continuing to sin, that he or she has been appropriately confronted, and that he or she has refused to repent, then the Elders shall inform the church and the congregation thereof at a regularly scheduled worship service in order that the church may call the erring individual to repentance.

If the erring individual demonstrates repentance, then notice to that effect may be given at a regularly scheduled worship service. If, however, the erring individual does not repent in response to the church in its collective call to repentance, then

(4) he or she shall be publicly dismissed from the fellowship and/or membership of the church and the congregation thereof at a regularly scheduled worship service. If the erring individual, after such dismissal, heeds the warning, demonstrates repentance, and requests reinstatement before the Board of Elders, then he or she shall be publicly restored to all the rights, duties, privileges, and responsibilities of fellowship and/or membership.

(c) Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Elders in the exercise of their discretion may proceed directly to the third stage of church discipline, (i.e. the informing of the church and the congregation thereof at a regularly scheduled worship service in order that the church may call the erring individual to repentance) or to the fourth stage of church discipline, (i.e. the dismissal from the fellowship and/or membership of the church) when one or more of the following have occurred:

(1) Where the transgression and the refusal to repent have been public, i.e. openly and to the offense of the whole Church (1 Cor. 5:1–5)

(2) Where the disciplined party has taught or otherwise disseminated doctrine deemed false or erroneous by the Elders, then chosen to disregard the direction and reproof of the Elders (Romans 16:17); or

(3) Where the disciplined party has been warned twice to cease from factious and divisive conduct and has chosen to disregard that warning (Titus 3:10–11).

(d) The members of this church, and all other professing Christians who regularly attend or fellowship with this church, agree that there shall be no appeal to any court because of the dismissal or because of public statements to the congregation at the third or fourth stages of church discipline. Members of this church who are under discipline by the church, as defined in the previous paragraphs, forfeit and waive the right to resign from this church. Resignations from membership are possible only by church members who are in good standing and who are not under any disciplinary action.

(e) Separate and apart from the process of church discipline, but subject to the discretion and approval of the Elders (or a duly constituted subcommittee thereof), a church member, non-member regular attender, or other individual may be notified that he or she

is not to be present upon church premises for such a period of time as is deemed necessary for the safety and well-being of others on church premises. Such required absence may, but need not, be concurrent with church discipline of that person.

(f) Separate and apart from the process of church discipline, but subject to the discretion and approval of the Elders (or a duly constituted subcommittee thereof), the names of any church members who have not attended a worship service, Sunday School class session, or Small Group meeting at Maranatha Bible Church for a period of six months or longer may be removed from the membership rolls.

### **Section E - Letters of Transfer**

1. Letters of transfer shall be received from other fundamental churches, subject to the provisions of Article VI, Sec. A and B.
2. Letters of transfer to fundamental churches shall be granted to those on the Active Roll. Application for withdrawal from this church and recommendations for membership in other fundamental churches should be made by letter to the Church Clerk, being careful to state the name of the church with which it is desired to affiliate. Letters shall be granted by the elders.

## **ARTICLE VII**

### **Church Leadership**

#### **Section A - Authority**

The one supreme authority over the church is Jesus Christ. The church is built by Him and upon Him as its Chief Cornerstone (Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:20), is under His authority as the Head of the church (Eph. 1:22, 23; Col. 1:18), and is under His care as its Chief Shepherd (Eph. 5:25; I Peter 5:4). It is in Christ that the body grows and is held together (Col. 2:19). We desire to obey Him, to imitate Him, and to seek His mind in all things.

#### **Section B – Elders**

##### **1. Description**

The Scriptures teach that elders are to oversee and shepherd the local church. Elders are spiritually qualified, mature men who are directly accountable to God for the well-being of the church (II Cor. 5:9, 10; Heb. 13:17).

##### **2. Scriptural Teaching**

We understand the Scriptures to teach the following important principles about elder leadership within the local church:

###### **a. Pastoral Leadership**

One of the most precious images of Jesus is as a Shepherd who cares for the flock (John 10). Elders likewise, must possess a deep desire to do the work of the ministry and to shepherd the flock of Jesus Christ at Maranatha (I Tim. 3:1; I Peter 5:2). This requires protecting the church from false teachers, feeding the flock through the teaching of God's Word, leading the church as overseers, and caring

for the practical needs of our people (Acts 20:28-35; I Thess. 5:12; I Tim. 3:5; Titus 1:9; I Peter 5:1-4). Pastoral leadership is about imitating the care and tender compassion of Jesus Christ for His people.

#### b. Servant Leadership

Elders are to be servant leaders, not domineering or self-serving dictators. Their desire must be to lovingly serve on the behalf of others in a humble way that genuinely manifests the life of Jesus Christ to the congregation and to a watching world. Jesus Christ is the supreme model of sacrificial servant leadership (John 13:1-17; Phil. 2:3-9).

We believe that church leadership is about people, not power, and that “lording” control over people is a failure to understand the Scriptural concept of eldership (I Peter 5:1-4). At Maranatha, the individuals within the elder team itself must work together with a servant spirit, being patient, listening, handling disagreement, receiving rebuke and correction, forgiving, and lovingly relating to one another.

#### c. Shared Leadership

Maranatha Bible Church is led by a plurality, or team, of elders. A consistent Scriptural pattern of shared leadership among elders is evident throughout many of the New Testament Epistles (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). The Scriptures record the existence of a group of elders in numerous local churches and it is never indicated that a church would ever have or need any other form of leadership than that of a plurality of elders.

The Apostles themselves shared the leadership of the first church at Jerusalem, and later with elders (Acts 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23). Furthermore, Paul never ordained a sole individual to perform the church’s ministry, but left a group of elders to jointly serve each believing community. The combined counsel and wisdom of a team of elders helps assure that decisions are not self-willed or self-serving to a single individual. Together, the elders strive to function in unity and harmony in seeking the mind of the Lord.

#### d. Male Leadership

We believe the Scriptures provide a model of male leadership within the New Testament church. The primary example of male leadership is found in the person of Jesus Christ as He selected and trained twelve men to serve as the leaders of the first church. In addition, the Apostle Paul’s letters to Timothy and Titus also require elders to be men (I Tim. 2:11, 12; I Tim. 3:1-5; Titus 1:6). At Maranatha, qualified men within the church body share the responsibility of elder leadership as taught in God’s Word.

We affirm that, while God in His Word has ordained differences in their function, both men and women are created in the image of God and are joint heirs in the kingdom. The Scriptures provide a strong basis for the value of women, both as persons and as participants in the life of the redeemed community. We, too, value the very significant participation that women have in the life of Maranatha. Our desire is to affirm, support and encourage women in the use of their God-given gifts and abilities to their fullest extent within the biblical guidelines for the glory of God.



### 3. Qualifications

The character and effectiveness of the church is directly related to the quality of its leadership. The Scriptures clearly teach that elders must meet certain spiritual and moral qualifications before appointment to office.

The spiritual qualifications for elders are found in I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and I Peter 5:1-4:

An overseer must be...

above reproach (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6, 7)	accusations not likely to be believed because of overall character
husband of one wife (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:6)	a man devoted to his wife
temperate (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8; 2:5)	clearheaded, not self-indulgent, self-controlled
prudent (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8)	not impulsive, self-restrained, balanced
respectable (I Tim. 3:2)	an ordered life
hospitable (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:8)	an open heart and an open house
able to teach (I Tim. 3:2; Titus 1:7)	able to transmit spiritual truth
not addicted to wine (I Tim. 3:3; 5:23; Titus 1:7)	no indulgence that would undermine witness
not pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious (I Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7)	not quick-tempered or irrational
free from the love of money (I Tim. 3:3; Titus 1:7; I Peter 5:2)	not money hungry
one who manages his own household well (I Tim. 3:4, 5)	home reflects Christian character
having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion (Titus 1:6)	children are believers
not a new convert (I Tim. 3:6)	not a new believer
good reputation (I Tim. 3:7)	known for good and right, a good reputation from those outside the church
good reputation (I Tim. 3:7)	known for good and right, a good reputation from those outside the church
God's steward (Titus 1:7)	one who is directly accountable to God
not self-willed (Titus 1:7)	not stubborn, headstrong, overbearing, having own way
not quick-tempered (Titus 1:7)	not known for outbursts of anger
loving what is good (Titus 1:8)	pursues beneficial things
just (Titus 1:8)	fair, impartial
devout (Titus 1:8)	personal holiness
holding fast the faithful word...that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict (Titus 1:9)	stable in the faith, and is able to teach and defend the truths of God's Word
exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily (I Peter 5:2)	not out of obligation, but desires to serve
not as lording it over but proving to be examples (I Peter 5:3)	not controlling, but as Godly models

We cannot place biblically unqualified men into office. Only morally and spiritually qualified men can serve as elders. Elders must also have a passionate heart to care for God's people and must pursue the responsibilities involved in leading God's flock. They must be willing to work diligently so that the body of Christ will be equipped for the work of service. But in addition to a personal desire to be a shepherd, Scripture demands that a prospective elder meet certain qualifications.

All elders must be in unreserved agreement with the Statement of Doctrine of this church. All elders must also be members of this church and must attend its corporate worship services faithfully as well as be actively involved with its members.

#### 4. The Process for the Placement of Elders

Because of the overriding concern of the New Testament for godly men to serve as elders, we take eldership at Maranatha seriously. The critical task of placing new elders in office shall include the following steps: preparation, identification, examination, training, appointment, and installation.

##### a. Preparation

Our Lord Jesus Christ spent a significant part of His public ministry preparing for the future. He patiently poured His life into twelve men, training them to be the future leaders of the church. He was a master teacher and mentor. Like the Lord, the Apostle Paul also was a discipler of men. He had men such as Timothy and Titus who he discipled and expected these men to train others: "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also," (II Tim. 2:2).

We believe that the key to reproducing leadership is to clearly plan for it. The development of spiritual leadership for the church occurs through an intentional process whereby individuals are discipled and trained by other spiritual men within the church. This equipping and building up of the body of Christ is through the teaching of God's Word. We understand that effective, qualified leadership may take years to develop. However, for the church to have doctrinally sound and competent leaders to serve, then the elders must actively train, guide, and pray for quality men *now*.

In addition to discipling individuals, the elders will ensure that the entire church family is taught the Scriptural principles for church leadership. The elders will evaluate the necessity for this instruction periodically.

##### b. Identification

The elders will seek to identify potential elders within the church by considering those men who are, in part, already doing the work of an elder. We believe that a God-given desire will motivate certain men within the church to diligently study the Scriptures, to instruct others in the Word, and to sacrificially care for and serve others within the congregation. The elders observe and identify those men who develop in spiritual maturity, godly character, faithful service, doctrinal soundness, and spiritual giftedness.

The elder team welcomes requests for new men to be considered for office.

Requests should be addressed to the elders. Although requests may be made at any time, the congregation will be called upon annually to confidentially identify potential elders during the annual meeting.

c. Examination

Potential elders will be considered first by the elder team. Those who have exhibited an ongoing desire to serve, who have a sufficient understanding of the teaching of God's Word, and who appear to meet the spiritual qualifications as found in I Timothy 3 and Titus 1, will be individually interviewed by the elder team. The elders shall inquire of the man's character and doctrinal knowledge as well as request information from the man's family and friends during the evaluation. The evaluation shall include a written questionnaire pertaining to character and doctrinal qualifications as well as a verbal review by the current elders.

Since the qualifications for eldership are to be taken seriously, the congregation also is to be involved in the examination process of its spiritual leaders. The selection of a potential elder will be announced to the congregation prior to his appointment to office for affirmation by the congregation. The announcement will include accompanying instructions so that the man is evaluated according to the biblical qualifications. Any objections as to the man's character will be evaluated by the current elders. The elders will determine if the accusations are Scripturally based and if he should be dismissed from consideration.

d. Training

To further prepare potential elders for leadership at Maranatha, these men will be requested to review the qualifications and responsibilities of eldership, read materials on church leadership, review the philosophy of ministry, strategy, and vision of Maranatha, receive instruction on decision making and problem solving, and attend the elders' meetings for Bible study and prayer.

e. Appointment

The Scriptures teach that elders are to be appointed. New Testament elders were appointed by other spiritual leaders within a local church. At Maranatha, elders are appointed by other elders who are serving in the church. A prospective elder may be appointed only after the candidate has been examined by the elders and the congregation and received training to equip him for the responsibilities of eldership.

f. Installation

The installation of new elders shall occur during a worship service or congregational meeting. The congregation will be presented with those elders who have been appointed to office and the new elders shall be charged with the work of the ministry by the laying on of hands. The congregation is encouraged to pray for the work of the new elders' ministry.

5. Responsibilities

a. Leading

The elders lead first by setting an example of personal godliness for others to follow:

“...nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock,” (I Pet. 5:3). They are to be men who are respectable and above reproach. Besides modeling godly living, the elders also manage, or rule, the church: “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor...,” (I Tim. 5:17). Some specific ways the elders of Maranatha lead and provide direction for the church are by

- taking an active leadership role in the worship services of the church
- being involved in every ministry of the church including attending meetings, offering insight, making decisions, and helping to set goals
- evaluating the effectiveness of all programs periodically
- writing and periodically evaluating a philosophy for every ministry of the church
- holding elders’ meetings regularly, for which there shall be a chairman, vice chairman, and secretary selected from among themselves
- making decisions on behalf of the church
- studying God’s Word and drafting position papers on various issues
- developing a vision statement for the church
- planning for the needs and growth of the church
- reviewing and making proposals to amend the Constitution as necessary

#### b. Overseeing

The author of Hebrews wrote, “Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls,” (Heb. 13:17). In I Peter we read that elders are to “shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight,” (I Peter 5:2). Elders are overseers of the church. They are responsible for watching over the members of the church family as well as supervising its affairs. The elders carry out this responsibility by

- regularly reviewing the church membership
- praying, caring for, and encouraging each individual of the church body
- directing and facilitating the serving ministry of the deacons
- supervising the placement, ministry, evaluation, and termination of church staff
- reviewing and approving programs, outreaches, policies, and curriculum of the church
- forming and overseeing church committees, advisory councils and sub-committees as necessary
- preparing and presenting an annual budget for congregational affirmation (the new budget must be available to the congregation at least two weeks before the annual meeting)
- approving, or disapproving, fund raisers, and overseeing all expenditures
- scheduling the congregational meetings and other events of the church
- overseeing the management of the facilities and property of the church
- acting as a board of trustees for legal purposes

#### b. Teaching

Throughout the New Testament, we see a great emphasis on the importance of teaching God’s Word. Before His ascension, Jesus commissioned His disciples to teach others (Matt. 28:20). The Apostles were teachers, and the early church devoted itself to teaching (Acts 2:42). Paul exhorted Timothy to give attention to “the public reading of Scripture, to exhortation, and teaching” (I Tim. 4:13).

New Testament elders are required to be “able to teach” (I Tim. 3:2). We are persuaded that all elders must have a sufficient knowledge of the truths of God’s

Word and be able to communicate sound doctrine to others (II Tim. 2:2; Titus 1:9). Those who “work hard at preaching and teaching” (I Tim. 5:17) are worthy of our deep appreciation and respect.

At Maranatha, we believe that the proclamation of the Word of God should always be the heart and focus of the church’s ministry. Therefore, the elders are faithfully committed to the accurate, systematic, God-centered preaching and teaching of the Scriptures. Some specific ways in which the elders instruct others are by

- the consistent expositional preaching of the Word of God
- teaching doctrine and the books of the Bible for all ages
- mentoring and training others one-on-one and through Bible studies
- providing teaching seminars and workshops to train others who are teachers
- writing curriculum as necessary
- being men who are individually devoted to regular study of the Word of God (Acts 6:4)

### c. Shepherding

As shepherds, elders strive to protect, lead, feed, and care for the spiritual and practical needs of the flock of Christ. Their ministry of shepherding others within the church family comes from a warm heart which is devoted to loving, self-sacrificing service on behalf of the sheep.

To the elders at Ephesus, the Apostle Paul said to “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood,” (Acts 20:28). Peter likewise exhorted his fellow elders to “shepherd the flock of God among you,” (I Peter 5:2). Shepherd elders seek to watch over the church body and defend it from that which threatens the unity, stability and purity of the church. The elders shepherd the flock at Maranatha by

- encouraging and exhorting members toward godliness, love and good deeds
- practicing the “one another’s” of the New Testament
- reaching out to new members and finding places of service
- participating in small group ministry
- lovingly exercising church discipline, being guided always by the principles set forth in Scripture
- helping to resolve conflict and rebuking any who cause division or disharmony within the body
- visiting the sick and caring for the weak and needy (including helping with the dispersal of the benevolence fund)
- comforting the bereaved
- providing counsel for those who are considering marriage or divorce
- welcoming others into their lives and their homes

### d. Guarding

A major part of the work of the elders is to establish and maintain the authority of the Word of God and to guard the local church from false teachers. Paul, writing to the elders at Ephesus, instructed them to “be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock,” (Acts 20:28). In his letter to Titus, Paul required an elder to be one who is “holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict,” (Titus 1:9). The elders defend the teachings of God’s Word and guard against false

doctrine by

- defending the inspiration, inerrancy, and authority of the Scriptures
- maintaining the centrality of the Scriptures in every program and ministry of the church
- diligently studying and exegeting the Scriptures to discover its correct interpretation
- being alert and watching for false teaching
- dealing with those who promote heresy, especially concerning the major doctrines of the Word
- reviewing curriculum
- staying current on contemporary issues and offering a biblical perspective of various topics affecting the church

#### e. Praying

God wants those who lead the church to be people of prayer. The first leaders of the church were men who devoted themselves to prayer (Acts 1:14; 6:4). Loving shepherd elders know that caring for people and their needs includes praying for them consistently. Furthermore, anyone who is suffering from sickness is directed to “call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him,” (James 5:14). The elders are committed to praying for the church by

- praying regularly for the church family, individually and corporately during elders’ meetings
- leading in prayer during the worship services of the church
- being available to pray with others at all times
- praying over and anointing with oil those who are experiencing serious health issues

#### 6. Elders and Decision Making

Decision making at Maranatha involves the collective participation of the elder team. The goal of the elders is to speak and act as a unified team. Therefore, we believe it is important for the elders to work and pray together to achieve oneness of mind.

Elders are to shepherd the flock “according to the will of God” (I Peter 5:2), which means that elders have a responsibility of knowing the will of the Head of the church. When conflict arises, eldership often requires much discussion, consideration of various opinions, study of Scripture, and fervent prayer, all with the purpose of becoming of one mind (Acts 15:1-29). At times, elders must defer to one another in matters of preference in order to arrive at unanimity (Rom. 12:10).

We believe that good communication is key to being an effective leader. The elder team will remain open and accessible to the members of Maranatha. The elders will strive to regularly communicate decisions and information, and receive input from the church body as well.

#### 7. Eldership not Limited by Number

There is no Scriptural limitation upon the number of elders within a local church. However, every prospective elder must have a desire to serve and meet the qualifications. The number of elders will depend upon those qualified and the number needed to effectively shepherd the church. It is our intent to have at least four qualified men to serve on the elder team at Maranatha Bible Church at all times.

## 8. Length of Service

Scripture places no limit on the length of service of an elder. Thus, all elders will serve until they decide to resign, until they request a period of rest, or because of personal circumstances. Additionally, the remaining elders may determine that there is some disqualifying cause to warrant one's removal.

During its annual meeting, the congregation will be called upon to complete and submit a written evaluation of elders who desire to continue to serve in the church. All current elders shall be presented to the congregation annually for affirmation and prayer.

## 9. Removal<sup>1</sup>

### a. Reasons for removal

Certain reasons may require an elder to step down from his position or make his removal necessary:

#### (1) Sin in which an elder comes under church discipline.

Some sins and offenses which an elder may commit can be addressed and resolved by following the procedure outlined in Scripture (Matt. 18:15, 16; Gal. 6:1). However, certain sins can be serious enough to significantly jeopardize an elder's integrity and, in some cases, destroy the testimony of the church. While every member of the body is called to godly living, the conduct of elders is particularly important since elders serve as examples for others to follow. They must be men who are above reproach and respectable as well as those who have a good reputation outside the church. While elders are not to be the objects of false or frivolous accusations (I Tim. 5:19), elders are church members just as all others and are subject to discipline according to the guidelines outlined in Scripture. An elder who sins in such a way that he comes under the discipline of the church will be disqualified from continuing to serve as an elder. This removal will be determined by the remaining elders and shall be reported to the church during a church service or congregational meeting (I Tim. 5:20).

#### (2) The discovery of biblical disqualification(s) after appointment.

If an elder is found to be biblically disqualified in any area, he must step down or be removed. All elders must continue to meet the requirements as found in I Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9 while serving in the church.

#### (3) The inability or persistent failure to perform the biblical functions of an elder.

If it becomes clear that an elder is unable, unwilling, or persistently failing to

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<sup>1</sup>Adapted from Jim Elliff, "Removal of an Elder." Copyright © 2004 Christ Fellowship of Kansas City. Used by permission.

perform the functions of eldership, even after encouragement, warnings, and counsel from the other elders, he must step down or be removed. All elders must have a sincere and diligent desire to serve and must carry out the work of the ministry.

(4) Unresolved doctrinal disharmony.

Anyone who advocates a major doctrinal difference or causes others to be led astray must not be allowed to continue in the church (I Tim. 1:19, 20; II Tim. 2:16-18). At Maranatha, in the event that an elder holds and insists on teaching doctrinal positions contrary to those in the Statement of Doctrine, and if doctrinal harmony is unattainable through study and discussion with other elders, the dissenting elder must step down or be removed.

(5) Unresolved philosophical disharmony.

No team of elders will be perfectly like-minded in all things. These minor differences often lead to helpful dialogue, inspire fresh thinking, or bring about necessary change. However, if a team is to pull strongly, they must be generally like-minded and moving in the same direction. Being unified in mind and purpose is essential to the church (Phil. 2:2; Eph. 4:3; Titus 3:9-11). If a single elder insists on pulling in a substantially different and incompatible direction regarding a major matter, and if he remains unyielding and disagreeable despite all attempts to harmonize his position with that of the elder team, he must step down or be removed.

(6) Personal desire to step down.

If an elder becomes personally convinced that he is no longer qualified, or if he no longer desires to serve as an elder, he must be allowed to step down (I Tim. 3:1). In such cases, before the elder steps down, earnest attempts should be made to encourage the man, who may simply be frustrated, discouraged, or excessively harsh in his self-examination (assuming the other elders and members of the church see him as qualified and effective). Additionally, other personal circumstances may create a situation in which an elder desires to step down from office.

(7) A need for rest.

If the elder team recognizes that an elder has become overburdened and needs rest from his duties, or for health reasons, or for the good of his family, he may decide on his own, or be encouraged by the other elders, to step down for a time of recovery.

b. Process for removal

In the church, as with any institution, those who are in authority may become the object of gossip and wrongful defamation. In fact, the more diligently an elder becomes involved in others' problems, the greater the risk of facing angry, false



accusation. For this reason, the Apostle Paul told Timothy, “Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses,” (I Tim. 5:19). It is necessary, then, for every member to avoid discussing personal objections with others and to proceed with prayer and caution, remembering that the church was careful in examining each elder before his appointment to office. The removal of an elder could lead to great strife and division. Furthermore, the unnecessary investigation of an elder could cause him to lose credibility among others.

This being said, neither personal loyalty to an elder, fear of strife in the church, fear of reprisal, nor any other concern should prevent a member from revealing a legitimate problem regarding an elder. The concern should be addressed to the elder team. If the elder recognizes a significant problem regarding his own leadership ability or sees himself as biblically unqualified, he may choose to step down voluntarily. In other cases, assuming the matter is well attested by multiple witnesses (I Tim. 5:19), the remaining elders shall investigate and remove the elder if necessary. In any event, the discontinuance or removal of an elder must be reported to the church during a church service or congregational meeting. The man may be able to serve in the church in other ways, but restoration to eldership may not be possible.

#### c. Spirit of removal

The Apostle Paul wrote, “Brethren, even if a man is caught in any trespass, you who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; each one looking to yourself, lest you too be tempted, (Gal. 6:1). Writing to the Ephesians, Paul said to “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you along with all malice. And be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you,” (Eph. 4:31, 32).

Loving discipline is not only for the protection of the church, but for the reconciliation of a fallen elder as well. Discipline reflects God’s love for His children: “For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines,” (Heb. 12:6). At Maranatha, the elders seek to remove and shepherd a sinning elder in a spirit of meekness, love, and forgiveness (Matt. 7:1-5; I Cor. 10:12; II Cor. 4, 8; Col. 3:12-14).

### **Section C - Deacons**

#### 1. Description

The Scriptures teach that deacons are to serve the church by caring for the practical needs of the people. Deacons are spiritually qualified men who assist and work under the leadership of the elders in serving the physical needs of the church family.

## 2. Scriptural Teaching

We understand the Scriptures to teach the following important principles about the ministry of deacons within the local church:

### a. Scriptural Basis

Acts 6:1-7 provides the first indication of a specific official group of men who were appointed to serve the practical needs of the church. Although the Greek word for “deacon” is not explicit in the text, the concept of a body of servants who lovingly care for the needs of others is very apparent. In this passage we see that men were selected to carry out the task of caring for the needy so that the Apostles could give attention to their first priority- prayer and ministry of the Word.

### b. Deacons an office in the church

Writing to the church at Philippi, the Apostle Paul addressed all the saints “including the overseers and deacons,” (Phil. 1:1). The first office is that of the pastoral oversight of elders; the second is the office of the practical service of the deacons. Likewise, the two offices of church leadership at Maranatha are elders and deacons.

### c. Complementary Ministry

In the New Testament, deacons are always in close relationship with the elders of the church. Like the elders, deacons are required to meet specific qualifications. Like the elders, they must be examined and approved before they can serve. Like the elders, they hold an official position of trust in the congregation.

Unlike the elders, however, deacons are not required to be able to teach and do not govern the church as part of their position. They are servants who relieve shepherding elders of the multitude of practical duties that are required in caring for a congregation. The two offices of elders and deacons are separate but complementary. Although deacons complement the elders, their Scriptural role and responsibilities are distinct. The elders must devote their primary attention to teaching and leading people while deacons must give their primary attention to caring for people’s physical welfare. So deacons assist and complement the elders in the overall ministry of the church.

### d. Subordinate Ministry

Because the elders oversee the entire church, they also oversee the deacons. Deacons serve under the direction and leadership of the elders, undertaking those areas of service necessary for the church’s functioning that would otherwise prohibit the elders from fulfilling their biblical responsibilities. At Maranatha, the elders delegate certain tasks to the deacons and call upon the deacons to help them with the various functional needs of the church.

### 3. Qualifications

The spiritual qualifications for deacons are found in II Timothy 3:8-12:

Deacons must be...

men of dignity (I Tim. 3:8)	serious; respectable conduct
not double-tongued (I Tim. 3:8)	not deceitful in words; no inconsistency in speech
not addicted to much wine (I Tim. 3:8)	not controlled by alcohol
not fond of sordid gain (I Tim. 3:8)	not one who loves money; not greedy
holding to the mystery of the faith (I Tim. 3:9)	one who knows what he believes and why
tested (I Tim. 3:10)	tested and approved character
beyond reproach (I Tim. 3:10)	no charge of wrongdoing is likely to be believed because of overall character
husband of only one wife (I Tim. 3:12)	a man devoted to his wife
good managers of their children and households (I Tim. 3:12)	has his home in order

Women must be...

dignified (I Tim. 3:11)	serious; respectable conduct
not malicious gossips (I Tim. 3:11)	not slanderous or libelous
temperate (I Tim. 3:11)	clearheaded, not self-indulgent, self-controlled
faithful in all things (I Tim. 3:11)	in all of life- to their husband, family, church, and God

All deacons must be in unreserved agreement with the Statement of Doctrine of this church. All deacons must also be members of this church and must attend its corporate worship services faithfully as well as be actively involved with its members.

### 4. The Process for the Placement of Deacons

The process for the placement of deacons shall be the same as for the placement of elders: preparation, identification, examination, training, appointment, and installation. Potential deacons are required to attend deacons' meetings for Bible study and prayer and may be requested to read material to prepare them for the serving ministry of the church. The potential deacons shall be examined by the elders. Deacons shall be appointed and installed into office by the elder team.

### 5. Responsibilities

Through the deacons, the local church's charitable activities are effectively organized and centralized. The deacons distribute funds and provide relief to the needy as agents of mercy. They help the poor, the jobless, the sick, the widowed, the elderly, the

homeless, the shut-in, the refugees, and the disabled. They help people in their everyday activities. They assist people in their homes. Their work, though often difficult and tiring, is most precious in God's eyes. He is deeply concerned about the poor and needy. "This is pure and undefiled religion..." declares James, "to visit orphans and widows in their distress..." (James 1:27). Caring for the needy is essential to authentic Christianity. Some examples of ways deacons at Maranatha serve are

- through greeting and visitor follow-up of those who attend the worship services of the church
- by providing an ushering ministry in which people are seated and which helps with the collection and counting of the church's offerings
- by arranging and providing transportation, and overseeing parking needs
- by helping with those who are moving
- by receiving requests and helping families with limited personal home needs
- by visitation ministry to the sick, widowed, and elderly of the church
- through managing and dispersing the benevolence funds to those with financial need
- by modeling servanthood before the church body by distributing the Lord's Table

Because service needs change, the role of deacons should remain flexible. The tasks may change, though the focus will remain on serving the church family.

## 6. Communication with the Elders

Our desire is for the leadership of the church to work together in a harmonious and purposeful way. However, with any organization where two or more groups hold official responsibilities, conflicts and tensions may sometimes arise. The work of shepherding elders and deacons frequently overlap, and the better informed elders and deacons are about their ministries and the church, the better their relationship will be. Only through effective communication, love, and mutual trust can conflicts be avoided.

While maintaining their distinctive roles of ministry, elders and deacons should be closely communicating with one another and serving in unity. At Maranatha, this is facilitated by the appointment of a chairman from among themselves who is to be in regular contact with an overseeing elder.

(The deacon chairman will also assist fellow deacons by looking for areas of service, praying regularly for the other deacons, training them as they seek to serve effectively, scheduling and moderating deacon meetings, helping to find other church members to help the deacons with tasks and by encouraging deacons in their ministry to the church body.)

As church leaders, the elders seek to provide leadership for the serving ministry of the deacons. Sometimes, the elders may need to clarify what the deacons duties will be, as confusion may cause many deacon-related problems. It is our desire at Maranatha to provide clear direction for the serving ministries of the deacons so they will not be left frustrated or without knowing what the shepherding elders believe God desires.

To maintain close relationship and good communication, the elders and deacons at Maranatha meet together on a regular basis for prayer, for study of the Scriptures, and to address any concerns which may affect the serving ministry of the deacons.

## 7. Number and Length of Service

There is no Scriptural limitation upon the number of deacons within a local church. However, every prospective deacon must have a desire to serve and meet the qualifications. The number of deacons will depend upon those qualified and the number needed to effectively serve the church.

All deacons will serve for as long as the elders deem necessary or until they decide to resign, request a period of rest, or step down because of personal circumstances. Additionally, the elders may determine that there is some disqualifying cause to warrant a deacon's removal.

During its annual meeting, the congregation will be called upon to complete and submit a written evaluation of deacons who desire to continue to serve in the church. All current deacons shall be presented to the congregation annually for affirmation and prayer.

## 8. Removal

A deacon may step down, or can be removed by the elders, for the reasons listed for elders above. In any event, the discontinuance or removal of a deacon must be reported to the church during a church service or congregational meeting.

## **Section D - Congregation**

### 1. Congregational Response

#### a. Toward spiritual leadership

Firstly, in his appeal to the believers at Thessalonica, Paul wrote: "But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction, and that you esteem them very highly in love because of their work. Live in peace with one another," (I Thess. 5:12, 13). This describes a close relationship involving respect, love, cooperation and appreciation. The congregation is to understand that the elders are to be highly esteemed and honored because of their work and because they represent the Head of the church. This respect calls for members to handle issues biblically concerning elders (I Tim. 5:19).

Secondly, the congregation is called upon to submit to and follow the instruction of their spiritual leaders, realizing that the Holy Spirit has made them overseers of the church. The effectiveness of the elders as leaders is measurably affected by the response of the people they lead. Only when believers listen and submit to their

spiritual leaders does the local church have any chance to be the growing, loving, joyous family God intends it to be. The author of Hebrews wrote, “Obey your leaders, and submit to them; for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you,” (Heb. 13:17). The result of submission on the part of those who are led is deep, satisfying joy on the part of those who lead.

Thirdly, the local church is responsible for providing for the needs of those diligently devoted to ministry: “Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching,” (I Tim. 5:17, 18).

Lastly, the congregation is directed to pray for its spiritual leaders: “Pray for us...,” (Heb. 13:18). The elders desire to faithfully and lovingly lead the people of Maranatha, and request the prayers of all members as they seek to shepherd the flock of Christ. Like the appeal of the Apostle Paul, the elders’ plea is, “Brethren, pray for us,” (I Thess. 5:25).

#### b. Toward one another

As members of the body of Christ, the congregation is called to love one another (John 15:12; I John 4:7-21), to live in unity and peace (II Cor. 13:11; Eph. 4:1-3), to meet together and encourage one another (Heb. 10:23-25), to serve and equip one another using each one’s spiritual gifts (Rom. 12:3-13), to pray for one another (Eph. 6:18), and to financially give to support the work of the Lord (I Cor. 16:2; II Cor. 9:7). As followers of Christ, believers are commissioned to preach the gospel (Mark 16:15) and to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19, 20).

### 2. Congregational Meetings

Congregational meetings allow us to review the current ministries and outreaches of the church as well as present upcoming ministry opportunities for the church family to consider. The church body may be called upon to offer input which may help the church fulfill its objectives. The shepherding elders may use this time to make known the needs of the church. As the leaders of the church, the elders may cast a vision for the church’s future and request the congregation to pray together for the spiritual growth and development of the church. Congregational meetings are intended to be times of corporate fellowship and encouragement as well.

The New Testament indicates a model of mutual communication and working together of elders and the whole church (Acts 6:5; 15:22, 25). At Maranatha, there are important issues and circumstances that arise which require the involvement and wisdom of the whole congregation. Since many of the actions of the elders as leaders have a significant effect on the entire church, their intention is to consistently involve the congregation in the decision-making process. Some of the items in which the elders will ask for input, prayer, and affirmation from the congregation are

- the annual church budget as prepared under the supervision of the elders

- large loans and purchases over \$20,000
- the employment and termination of pastoral staff
- the disposition or acquisition of all real church property over \$20,000
- changes to the Church Constitution, including the Statement of Doctrine
- other items which pertain significantly to the ministries of the church and as determined by the elders

The elders will schedule and lead the congregational meetings of the church, of which there shall be a minimum of three annually. All meetings will be conducted in an orderly and courteous manner which reflects our love and kindness for one another as brothers and sisters in Christ. All those in the church body are requested to attend.

## **ARTICLE VIII**

### **Ministry Staff**

#### **Section A - Church Staff**

The church staff are individuals who carry out the day-to-day affairs of the ministries of Maranatha Bible Church under the direction of the elders. They are paid so that they can devote the best hours of their day to strengthen and build the ministries and programs of the church. Church staff may include individuals such as pastors, teachers, interns, youth workers, worship leaders, secretarial assistants, and facility maintenance personnel.

Specific responsibilities will be delegated to each staff member through a ministry description (updated annually). The elders determine the responsibilities and each staff member is evaluated annually with respect to the ministry objectives.

#### **Section B - Pastoral Staff**

We believe this church, as the body of Christ, is composed of many members, each having gifts bestowed by the Holy Spirit for ministering and serving within the body. However, we also recognize that God calls, gifts, and prepares certain men to be evangelists and pastor-teachers (Eph. 4:11, 12). The work of these individuals is to equip the members of the church for works of service and the building up of the body of Christ.

The elders, after seeking the input of the church body, may call and employ pastor-teachers as part-time or full-time staff to help with the on-going ministries of the church. In each case, the elders will work together to review the spiritual and educational qualifications and giftedness of such men as well as previous ministry experience. Because these men have a very important ministry and responsibility within the church, the elders must be in unanimous agreement before extending a call to pastoral staff individuals.

The elder team will oversee the work and ministry of the pastoral staff. As with other ministry staff, the elders will write a ministry description for all pastor-teachers as well as arrange for a financial agreement with each one, assuring their physical needs are cared

for according to the principle set forth in I Tim. 5:17.

All individuals of the pastoral staff must be members of the church and must exhibit the spiritual qualifications consistent with those for elders. In addition, because it is our expectation for all pastoral staff to serve as elders, such men will pursue the process for the placement of elders at Maranatha. After a period of evaluation (I Tim. 3:10; 5:22), these individuals may be appointed as elders and installed into office.

## **ARTICLE IX**

### **Finances**

#### **Section A**

The financial program of this church and its sub-organizations shall be supported only through the free-will offerings, rental fees, registration fees and gifts of those interested in its ministry.

#### **Section B - Designated Funds**

1. Any temporary use of funds for purposes other than designated must have the approval of the elders.
2. If the purpose for which the funds have been previously designated is to be changed, the congregation must be notified.
3. Gifts designated through the church for a specific purpose or person shall be so used, unless the donor approves a change. Otherwise, the gift shall be returned.

## **ARTICLE X**

### **Properties**

#### **Section A - Title**

The title to all property of this church, both real and personal, shall be and remain vested in that portion of the Active Membership that shall remain faithful to the original purpose stated in Articles II and III of the Constitution.

#### **Section B - Acquisition and Sale of Property**

1. The church shall have power to acquire and hold property, both real and personal, for the general purpose of the church. All property so acquired shall be in the name of the church.
2. Any sale, mortgage, or transfer of real or personal property valued in excess of \$1,000.00 shall be approved unanimously by the elders.



### **Section C - Use of Property**

1. All properties belonging to the church shall be available to the membership for purposes consistent with the ministry of the church, subject to regulation by the elders.
2. The elders shall have access at all times and under all circumstances to all properties owned by the church.

### **Section D - Dissolution**

No part of the net earnings of this corporation shall ever inure to the benefit of any donor, member, director or officer of this corporation or to any private individual, and no donor, member, director, officer of the corporation, or any private individual shall be entitled to share in the distribution of any of the corporation assets. Upon dissolution, any asset of the corporation must be distributed to The Independent Bible Mission of 749 Lamoreaux Drive, Comstock Park, Michigan, if it then exists and is exempt from Federal Income Tax, otherwise to one or more organizations recognized by the Internal Revenue Service as one organized exclusively for religious, charitable, scientific, literary or educational purposes.

## **ARTICLE XI**

### **Ordination**

#### **Section A - Composition and Function of Board of Ordination**

1. When, in the judgment of the elders , a man in this membership, or in special cases a non-member, is called to the Christian ministry, it shall be within the power of the elders to call and conduct a Council of Ordination. This Council of Ordination shall consist of ordained Christian ministers and, if possible, one delegate from each fundamental church invited to participate.
2. The Council of Ordination shall thoroughly examine the applicant regarding his personal Christian experience, call to the ministry, educational training, doctrinal belief, reputation, and demonstrated efficiency in Christian service. The Applicant shall give evidence of his agreement with these provisions of the Constitution of this church with respect to doctrine, independence of the local church, and Scriptural qualifications for church leadership.
3. Upon completion of the examination of the applicant, a two-thirds majority vote by the Council of Ordination shall be required to recommend his ordination to the church when so recommended, a public ordination service shall be arranged by the Council of Ordination in consultation with the elders and the applicant.
4. The minutes of the Council of Ordination and of the public service shall be incorporated into the records of church meetings, and a Certificate of Ordination shall be provided for the newly ordained minister.

## **Section B - Discipline of Ordained Ministers**

1. The elders shall have the power to discipline, even to the revoking of the ordination credentials of any minister ordained under this Constitution, if the said minister is found guilty of doctrinal or moral defection after an impartial trial conducted in the spirit of I Cor. 13.

## **ARTICLE XII**

### **Amendments**

#### **Section A - Procedure**

This Constitution may be amended by unanimous approval of the elders and affirmation of the congregation.

#### **Section B – Amendment Regarding MBC’s Position on Sexuality, Gender, and Marriage**

According to the Bible, marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God’s unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race. We believe that sexual intimacy is a wonderful gift of God that is only to be expressed between one man and one woman (as genetically defined), within the love and bonds of marriage. (Genesis 2:24-25; Matthew 19:4-6; Ephesians 5:21-33, 1 Corinthians 7:3-5; Hebrews 13:4).

We believe that any form of sexual intimacy outside of marriage is both immoral and a perversion of God’s gift (Leviticus 18:1-30; Proverbs 6:32; 1 Corinthians 6:18; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8). Furthermore, we believe that any form of sexual immorality such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography, or cohabitation (regardless of the age of the individuals involved) is sinful and offensive to God (Leviticus 18-20; Romans 1).

Additionally, Scripture outlines and confirms God’s perfect plan in creating humans as distinctly male and distinctly female, an immutable binary gender distinction given by God at conception in accordance with an individual’s biology (Genesis 1:27, 2:18, 21-24, 5:2; Mark 10:6-8; 1 Corinthians 14:33). We further recognize the supremacy and authority of God to define and express each person’s gender as determined biologically at conception. We believe that each person must submit to God’s perfect will with respect to their biologically defined gender (Isaiah 64:8; Psalm 139:13-16; James 4:7). The individual’s biologically defined gender is intended to guide his or her foundational role in the family and in other relationships throughout his or her life (Genesis 1:27-28; Mark 10:6-9; Matthew 19:4-6; Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 2:11-15; Titus 2:3-5). Any person who embraces a gender and/or gender characteristics other than the gender that he or she is given by God at conception is acting in a manner that is contrary to God’s plan, and treating gender as anything other than an immutable distinction from conception is also contrary to God’s design for the family and His design

for other interpersonal relationships. (Genesis 2:18, 24; 1 Peter 3:7; Ephesians 5:22-23, 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21). Actions, behaviors, and beliefs that foster gender misalignment contradict God's intended biological design, and such activity is therefore immoral and sinful (Genesis 1:27, 31; Psalm 139:13-16; Isaiah 5:20). We recognize that rare disorders of sexual development may result in atypical physical features and affirm that these disorders do not diminish or invalidate God's good plan in creating two normative genders. Concerns resulting from such disorders will be handled by the elders on a case-by-case basis.

We believe that in order to preserve the function, unity, and integrity of the church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by the church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, should abide by and agree to this Statement on Marriage and Sexuality and conduct themselves accordingly whether at church, home, or in the community.

In light of our biblical commitments, no pastor, elder, or any other person at Maranatha Bible Church will perform same gender weddings or any other anti-biblical weddings or ceremonies at the church or at any other location. Furthermore, no member or non-member parties will be allowed to use any facilities of the church for same gender and/or sexually immoral weddings, wedding receptions, or other functions.

Additionally, member or non-member parties attending Maranatha Bible Church, whether gathering for corporate worship, participating or serving in any ministry, participating in any other functions, or using the facilities will (1) be addressed by the pronouns that align with their God-given, biologically-defined gender, (2) only be eligible to participate in ministries that align with their God-given, biologically-defined gender when applicable, such as Men's/Women's Training, Boys/Girls Discipleship Groups, etc., and (3) be required to use facilities, such as bathrooms, bath houses, etc. that align with their God-given, biologically-defined gender.

We do believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Romans 8). And we believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior, attitudes, or speech directed towards any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of Maranatha Bible Church (1 Peter 2:13-25; 1Thessalonians 4:11-12).