

# Harvest Bible Church Constitution

## ARTICLE I: DEFINITION AND PURPOSE OF THIS CONSTITUTION

This written document is a declaration of our beliefs and understanding of the Holy Scripture, as to our doctrinal beliefs, form of church government, organizational structure, and purposes as a body. It is vitally important for a church, if it is to glorify God and accomplish His purposes, that its people be in agreement with regard to doctrine, organizational structure and goals (1 Cor. 1:10; Eph. 4:3, 13).

This is thus designed to be a statement of these things that it might promote a oneness of mind within our own ranks, and that those interested in becoming a part of this ministry might have a clear concept of our beliefs and objectives.

This document is not a higher authority than the Word of God. Neither is it a higher authority than the authority that God Himself has invested in those believers He has appointed to lead in this local church (Heb. 13:17). It must be remembered that the local church itself is a living, growing, and flexible body subject ultimately to the authority of Jesus Christ alone as it is declared in the Word of God (Eph. 1:22; 4:12-16). As we grow in the Word, this document is therefore subject to amendment according to the provisions of **Article XII** of the Harvest Bible Church Constitution. This document is, however, to be followed in all its parts as a protection to all until part or all is amended according to its provisions.

## ARTICLE II: NAME

The name of this local church shall be **Harvest Bible Church**, a corporation under the laws of the state of Texas.

## ARTICLE III: MISSION, GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

### A. Our Mission

The supreme mission of the church, and so also of every individual believer, is to glorify God and to serve Him forever (Eph. 3:21; Rom. 11:36; 1 Pet. 4:11). Our mission comes from the Great Commission of Matthew 28:19-20: *to know Christ and to make Him known*. This is in keeping with the Great Commandment: to love the Lord your God with your heart, soul, & mind.

### B. Our Goals

Our goals are to serve God and bring glory to Him. Certain God-ordained goals are established in Scripture for the local church.

#### 1. Equipping Believers

Equipping the saints unto the work of the ministry in all its aspects along with their spiritual maturity in the Lord is the second great goal of this church (Eph. 4:12-16; Col. 1:28-29).

#### 2. Evangelization of the Lost

Reaching the lost with the gospel of Jesus Christ, both at home and abroad, is to be one of the goals of this church (Rom. 1:14-16; 1 Thess. 1:8; Acts 1:8).

## C. Our Objectives

### 1. Internal Objectives and Functions

**a. Instruction in the Word of God—Teaching:** To stand for the historic, fundamental truths of Scripture, and through Scripture, to equip the saints for service, and for the building up of the body of Christ for unity, knowledge of the Son of God, and maturity, measured by the stature of the fullness of Christ, and for protection against the deceitful scheming of Satan (Eph. 4:12-16).

**b. Fellowship:** To encourage and provide for means of developing meaningful relationships among believers (expressions of sharing and caring for, and loving one another, warning, stimulating, and encouraging one another to love and good deeds (Heb. 10:24-25; 13:1-2; Acts 2:42-47).

**c. Worship:** To provide the means for developing and expressing meaningful worship in prayer, songs of praise, adoration, admonishment, singing and making melody in our hearts to the Lord, and to administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's supper (Heb. 13:15; Eph. 5:19; Col. 3:16; 1 Cor. 11:23-34; Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:42).

**d. Ministry:** To provide the means for developing and exercising spiritual gifts for the edification of the body and the evangelization of the lost (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Pet. 4:10-11).

### 2. External Objectives and Functions

**a. Outreach:** To present the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who have never trusted in Jesus Christ as their Savior, and to encourage them to trust in Him (Matt. 28:19-20; Acts 1:8; 1 Thess. 1:2-10).

**b. Holy Behavior:** To live holy lives in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation acting as salt and as lights in the world (Phil. 2:15; Matt. 5:13-14; 1 Pet. 2:11-15; Col. 4:5).

**c. Showing Mercy:** To do good to all men whenever there is the opportunity and the means to do so within biblical principles and precepts (Gal. 6:10; Luke 10:29-37).

Our **mission, goals, and objectives** set forth our philosophy of the local church and its ministry. This, in turn, must form the foundation for our thinking and activities as a body of people. It directs us in what we ought to be doing. Anything which does not contribute to this philosophy of our mission, goals and objectives should then be either corrected, rejected or alleviated from the activities of the church.

## ARTICLE IV: DOCTRINE

Since the Word of God is foundational and absolutely essential to true spirituality, fellowship, spiritual sustenance, effectiveness in service and ministry, faith and doctrinal accuracy, we believe that the most important function of this local church, and its central thrust, is consistent teaching and study of the Word of God (1 Tim. 4:6-7).

The study of the Word of God is not **an end in itself**, but it is a high priority and a necessary channel for fellowship with God and thereby also of effective ministry to one another and to the world. It will not therefore, be bypassed or made secondary in the interest of social concerns, actions, or activities, but must be so promoted that the Word, and the teaching of the Word, become the pulse and heartbeat behind all church and non-church related activities or concerns (Psa. 119:1ff; 138:2; Isa. 77:2b; Rom. 15:4; 16:25-26; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Tim. 1:5; 4:1-16; 2 Tim. 3:15-17; 4:1-3).

This local church shall thus function as an independent, evangelical Bible church, committed to the fundamental, historic truths recorded in God's inerrant revelation—the Holy Scriptures. To hold positions within Harvest Bible Church, all elders, ministerial staff, deacons and teachers must wholeheartedly agree with the Doctrinal Statement, Article V, of this church.

## **ARTICLE V: DOCTRINAL STATEMENT**

### **A. The Scriptures**

We believe that "all Scripture is given by inspiration of God," by which we understand the whole Bible is inspired in the sense that holy men of God "were moved by the Holy Spirit" to write the very words of Scripture. We believe that while there was progress in revelation from God, this divine inspiration extends equally and fully to all parts of the writings—historical, poetical, doctrinal, prophetic and to the smallest word and inflection of a word as appeared in the original manuscripts. We believe that the whole Bible in the originals is therefore without error. We believe that all Scriptures center about the Lord Jesus Christ in His person and work in His first and second coming, and hence that no portion, even of the Old Testament, is properly read or understood until it leads to Him. We also believe that all the Scriptures were designed for our practical instruction (Matt. 5:18; Mark 12:26, 36; 13:11; Luke 24:27, 44; John 5:39; Acts 1:16; 17:2-3; 18:28; 26:22-23; 28:23; Rom. 15:4; 1 Cor. 2:13; 10:11; 2 Tim. 3:16; 2 Pet. 1:20-21).

### **B. The Godhead**

We believe that the Godhead eternally exists in three persons—the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit—and that these three are one God, having precisely the same nature, attributes and perfections, and worthy of precisely the same homage, confidence and obedience (Matt. 28:18-19; Mark 12:29; John 1:14; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor. 13:14; Heb. 1:1-3; Rev. 1:4-6).

### **C. Angels, Fallen and Unfallen**

We believe that God created an innumerable company of sinless, spiritual beings known as angels; that one, "Lucifer, son of the morning," the highest in rank, sinned through pride thereby becoming Satan; that a great company of the angels followed him in his moral fall, some of whom became demons and are active as his agents and associates in the prosecution of his unholy purposes, while others who fell are "reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day" (Isa. 14:12-17; Ezek. 28:11-19; 1 Tim. 3:6; 2 Pet. 2:4; Jude 6; Rev. 12:3-4).

We believe that sin originated with Satan and under the permission of God and as the adversary of God and His character, he through subtlety, led our first parents into transgression, thereby accomplishing their moral fall and subjecting them and their posterity to his own power; that he is the enemy of God and the people of God opposing and exalting himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped; and that he who in the beginning said, "I will be like the most High," in his warfare appears as an angel of light even counterfeiting the works of God by fostering political and religious movements and systems of doctrine, which systems are characterized by such false beliefs as the denial of God, the person and work of Christ as the God-man substitute or salvation by grace alone (Gen. 3:1-19; Rom. 5:12-14; 2 Cor. 4:3-4; 11:3-4, 13-15; Eph. 6:10-12; 2 Thess. 2:4; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 1 John 4:1-3).

We believe that Satan was judged at the cross, though not then executed, and that he, a usurper, now rules as the "god of this world;" that at the second coming of Christ, Satan will be bound and cast into the abyss for a thousand years and after the thousand years he will be loosed for a little season and then "cast into the lake of fire and brimstone" where he "shall be tormented day and night forever and ever" (Col. 2:15; Rev. 20:1-3, 10).

We believe that a great company of angels kept their holy estate and are before the throne of God from whence they are sent forth as ministering spirits to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation (Luke 15:10; Eph. 1:21; Heb. 1:14; Rev. 7:11-12).

We believe that man was made lower than the angels and, that in His incarnation, Christ took for a little time this lower place that He might lift the believer to His own sphere above the angels (Heb. 2:6-10).

## **D. Man Created and Fallen**

We believe that man was created by God as a human being, and did not evolve from a lower order of life. We believe that man was originally created in the image and after the likeness of God, and that he fell through sin and, as a consequence of his sin, lost his spiritual life becoming dead in trespasses and sins, and that he became subject to the power of the devil. We also believe that his spiritual death, or totally depraved human nature, has been transmitted to the entire human race of man, the Man Christ Jesus alone being excepted; and hence that every child of Adam is born into the world with a nature which not only possesses no spark of divine life, but is essentially and unchangeably depraved apart from divine grace (Gen. 1:26; 2:17; 6:5; Psalm 14:1-3; 51:5; Jer. 17:9; John 3:6; 5:40; 6:53; Rom. 3:10-19; 8:6-7; Eph. 2:1-3; 1 Tim. 5:6; 1 John 3:8).

## **E. The Dispensations**

We believe that the dispensations are stewardships by which God administers His purposes on the earth through man under varying responsibilities. We believe that the changes in the dispensational dealings of God with man depend upon changed conditions or situations in which man is successively found with relation to God, and that these changes are the result of the failures of man and the judgments of God. We believe that different administrative responsibilities of this character are manifest in the biblical record, that they span the entire history of mankind, and that each ends in the failure of man under the respective test and in an ensuing judgment from God. We believe that three of these dispensations of rules of life are the subject of extended revelation in the Scriptures—the dispensation of the Mosaic Law, the present dispensation of the church, and the future dispensation of the millennial kingdom. We believe that these are distinct and are not to be intermingled or confused, as they are chronologically successive.

We believe that the dispensations are not ways of salvation nor different methods of administering the so-called Covenant of Grace. They are not in themselves dependent on covenant relationships but are ways of life and responsibility to God which test the submission of man to His revealed will during a particular time. We believe that if man does trust in his own efforts to gain the favor of God or salvation under any dispensational test, because of inherent sin, his failure to satisfy fully the just requirements of God is inevitable and his condemnation sure.

We believe that according to the "eternal purpose" of God (Eph. 3:11), salvation in the divine reckoning is always "by grace through faith," and rests upon the basis of the shed blood of

Christ. We believe that God has always been gracious, regardless of the particular dispensation in effect at any point in history, but that man has not at all times in past history been under the dispensation of grace (the Church is presently under this dispensation of grace) (1 Cor. 9:17; Eph. 3:2, 9 [NASV]; Col. 1:25; 1 Tim. 1:4 [NASV]).

We believe that it has always been true that "without faith it is impossible to please God" (Heb. 11:6), and that Old Testament saints were saved by faith in a coming Savior and Redeemer. However, due to the progress of revelation, it was historically impossible for them to comprehend to the same extent as we do, the nature of the prophecies and sacrifices that they portrayed, the incarnate, crucified Son, the Lamb of God. We believe that they did have some understanding of the prophecies and types of the suffering Savior and other details (1 Pet. 1:10-12). This faith, vague as it was, was counted unto them for righteousness (Rom. 4:3-8; Gen. 15:1).

## **F. The First Advent**

We believe that, as provided and purposed by God and as pre-announced in the prophecies of the Scriptures, the eternal Son of God came into this world that He might manifest God to men, fulfill prophecy and become the Redeemer of a lost world. To this end He was born of the virgin and received a human body and a sinless human nature (Luke 1:30-35; John 1:18; 3:16; Heb. 4:15).

We believe that on the human side, He became and remained a perfect man but sinless throughout his life; yet He retained His absolute deity being at the same time very God and very man (Luke 2:40; John 1:1-2; Phil. 2:5-8), and that His earth-life sometimes functioned within the sphere of that which was human and sometimes within the sphere of that which was divine. We believe that in fulfillment of prophecy, He came first to Israel as her Messiah-King, and that being rejected of that nation, He according to the eternal counsels of God, gave His life as a ransom for all (John 1:11; Acts 2:22-24; 1 Tim. 2:6).

We believe that in infinite love for the lost, He voluntarily accepted His Father's will and became the divinely provided sacrificial Lamb and took away the sin of the world, bearing the holy judgments against sin which the righteousness of God must impose. His death was therefore substitutionary in the most absolute sense—the just for the unjust—and by His death, He became the Savior of the lost (John 1:29; Rom. 3:25-26; 2 Cor. 5:14; Heb. 10:5-14; 12 Pet. 3:18). We believe that according to the Scriptures, He arose from the dead in the same body, though glorified, in which He had lived and died, and that His resurrection body is the pattern of that body which ultimately will be given to all believers (John 20:20; Phil. 3:20-21).

We believe that on departing from the earth, He was accepted of His Father and that His acceptance is a final assurance to us that His redeeming work was perfectly accomplished (Heb. 1:3).

We believe that He became Head over all things to the church which is His body, and in this ministry He ceases not to intercede and advocate for the saved (Eph. 1:22-23; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1).

## **G. Salvation Only Through Christ**

We believe that, owing to universal death through sin, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless born again; and that no degree of reformation, however great, no attainments in morality, however high, no culture, however attractive, no baptism or other ordinance, however administered, can help the sinner to take even one step toward heaven; but a new nature imparted

from above, a new life implanted by the Holy Spirit through the Word, is absolutely essential to salvation and only those thus saved are sons of God. We believe also that our redemption has been accomplished solely by the blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, who was made to be sin and was made a curse for us, dying in our stead; and that no repentance, no feeling, no faith, no good resolutions, no sincere efforts, no submission to the rules and regulations of any church, nor all the churches that have existed since the days of the apostles, can add in the very least degree to the finished work wrought for us by Him who united in His person true and proper deity and perfect and sinless humanity (Lev. 17:11; Isa. 64:6; Matt. 26:28; John 2:7-18; Rom. 5:6-9; 2 Cor. 5:21; Gal. 3:13; 6:15; Eph. 1:7; Phil. 3:4-9; Titus 3:5; James 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:18-19, 23).

We believe that the new birth of the believer comes only through faith in Christ and that repentance is a vital part of believing, and is in no way in itself a separate and independent condition of salvation; nor are any other acts, such as confession, baptism, prayer, or faithful service to be added to believing as a condition of salvation (John 1:12; 3:16, 18, 36; 5:24; 6:29; Acts 13:39; 16:31; Rom. 1:16-17; 3:22, 26; 4:5; 10:4; Gal. 3:22).

## **H. The Extent of Salvation**

We believe that when an unregenerate person exercises that faith in Christ which is illustrated and described as such in the New Testament, he passes immediately out of spiritual death into spiritual life and from the old creation into the new; being justified from all things, accepted before the Father according as Christ His Son is accepted, loved as Christ is loved, having his place and portion linked to Him and one with Him forever. Though the saved one may have occasion to grow in the realization of his blessings and to know a fuller measure of divine power through the yielding of his life more fully to God, he is, as soon as he is saved, in possession of every spiritual blessing and absolutely complete in Christ, and is therefore in no way required by God to seek a so-called "second blessing" or a "second work of grace" (John 5:24; 17:23; Acts 13:39; Rom. 5:1; 1 Cor. 3:21-23; Eph. 1:3; Col. 2:10; 1 John 4:17; 5:11-12).

## **I. Sanctification**

We believe that sanctification, which is a setting apart unto God, is three-fold: It is already complete for every person because his position toward God is the same as Christ's position. Since the believer is in Christ, he is set apart unto God in the measure in which Christ is set apart unto God. We believe, however, that he retains his sin nature, which cannot be eradicated in this life. Therefore, while the standing of the Christian in Christ is perfect, his present state is no more perfect than his experience in daily life. There is therefore a progressive sanctification wherein the Christian is to "grow in grace" and to "be changed" by the unhindered power of the Spirit. We believe also that the child of God will yet be fully sanctified in his state as he is now sanctified in his standing in Christ when he shall see his Lord and shall be like Him (John 17:17; 2 Cor. 3:18; 7:1; Eph. 4:24; 5:25-27; 1 Thess. 5:23; Heb. 10:10, 14; 12:10).

## **J. Eternal Security**

We believe that, because of the eternal purpose of God toward the objects of His love, because of His freedom to exercise grace toward the meritless on the ground of the propitiatory blood of Christ, because of the very nature of the divine gift of eternal life, because of the present and unending intercession and advocacy of Christ in heaven, because of the immutability of the unchangeable covenants of God, because of the regenerating, abiding presence of the Holy Spirit in the hearts of all who are saved, we and all true believers everywhere, once saved shall be kept

saved forever. We believe, however, that God is a holy and righteous Father and that since He cannot overlook the sins of His children, He will, when they persistently sin, chasten them and correct them in infinite love; but having undertaken to save them and keep them forever, apart from all human merit, He who cannot fail will in the end present every one of them faultless before the presence of His glory and conformed to the image of His Son (John 5:24; 10:28; 13:1; 14:16-17; 17:11; Rom. 8:29, 32-39; 1 Cor. 6:19; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1-2; 5:13; Jude 24).

## **K. Assurance**

We believe it is the privilege, not only of some, but of all who are born again by the Spirit through faith in Christ as revealed in the Scriptures, to be assured of their salvation from the very day they take Him to be their Savior; and that this assurance is not founded upon any fancied discovery of their own worthiness or fitness, but wholly upon the testimony of God in His written Word, exciting within His children filial love, gratitude and obedience (Luke 10:20; 22:32; Rom. 8:15-16; 2 Cor. 5:1, 6-8; 2 Tim. 1:12; Heb. 10:22; 1 John 5:13).

## **L. The Holy Spirit**

We believe that the Holy Spirit, the third Person of the blessed Trinity, though omnipresent from all eternity, took up His abode in the world in a special sense on the day of Pentecost according to the divine promise, dwells in every believer and, by His baptism, unites all to Christ in one body and that He, as the indwelling One, is the source of all power and all acceptable worship and service. We believe that He never takes His departure from the church, nor from the feeblest of the saints, but is ever present to testify of Christ; seeking to occupy believers with Him and not with themselves nor with their experiences. We believe that His abode in the world in this special sense will cease when Christ comes to receive His own at the completion of the church (John 14:16-17; 18:7-15; 1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 2:22; 2 Thess. 2:7).

We believe that in this age, based on that which the Holy Spirit is to the believer, the Holy Spirit has certain well defined ministries, and that it is the duty of every Christian to understand what the Holy Spirit is to him, and does to him, and to be rightly adjusted to the Holy Spirit in his own life and experience. We believe that the Holy Spirit, as a special provision of God, is an **anointing** (2 Cor. 1:21; 1 John 2:20-27), a **seal** (2 Cor. 1:22; Eph. 1:14; 4:30), and an **earnest** (2 Cor. 1:11; Eph. 1:14). His ministries to the Christian are the restraining of evil in the world to the measure of the divine will; the convicting of the world respecting sin, righteousness and judgment; the regenerating of all believers; the indwelling of all who are saved whereby they are sealed unto the day of redemption and anointed of God for service; the baptizing into the one body of Christ of all who are saved; and the continued filling for power, witnessing, teaching, leading, and service of those among the saved who are yielded to Him and who are subject to His will (John 3:6; 16:7-15; Acts 1:8; Rom. 8:3-14; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:30; 5:18; 2 Thess. 2:7; 1 John 2:20-27).

We believe that some gifts of the Holy Spirit such as speaking in tongues and miraculous healings were given to be used as signs to authenticate the message of the first century church. We believe that speaking in tongues was never the common or necessary sign of the baptism nor of the filling of the Spirit, and that the complete deliverance of the body from sickness or death awaits the consummation of our salvation in the resurrection (Acts 4:8, 31; Rom. 8:23; 1 Cor. 13:8; 2 Cor. 12:12). We believe that in accordance with the sovereign will of God, healing is available through the prayer of believers (James 5:14). We believe that other non-sign gifts were given to the church and that through the exercise of these gifts in the church, believers who learn

and apply the truth of Scripture to their lives will mature spiritually. We further believe that ecstatic experiences, though they may be valid manifestations of the grace of God, do not appreciably contribute to one's spiritual maturity (Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Pet. 2:2).

## **M. The Church, A Unity of Believers**

### **1. The Universal Church**

We believe that the church is composed of all who are united by the Holy Spirit to the risen and ascended Son of God, that by the same Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, and thus being members one of another, we are responsible to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace, rising above all sectarian prejudices and denominational bigotry, and loving one another with a pure heart fervently (Matt. 16:16-18; Acts 2:42-27; Rom. 12:5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 1:20-24; 4:3-10; Col. 3:14-15).

### **2. The Local Church**

We believe that God's primary (intended) organization of believers, after the family unit, in the present age is local assemblies of believers, committed to the Lord and to each other for the purpose of carrying out the universal church's visible activities; that is, the communication of God's truth to the people of God, the worship of and prayer to God by God's people, the loving care of God's people for one another, and the spread of the gospel to the ends of the earth; that these assemblies (or churches), though they should endeavor to cooperate with other Christian assemblies, are to function under the lordship of Christ, free from external controls of any religious organizations beyond the early oversight by the church founders and the influence of its own mature leaders; and that it is God's intention that all believers publicly identify with a visible, local assembly (Acts 2:41-47; 4:19; 5:29; 1 Cor. 1:1-2; 1 Thess. 1:1; Heb. 10:24-25).

## **N. The Ordinances of the Church**

We believe that Christ, the head over all things to the church (Eph. 1:22), has commanded us to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19); and to partake at His table. When He had given thanks, he broke the bread and said, "this is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of Me." In the same way He took the cup also after supper, saying, "this cup is the new covenant in My blood; do this as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me. For as often as you eat this bread, and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes" (1 Cor. 11:23-26).

## **O. The Christian's Walk**

We believe that we are called with a holy calling to walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit, and so to live in the power of the indwelling Spirit that we will not fulfill the lusts of the flesh. But the flesh with its fallen, Adamic nature, which in this life is never eradicated, being with us to the end of our earthly pilgrimage, needs to be kept by the Spirit constantly in subjection to Christ, or it will surely manifest its presence in our lives to the dishonor of our Lord (Rom. 6:11-13; 8:2, 4, 12-13; Gal. 5:16-23; Eph. 4:22-24; Col. 3:1-10; 1 Pet. 1:14-16; 1 John 1:4-7; 3:5-9).

## **P. The Christian's Service**

We believe that divine, enabling gifts for service are bestowed by the Spirit upon all who are saved. While there is a diversity of gifts, each believer is energized by the same Spirit and each is

called to his own divinely appointed service as the Spirit may will. In the apostolic church, there were certain gifted men, i.e., apostles, prophets, evangelists and pastor-teachers who were appointed by God for the perfecting of the saints unto their work of the ministry. We believe also that today some men are especially gifted of God to be evangelists and pastor-teachers, and that it is to the fulfilling of His will and to His eternal glory that these men shall be sustained and encouraged in their service for God (Rom. 12:6; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; Eph. 4:11; 1 Pet. 4:10-11).

We believe that, wholly apart from salvation benefits which are bestowed equally upon all who believe, rewards are promised according to the faithfulness of each believer in his service for his Lord, and that these rewards will be bestowed at the judgment seat of Christ after He comes to receive His own to Himself (1 Cor. 3:9-15; 9:18-27; 2 Cor. 5:10).

## **Q. The Great Commission**

We believe that it is the explicit message of our Lord Jesus Christ to those whom He has saved that they are sent forth by Him into the world even as He was sent forth of His Father into the world. We believe that after they are saved they are divinely reckoned to be related to this world as strangers and pilgrims, ambassadors and witnesses, and that their primary purpose in life should be to make Christ known to the world (Matt. 28:18-19; Mark 16:15; John 17:18; Acts 1:8; 2 Cor. 5:18-20; 1 Pet. 1:17; 2:11).

## **R. The Blessed Hope**

We believe that according to the Word of God the next great event in the fulfillment of prophecy will be the coming of the Lord in the air to receive to Himself into heaven both His own who are alive and remain unto His coming, and also all who have fallen asleep in Jesus, and that this event is the blessed hope set before us in Scripture, and for this we should be constantly looking (John 14:1-3; 1 Cor. 15:51-52; Phil. 3:20; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; Tit. 2:11-14).

## **S. The Tribulation**

We believe that the translation of the church will be followed by the fulfillment of Israel's seventieth week (Dan. 9:27; Rev. 6:1-19:21) during which the church, the body of Christ, will be in heaven. The whole period of Israel's seventieth week will be a time of judgment on the whole earth, at the end of which the times of the Gentiles will be brought to a close. The latter half of this period will be the time of Jacob's trouble (Jer. 30:7), which our Lord called the great tribulation (Matt. 24:15-21). We believe that universal righteousness will not be realized previous to the second coming of Christ, but that the world is day by day ripening for judgment and that the age will end with a fearful apostasy.

## **T. The Second Coming of Christ**

We believe that the period of great tribulation in the earth will be climaxed by the return of the Lord Jesus Christ to the earth as He went, in person on the clouds of heaven, and with power and great glory to introduce the millennial age, to bind Satan and place him in the abyss, to lift the curse which now rests upon the whole creation, to restore Israel to her own land and to give her the realization of God's covenant promises, and to bring the whole world to the knowledge of God (Deut. 30:1-10; Isa. 11:9; Ezek. 37:21-28; Matt. 24:15-25:46; Acts 15:16-17; Rom. 8:19-23; 11:25-27; Rev. 20:1-3).

## U. The Eternal State

We believe that at death the spirits and souls of those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation pass immediately into His presence and there remain in conscious bliss until the resurrection of the glorified body when Christ comes for His own, whereupon soul and body reunited shall be associated with Him forever in glory; but the spirits and souls of the unbelieving remain after death conscious of condemnation and in misery until the final judgment of the Great White Throne at the close of the Millennium, when soul and body reunited shall be cast into the lake of fire, not to be annihilated but, to be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power (Luke 16:19-26; 23:42; 2 Cor. 5:8; Phil. 1:23; 2 Thess. 1:7-9; Jude 6-7; Rev. 20:11-15).

### ARTICLE VI: GENERAL ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

The local church body is composed of one body with many members all of whom are in vital relationship with Jesus Christ, but the body also has "joints of supply," units of control, and unity, i.e., church leaders (Eph. 4:16). This together suggests body participation under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ with leadership direction, submission and authority in a two-directional manner.

First, the local government is invested in the body of believers who compose the local body under the headship of Jesus Christ according to the Word of God and the ministry of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 18:20; Eph. 1:22-23; 4:16; 5:21; Col. 1:18; 2:19).

Second, executive authority or leadership, however, is invested by the congregation, as authorized by Scripture, in a Board of Elders who lead the church and to whom the congregation is to submit under the headship of Christ. These men have the authority and responsibility to delegate to individuals, committees or other boards (such as the Board of Deacons) authority and responsibility to carry out the business or ministry of the church in spiritual and physical (material) matters (Acts 20:28; 15:6; Eph. 4:11-12; Phil. 1:1; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:7, 17).

In using its delegated authority, and in making its decisions, the Board of Elders must seek to be guided by the Scripture, the ministry of the Holy Spirit, and by input from the congregation (Acts 20:32; 6:2-5a; 11:22; 15:22; 2 Cor. 8:19).

In the event of the misuse of the delegated authority, the church has recourse to the principles as set forth in Articles VII, XI, and XIII.

### ARTICLE VII: ELDERS

#### A. Qualifications

Elders shall be men whose lives are characterized by the qualities set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. These qualities can be categorized as:

- (1) They must **desire** the office of elder and demonstrate spiritual leadership abilities among the flock (synonym for body of believers – Christians at Harvest Bible Church).
- (2) They must be **able to teach** and use the Word of God with wisdom and patience.
- (3) They must be **lovers of God**. Men who take God and His Word seriously.
- (4) They must be **able to manage their household** in a biblical manner.

- (5) They must be able to spiritually manage their interpersonal relationships.
- (6) They must be men who are seeking to be controlled by Christ and His Word rather than by worldly and fleshly desires.
- (7) These men shall hold to the doctrinal statement of this Constitution in accord with the statements of Article V, and be supportive of the entire Constitution.

## **B. Authority**

The ministry of Harvest Bible Church shall be under the direction of the Lord Jesus Christ working in and through the Board of Elders. The elders will be the primary decision-making body within the church. However, it is critical that the elders make decisions based on carefully assembled facts, scriptural insight, the individual and corporate leading by the Holy Spirit, and input from the body (Acts 6:5; 15:6, 22; Heb. 13:17; 1 Thes. 5:12-13).

The church is *not* a democracy or a government where the majority rules. Jesus Christ Himself is the Head and Ruler of the church. If an issue is specifically addressed in the Scriptures a vote among the members of the church will be unnecessary. However, as seen in Article VI of the Harvest Bible Church Constitution, the Lord Jesus leads and directs through both the body of believers and the Board of Elders in matters not specifically given in scripture (i.e., pastoral selections, locations for future church plants, etc.). Since the Lord Jesus dwells in each member of the body of Christ, leading/directing through the body as to needs, desires, and responsibilities for each local body, it is important and necessary for the Board of Elders to seek input, information, and guidance from the body of believers in each and every situation where the elders will be making important decisions. Church members have an obligation to voice their views to the Board of Elders on any matter they deem appropriate.

In all major decisions of church life (building construction, land acquisition, the hiring of more ministerial staff, etc.) the congregation will be expected to give their input into such matters in order to show a unified movement toward the direction in question and to confirm a sense of God's leading among the elders who will bring the issue(s) at hand to the congregation once they are united in a particular decision. The Board of Elders reserves the right on rare occasions to seek a vote among the church members (see Article X, section E) to solidify various courses of action – though this will not be the norm. In such cases the Board of Elders will not move forward with a decision until, or unless, the majority of the body (no less than two-thirds majority) is unified on the matter. Issues that require an actual vote will be, at a minimum, the selection of a senior pastor. It is the decision of the elders solely, under the direction of the Holy Spirit, what specific issues constitute an actual vote outside of the selection of a new senior pastor.

**NOTE:** When a vote is taken, the procedure outlined in **Article X, Section E** of the Harvest Bible Church Constitution shall be followed.

## **C. Duties**

Because of external and internal Christian testimony to be promoted with the local body, an elder must first and foremost exercise a personal spiritual walk which promotes self examination, maintain a servant-like quality in life, and serve with gentleness and humility in all that he does. Out of his biblical perspective, the elder is to joyfully undertake the following duties:

- (1) Give themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word.
- (2) Guard and protect the flock.
- (3) Oversee and provide spiritual direction for the activities and growth of the flock.

- (4) Aid in finding and developing gifted teachers of the Word (2 Tim. 2:2).
  - (5) Warn and discipline as outlined in Article XI.
  - (6) Support, encourage, counsel and lead in humility.
  - (7) See to the appointment of deacons as per Article IX.
  - (8) Provide guidance to the deacons as needed.
  - (9) See to the oversight of the finances of the congregation.
  - (10) Pray for and encourage the sick.
  - (11) Seek the Lord's will to interpret the Articles and provisions of this Constitution in the light of Scripture.
  - (12) Make decisions and perform any other duties as situations within the church dictate, either directly or through proper and orderly delegation of committees or persons as necessary.
- The elders shall strive to maintain open communication with the flock, both to discern needs, concerns and viewpoints, and to communicate information and decisions. This may be done through the Sunday bulletin, pulpit announcements, group or congregational meetings and discussions (at least one such meeting held annually), votes, and one-on-one personal contact (Acts 6:1-5; 11:22; 15:1, 6, 22; 16:2).

## **ARTICLE VIII: PAID ELDERS AND STAFF**

### **Paid Elder(s): Pastor-Teacher**

The paid elder(s) plays a critical role in the growth, maturity, spirituality and effectiveness of the church. He is responsible for the quality and content of the teaching and counseling within the flock (Eph. 4:11-16; 1 Tim. 4:6-16). Harvest Bible Church recognizes that the Lord has given spiritual gifts to all believers and therefore does not expect the paid elder(s) to provide all the teaching, evangelism and counseling, etc., within the body (Rom. 12:3-8; Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; 1 Pet. 4:10-11). Rather they are to equip the saints "for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12).

## **ARTICLE IX: DEACONS**

### **A. Qualifications**

Deacons shall be men who desire to be servants of the local church body, who are able to serve, who meet all the qualifications of Scripture set forth in Acts 6:3 and 1 Timothy 3:8-12, and who are conscientiously and wholeheartedly in agreement with the Constitution of this church.

### **B. Duties**

In Acts 6:1-4, certain men were appointed to minister to the physical needs of the flock, to relieve the elders so they would have more time to concentrate on prayer and on the Word. These were undoubtedly the first deacons and functioned as helpers to the leaders of the Jerusalem church.

Deacons shall be helpers of the elders in ministering to the needs of the body, especially the physical needs (such as caring for widows along with the building and property), though they may serve in other capacities as their gifts and training allow.

Their specific duties will be designated by the elders according to the need of the church and a deacon's particular gifts, capacities and talents (see policy manual).

## **ARTICLE X: CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

### **A. Union in the Universal Body of Christ**

At the time of personal faith in Jesus Christ, the believer is called into the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (1 Cor. 1:2, 9; 12:12-13, 20; Col. 1:18), and joined into union with the universal body of Christ, the church, by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:12-13; Col. 1:18).

### **B. Union With a Local Assembly of Believers**

There is another aspect of this fellowship into which the believer is joined. He is brought into the fellowship of fellow members of that body, other living believers on earth, that he might share and participate in the various blessings and ministries of the body of Christ. For this to occur properly, believers are to seek the fellowship of one another in a local body or assembly of believers to which they are to become responsible, a mini-congregation, so to speak, of the greater and universal congregation of God (1 Pet. 5:2-3; 1 Cor. 1:2; 1 Thess. 1:1; 2 Thess. 1:1).

Believers in isolation, operating independently of other believers of a local assembly, is an idea contrary to Scripture. Scripture teaches that there are to be local assemblies of believers, united together by a common faith, by union in Christ, and the universal indwelling of the Holy Spirit, by common purposes, commitments and responsibilities, and with a common leadership of that specific body, independent in government from other local assemblies (Eph. 4:4-6; 1 Pet. 5:1-3; 1 Cor. 1:2; Heb. 13:7, 17; 1 Thess. 5:12-13). The local church is to be a body of people allotted to the charge of elders (1 Pet. 5:1-3; 1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 10:14-15; 1 Pet. 4:8-10; 1 Cor. 12:20-27), and subject to the discipline of that body or assembly (1 Cor. 5:2; 1 Thess. 5:14 [admonish the unruly], 2 Thess. 3:6, 14; 1 Tim. 5:20).

This of necessity implies more than a loose relationship of a believer or believers to a particular body or assembly. It involves a tie, an involvement, a commitment, responsibility and submission to both the leadership and to each other.

### **C. Church Membership**

The Scriptures contain neither a mandate for nor a command against an official membership roll. In Acts, we see that believers were added to the church in Jerusalem, however, this serves primarily to show the growth in the early church (Acts 2:47; 9:31; 16:5). These people were devoting themselves to a local assembly and its leadership for teaching, leadership, fellowship and worship (Acts 2:42). There were also letters of commendation or acceptance written on behalf of both men and women to be welcomed and accepted into the fellowship or various assemblies. These letters commended believers to other assemblies regarding their faithfulness and ministry and thus they were not a transfer of membership by letter (Rom. 16:1-2; 1 Cor. 16:10; Col. 4:10; 2 Cor. 3:1; 8:16-24).

The emphasis of these Scriptures is that every believer become identified and committed to a specific local assembly of believers following the leading and direction of God. This commitment is revealed by their attitude, faith, attendance, involvement, giving and submission

to that assembly. Thus a membership roll cannot, in and of itself, serve as the sole means of commitment a believer has to a local body.

Harvest Bible Church does have a membership roll to aid in conducting business in an orderly manner and to provide legal protection in important, yet potentially controversial church decisions. An individual's decision to be placed on the membership roll should flow from their commitment to the church. The individual should remember that being on the membership role has no merit or value so far as his spiritual maturity or growth is concerned. It is, however, an important tool in helping the church function smoothly.

## **D. Qualifications for Membership**

1. Profess Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior – saved by the grace of God, through faith in Christ, unto good works (Eph. 2:8-10). If a person desires membership and has not been baptized, then baptism will be required to make their membership official. If however, a person has been baptized as an infant or in another church, the decision for re-baptism will be up to them and *not* required from the elders.
2. Adherence to the HBC constitution and doctrinal statement.

**NOTE:** If one desires to be a member of HBC and does not completely adhere to the doctrinal statement (though still professing Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior), he/she can still be a member, but they are unable to teach in the teaching ministries of Harvest Bible Church.

## **E. Voting and Congregational Meetings**

The purpose of voting is not to simply obtain a "majority-rules" consensus. Rather, all voting in this church is designed to show God's leading within the congregation (church members) on an issue. Unless specifically indicated differently within the HBC Constitution, a two-thirds, majority vote in favor of an issue shall signify to the Board of Elders that the congregation agrees that God is leading favorably in the decision being voted on. If the two-thirds majority vote in favor is not achieved, the Board will reevaluate the situation. No steps will be taken on any issue *that requires a vote* without the two-thirds majority.

Any member of the church who is over the age of 18 may vote. The person may vote in person or they may vote absentee. An absentee vote is valid if the person writes down on any piece of paper the issue being voted on, their vote, and their signature. Absentee votes must be turned in to an elder, or faxed, no later than the date of the meeting.

The means of voting will normally be by written ballot. This may vary, however, if the Board of Elders announces the form of voting to be used when the meeting of the vote is announced. The congregation will be advised of the date/time of a meeting for a vote at least two weeks prior to the meeting. A binding vote comes with those present at a duly called congregational meeting.

## **ARTICLE XI: CORRECTIVE CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

We believe in the responsibility and necessity of church discipline as clearly outlined in Scripture. It is a very difficult area and hard to practice. Nevertheless, church discipline has the divine authority of Scripture and is vital to the purity of the church. In church discipline, the following matters must be carefully understood and applied.

### **The Purposes of Church Discipline**

- (1) Concern for the glory of God and the testimony of the flock.
- (2) The restoration and building up of the sinning believer.
- (3) The winning of a soul to Christ (if only a professing Christian).
- (4) The purity of the local body and its protection from moral and doctrinally impure influences, knowing a little leaven can leaven the entire lump (1 Cor. 5:6-7).

Such goals automatically govern the spirit in which all disciplinary action is to be given.

Thus:

- (1) It must be done in the spirit of humility, gentleness and patience, looking to yourself lest you too be tempted (Gal. 6:1-2; 2 Tim. 2:24-25).
- (2) Those who walk disorderly are to be admonished, warned, and appealed to in love (1 Thess 5:14-15; 1 Tim. 5:1-2; Eph. 4:15; 2 Tim. 4:2). This admonishing, etc., is not restricted to the leaders but may be done by any member (1 Thess. 5:14).
- (3) If there is no response in repentance and obedience, then members are to withhold intimate fellowship until there is obedience (2 Thess. 3:6, 14). This is to indicate to the offender that his action has caused a rupture in the harmony of the body. Its goal is restoration and the person is still to be counted as a brother (2 Thess. 3:14-15).
- (4) If the person persists after admonition and withdrawal of intimate fellowship, the final step is rejection or excommunication (Titus 3:10; Matt. 18:17b), accompanied by public rebuke before all (1 Tim. 5:20). Examples of church discipline are found in Scripture. The Corinthian believers were to be "gathered together" in order to take action against the offending brother (1 Cor. 2:6). We also find that it was the whole church in Rome and in Thessalonica who were to take action with regard to the unruly and schismatic and not just a few (2 Thess. 3:6-15; Rom. 16:17).
- (5) Finally, discipline in the name of our Lord always includes a readiness to forgive. The many or majority who discipline must also be ready and eager to forgive, comfort, and reaffirm their love to the sinning person (2 Cor. 2:6-8).

## **ARTICLE XII: AMENDMENTS**

This Constitution may be amended or replaced when the need for change is recognized by the elders and the members of the church body. At the time such need is believed to be present, the elders, after consultation with the body, shall make provisional modification in light of Scripture and all essential information on this matter shall be communicated to the congregation in written form, providing adequate time for study and response. A date will be proposed for acceptance of the revisions at a congregational meeting. The congregation will then vote to see if there is a unity of acceptance and understanding of the amendments according to **Article X, Section E** of

the Harvest Bible Church Constitution. If so, the amendments to the Constitution will become effective.

### **ARTICLE XIII: DISSOLUTION OF PROPERTY**

No real property or fixed asset expenditures can be committed for or purchased by the corporation in an amount in excess of \$5,000.00 per annum, non-cumulative, nor any fixed indebtedness incurred without the unanimous approval of the Board of Elders. No real or personal property can be accepted as a gift to Harvest Bible Church without the prior approval of the Board of Elders unless such property is liquid in nature and has an immediately realizable and ascertainable cash value. At the desire of the elders, such planned expenditure shall be made known to each voting member of the church in writing at least two weeks prior to commitment. During this period, the members may raise any objections to the proposed expenditures. Such objections should be made known to an elder privately. The title to all real property of the corporation shall be in name of the corporation. No member or group of members shall have any individual property rights in the assets of the corporation.

Said corporation/organization is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes, including for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations under section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code (or of the corresponding section of any future Federal tax code).

No part of the net earnings of the corporation/organization shall insure to the benefit of, or be distributed to its members, trustees, directors, officers or other private persons, except that the corporation/organization shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of section 501 (c) (3) purposes. No substantial part of the activities of the corporation /organization shall be the carrying on of propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the corporation/organization shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of or in opposition to any candidate for public office.

Notwithstanding any other provision of these articles, the corporation/organization shall not carry on any other activities not permitted to be carried on (a) by a corporation/organization exempt from Federal income tax under section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code (or corresponding section of any future Federal tax code).

Upon dissolution of this corporation/organization assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future Federal tax code, or shall be distributed to the Federal government or to a state or local government for a public purpose.