



The Constitution and Bylaws of Hagerstown Church

Preamble

Since it pleased Almighty God, by his Holy Spirit, to call some of his servants to unite here in Hagerstown, Maryland, under the name Hagerstown Church to worship God and to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ, we, the members of Hagerstown Church, adopt this constitution and bylaws as our articles of governance, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of Jesus Christ and bring him glory, as revealed in the Holy Bible and articulated in the statement of faith and covenant of this church.

Constitution

Article 1 – Name

- **1.1.** This church shall be known as Hagerstown Church.

Article 2 – Purpose

- **2.1.** This church exists by the grace of God and for the glory of God, which shall be the ultimate purpose in all its activities.
- **2.2.** This church glorifies God by loving him and obeying his commands through:
 - worshipping him;
 - equipping the saints through Bible instruction and study;

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- proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching and personal evangelism, and any other means consistent with the teachings of the Bible;
- encouraging, supporting, and participating in local, domestic, and international missions work;
- administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper;
- encouraging biblical fellowship among believers;
- serving other individuals, families, and churches by providing for physical, emotional, and spiritual needs;
- and encouraging fellow churches to biblical faithfulness and purity.

Article 3 – Beliefs

Section 1. - Affiliation

- **3.1.1.** Hagerstown Church operates as an independent church with its own governance structure. To further its purposes, however, the church may affiliate with any like-minded churches, associations, or denominations.
- **3.1.2.** Hagerstown Church will voluntarily cooperate with the Southern Baptist Convention, the Baptist Convention of Maryland/Delaware, and the Blue Ridge Baptist Association in its efforts to promote historic Baptist principles, Christian worship, evangelism, and missions.

Section 2. - Distinctives

- **3.2.1. Baptist**—We believe that born-again Christians are welcomed into membership through baptism upon a credible profession of faith. Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Additionally, although Hagerstown Church affiliates with other like-minded churches, associations, or denominations, we remain an autonomous entity.
- **3.2.2. Reformed**—We hold to a historically reformed, baptistic theology—among which we fully affirm the “Five Solas” of the Protestant Reformation: that we are saved by grace alone, through faith alone, in Christ alone, according to Scripture alone, for the glory of God alone.
- **3.2.3. Elder-Led**—We believe the Bible teaches that every local church is to be led by a plurality of elders (1 Timothy 5:17-18, Titus 1:5, 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9, 1 Timothy 5:19-20, Acts 20:16-38, 1 Peter 5:1-4, Hebrews 13:17). An elder is synonymous in the

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Bible with “pastor”, “bishop”, and “overseer.” The primary work of an elder is, “to equip the saints for the work of the ministry, for building up the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12). This is achieved primarily through a faithful expository teaching ministry of God’s Word.

- **3.2.4. Congregational**—We believe that the final authority in a local church ultimately rests with the members of the congregation. Members exercise their authority by: 1) receiving, dismissing, or disciplining members, 2) affirming elders and deacons, 3) voting on matters that impact the integrity and viability of the church as a Gospel ministry.
- **3.2.5. Deacon-Served**—We believe the Bible teaches that every local church should be served by deacons. Deacons are men and women who meet the qualifications according to 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and who devote themselves to the unity of the church. The Bible is clear that deacons are not elders, nor are churches to be governed by a committee or board of deacons. Biblical deacons are those who do whatever is necessary to allow the elders to accomplish their God-given calling of shepherding and teaching the church according to Acts 6.

Section 3. Statement of Faith

- **3.3.1.** Hagerstown Church holds to the *Baptist Faith and Message 2000* as our Statement of Faith which serves to summarize our essential Christian beliefs, demonstrate our unity in Christ, and guard our church against error.

Bylaws

Article 4 – Membership

Section 1. – Qualifications

Members of this church shall be believers in Jesus Christ who:

- **4.1.1.** give evidence of regeneration;
- **4.1.2.** have been baptized as believers in obedience to Christ;
- **4.1.3.** hold the doctrines of our church as expressed in the statement of faith; and
- **4.1.4.** promise in writing to keep the commitments expressed in the church covenant.

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Section 2. Admission

- **4.2.1.** An applicant shall be received as a member of the church upon the recommendation of the elders and the subsequent agreement of the majority of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting.
- **4.2.2.** No member of this church shall retain membership in any other church.

Section 3. Duties and Privileges

Members shall be expected to participate actively in the life of the church by:

- **4.3.1.** regularly attending its Lord's Day meetings;
- **4.3.2.** faithfully observing its ordinances, namely, baptism and the Lord's Supper;
- **4.3.3.** submitting to its discipline and instruction;
- **4.3.4.** attending its members' meetings;
- **4.3.5.** voting on the church's governing documents (constitution, statement of faith, and covenant) and on all other matters submitted to the congregation at a members' meeting.
- **4.3.6.** contributing to the ministry of the church consistent with the gifts, time, and resources each has received from God.
- **4.3.7.** No person who is not a member shall lead any ministry or hold any office of the church.

Section 4. Members' Meeting Responsibilities

The church, duly assembled in a members' meeting, shall be responsible to:

- **4.4.1.** elect and remove elders, deacons/deaconesses, and other officers;
- **4.4.2.** receive applicants into membership;
- **4.4.3.** recognize that membership has been terminated by death, apostasy, or voluntary resignation;
- **4.4.4.** exercise church discipline;

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- **4.4.5.** approve an annual budget;
- **4.4.6.** hear reports from the elders and, from time to time, the various deacons/deaconesses; and,
- **4.4.7.** take any other action it deems necessary or desirable.

Section 5. On Church Discipline

- **4.5.1.** Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of unrepentant conduct contrary to the principles of Scripture, and so opposing the welfare of the church, may be subject to the admonition of the elders and the discipline of the church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15–17, 1 Corinthians 5, and other Scriptures.
- **4.5.2.** Church discipline, then, should ordinarily be contemplated after individual private admonition has failed.
- **4.5.3.** Church discipline can include admonition by the elders or congregation, removal from office, and excommunication (Matthew 18:15–17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14–15; 1 Timothy 5:19– 20; 1 Corinthians 5:4–5).
- **4.5.4.** The purpose of such discipline should be for:
 - the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the person disciplined (Proverbs 15:5; 29: 15; 1 Corinthians 4:14; Ephesians 6:4; 1 Timothy 3:4–5; Hebrews 12:1–11; Psalm 119:115; 141:5; Proverbs 17:10; 25:12; 27: 5; Ecclesiastes 7:5; Matthew 7:26–27; 18:15–17; Luke 17:3; Acts 2:40; 1 Corinthians 5:5; Galatians 6:1–5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14–15; 1 Timothy 1:20; Titus 1:13–14; James 1:22);
 - the instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to them (Proverbs 13:20; Romans 15:14; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 15:33; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:14 [*note this is written to the whole church, not just to leaders*]; 1 Timothy 5:20; Titus 1:11; Hebrews 10:24– 25);
 - the purity of the church as a whole (1 Corinthians 5:6–7; 2 Corinthians 13:10; Ephesians 5:27; 2 John 10; Jude 24; Revelation 21:2);

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- the church's corporate witness to non-Christians (Proverbs 28:7; Matthew 5:13–16; John 13:35; Acts 5:1–14; Ephesians 5:11; 1 Timothy 3:7; 2 Peter 2:2; 1 John 3:10); and,
- supremely, for the glory of God by reflecting his holy character (Deuteronomy 5:11; 1 Kings 11:2; 2 Chronicles 19:2; Ezra 6:21; Nehemiah 9:2; Isaiah 52:11; Ezekiel 36:20; Matthew 5:16; John 15:8; 18:17, 25; Romans 2:24; 15:5–6; 2 Corinthians 6:14–7:1; Ephesians 1:4; 5:27; 1 Peter 2:12).

Section 6. Termination

- **4.6.1.** The church shall recognize the termination of a person's membership following his or her death or apostasy, and may do so following his or her voluntary resignation with intent to join another like-minded church.
- **4.6.2.** The church shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation or transfer of membership to another church, for the purpose of proceeding with church discipline.
- **4.6.3.** A member shall be removed from membership as a matter of church discipline ordinarily upon the recommendation of the elders and the latter agreement of at least two-thirds of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting.

Article 5. Meetings

Section 1. Worship

- **5.1.1.** The church shall meet together for public worship each Lord's Day, and at other times throughout the week as the church may determine.

Section 2. Members' Meetings

- **5.2.1.** The church shall hold a regular members' meeting at least every quarter, without displacing the regular gathering of the church on the Lord's Day.
- **5.2.2.** The elders, whenever they deem it necessary, or within thirty days of receiving a written request signed by ten percent of the membership, shall call a special members' meeting.

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- **5.2.3.** No members' meeting shall be held unless the date, time, and place of the meeting has been announced at every public meeting of the church for at least a week immediately before the members' meeting in question.
- **5.2.4.** An elder designated by the board of elders shall preside as moderator at all members' meetings, but shall have no vote, unless the members are equally divided on a question.
- **5.2.5.** Members' meetings shall proceed in reasonable order, and the members present shall constitute a quorum to do business. Motions shall be adopted by a majority vote of the members present and voting on the question, except on matters otherwise provided for in this constitution.

Article 6. Government

Section 1. Summary

- **6.1.1.** The biblical offices in the church shall be elders and deacons, but final earthly authority is vested in the assembled congregation.

Section 2. Elders

- **6.2.1.** Subject to the will of the congregation, the elders shall oversee the ministry, resources, legal, business, and facilities of the church.
- **6.2.2.** The board of elders shall be composed of men who satisfy the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 and who shall carry out their duties in accordance with 1 Peter 5:1-4.
- **6.2.3.** Elders shall be recognized as follows: The elders may present the name of a nominee (or nominees) to the church at any regular members' meeting. For at least a month, the church shall consider whether the nominee is (or nominees are) qualified. Any member intending to vote against a nominee should express his or her objection to at least one elder as early as possible before the vote. Once at least a month has passed, the elders may move the nomination(s) to a vote at a regular members' meeting. The members shall vote on nominees one at a time. The moderator or his delegates shall count the votes, and any nominee immediately shall become an elder who receives the approval of at least three-quarters of the members present and voting on his nomination. Immediately after the vote, the church shall publicly recognize and set apart all such newly approved elders.

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- **6.2.4.** In accordance with 1 Timothy 2:12 and 3:2, women shall not serve as elders.
- **6.2.5.** With the exception of the preaching elder (also called the lead pastor) and associate pastors, elders shall be reaffirmed by vote of the church triennially, and having served two consecutive three-year terms, shall not be eligible for reelection for one year. Neither a lead pastor nor an associate pastor shall be subject to any term limit.
- **6.2.6.** No elder shall hold the office of deacon during his tenure.
- **6.2.7.** The board of elders shall choose its chairman and other officers. In accordance with the nonprofit corporation laws of Maryland, the board shall serve as the board of trustees of the corporation, and the elders shall designate the lead pastor or another elder to serve as the president of the corporation.
- **6.2.8.** The elders shall, in keeping with Scripture (especially Acts 6:1-6; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 5:17; Titus 1:5-9; James 5:14; and 1 Peter 5:1-5), take responsibility to shepherd God's flock by devoting themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. They shall have particular authority to:
 - **6.2.9.** plan and oversee worship services;
 - **6.2.10.** oversee the ordinances, namely baptism and the Lord's Supper;
 - **6.2.11.** examine and instruct prospective members;
 - **6.2.12.** oversee the process of church discipline;
 - **6.2.13.** examine and recommend candidates for all offices and positions;
 - **6.2.14.** oversee the work of deacons, deaconesses, and all other agents of the church;
 - **6.2.15.** give final oversight, when necessary, to the hiring and termination of non-elder church staff, as ordinarily conducted by the lead pastor; and
 - **6.2.16.** take any other action which shall be necessary and proper for faithfully overseeing and shepherding the church.
- **6.2.17.** Annually, after consulting with the deacons, deaconesses, and members of the church, the elders shall present to the church an itemized budget. This budget shall be presented for discussion at a members meeting in the fourth quarter of the year and moved to a vote on the budget as a whole at the following members' meeting. No money shall be solicited by or on behalf of the church or any of its ministries without the approval of the elders.

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- **6.2.18.** An elder shall be removed from office upon the vote of three-quarters of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions in Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Timothy 5:17-21.

Section 3. The Lead Pastor

- **6.3.1.** Primary responsibility for preaching and teaching the Scriptures in public meetings of the church will be vested in the lead pastor. As defined below, and in accordance with the nonprofit corporation laws of Maryland, the elders shall designate the lead pastor or another elder to serve as the president of the corporation. If the lead pastor is absent or incapacitated, the elders shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which may be delegated to someone biblically qualified to perform such duties.
- **6.3.2.** The lead pastor shall be selected as follows: The elders shall present the name of one nominee to the position of preaching elder at a members meeting. For at least a month, the church shall consider the nominee's biblical qualifications, his gifts in preaching and teaching, his commitment to minister personally to the members of this church, and his wholehearted assent to the statement of faith and church covenant. Any member intending to vote against a nominee should express his or her objection to at least one elder as early as possible before the vote. Once at least a month has passed, the elders may move the nomination to a vote at a members' meeting. The moderator or his delegates shall count the votes, and if the nominee receives the approval of at least three-quarters of the members present and voting on his nomination, he shall immediately be the preaching elder (and, if he is not yet an elder and member, also an elder and member). In a reasonable time after the vote, the church shall publicly recognize and set apart the lead pastor. *Cf.* Art. 6, Sec. 4, Cl. 2 (selection process for associate pastor).
- **6.3.3.** The lead pastor shall meet all the qualifications and hold all the rights and responsibilities of a church member. He shall meet all the qualifications and hold all the duties and responsibilities of an elder. In terms of formal authority, there shall be no distinction between an elder and a preaching elder.
- **6.3.4.** The lead pastor shall not be subject to any term limit.
- **6.3.5.** The lead pastor shall be removed from office upon the vote of three-quarters of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting. Any such

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action shall be done in accordance with the instructions in Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Timothy 5:17-21.

Section 4. Associate Pastors

- **6.4.1.** The church may call/hire additional pastors whose relationship to the preaching elder (or lead pastor) is that of associate. Other pastoral responsibilities may be vested in one or more associate pastors.
- **6.4.2.** An associate pastor shall be selected in the same manner as the lead pastor. See Art. 6, Sec. 3, Cl. 2.
- **6.4.3.** An associate pastor shall meet all the qualifications and hold all the rights and responsibilities of a church member. He shall meet all the qualifications and hold all the duties and responsibilities of an elder. In terms of formal authority, there shall be no distinction between an elder and an associate pastor.
- **6.4.4.** An associate pastor shall not be subject to any term limit.
- **6.4.5.** An associate pastor shall be removed from office upon the vote of three-quarters of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions in Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Timothy 5:17-21.

Section 5. Deacons/Deaconesses

- **6.5.1.** Particular service to the church shall be provided by deacons/deaconesses, who will vary in number depending on the needs of the church, and who shall satisfy the qualifications in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
- **6.5.2.** The deacons/deaconesses shall not meet together regularly as a governing body. Each diaconate position shall serve a particular need of the church, and shall be created or dissolved upon the recommendation of the elders and the later agreement of a majority of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting.
- **6.5.3.** Deacons/deaconesses shall be recognized as follows: The elders may present the name of a nominee (or nominees) to the church at any regular members' meeting. For at least a month, the church shall consider whether the nominee is (or nominees are) qualified. Any member intending to vote against a nominee should express his or her objection to at least one elder as early as possible before the vote. Once at least a month has passed, the elders may move the nomination(s) to a vote at a regular

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members' meeting. The members shall vote on nominees one at a time. The moderator or his delegates shall count the votes, and any nominee immediately shall become a deacon (or deaconess) who receives the approval of at least two-thirds of the members present and voting on his (or her) nomination. In due haste after the vote, the church shall publicly recognize and set apart all such newly approved deacons/deaconesses.

- **6.5.4.** Deacons/deaconesses shall be elected to one term lasting for a maximum of two years. If after having served one term a replacement or substitute cannot be found, and so long as the current deacon/deaconess wishes to continue to serve in such a capacity, and upon the recommendation of the elders, the existing deacon/deaconess can be recommended to the church for approval for another two year term.
- **6.5.5.** In keeping with the principles in Acts 6:1-6, deacons/deaconesses shall not exercise spiritual authority, but shall enable the elders to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word, and work to maintain the unity of the church. They will do this by caring for the physical needs of the church.
- **6.5.6.** The church may recognize deacons/deaconesses to take responsibility to:
 - **6.5.7.** care for the temporal needs of members,
 - **6.5.8.** attend to the accommodations for public worship, and
 - **6.5.9.** encourage, support, and mobilize those able to help others and those with gifts of administration.
 - **6.5.10.** An appointed deacon/deaconess shall receive, hold, and disburse, upon approval from two elders, a fund for benevolence, reporting on its use to the elders at their request, and reporting to the church only its total receipts and total disbursements.
 - **6.5.11.** The deacons and deaconesses, with the agreement of the elders, may establish unpaid administrative positions or committees of members to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities in the church.
 - **6.5.12.** A deacon/deaconess may be removed from office upon the recommendation of the elders and the later vote of a two-thirds of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting.

Article 7. Administration

Section 1. President

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- **7.1.1.** The elders' designee, whether the lead pastor or another elder, shall serve as president of the corporation, assuming all its responsibilities and other responsibilities delegated by the board of elders. The president shall have general supervision and direction of the business and affairs of the church. The president shall recuse himself from any board discussion and vote regarding his duties, responsibilities, and compensation. The president or chairman of the board of elders shall execute any necessary documents on behalf of the church, except where that responsibility is expressly delegated by the board to some other officer or agent of the church.

Section 2. Clerk

- **7.2.1.** The clerk shall record the minutes of all regular and special members' meetings of the church. In compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of Maryland, the clerk shall serve as the secretary of the corporation.
- **7.2.2** The clerk shall be a member of the church. The clerk shall not be an elder.
- **7.2.3.** The clerk shall be selected to a renewable term of one year upon the recommendation of the elders and the later agreement of a majority of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting.
- **7.2.4.** The clerk may be removed from office by a majority vote of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting.

Section 3. Treasurer

- **7.3.1.** The treasurer shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in the banks, financial institutions, or depositories held by the church. The treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church. The treasurer shall provide to the elders at least once a year, or whenever the elders may require it, an account of all financial transactions since the last complete account and of the financial condition of the church. The treasurer shall also present reports of the account balances, revenues, and expenses of the church at regular members' meetings.
- **7.3.2.** The treasurer shall be selected to a renewable term of one year upon the recommendation of the elders and the later agreement of a majority of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting.

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- **7.3.3.** No person shall serve more than three consecutive terms as treasurer.
- **7.3.4.** The treasurer shall be a member of the church. No elder or paid staff member of the church may serve as treasurer.
- **7.3.5.** The treasurer shall be removed from office upon the recommendation of the elders and the latter vote of a majority of the members present and voting on the question at any members' meeting.

Article 8. Amendments

- **8.1.** The statement of faith or church covenant shall be amended upon the recommendation of the elders and the agreement of three-quarters of the members voting on the question at any regular members' meeting, provided the amendment was presented by the elders in writing at a previous regular members' meeting, and was announced at every public meeting of the church during the two weeks immediately before the vote.
- **8.2.** This constitution shall be amended upon the recommendation of the elders and the agreement of two-thirds of the members voting on the question at any regular members' meeting, provided the amendment was presented by the elders in writing at a previous regular members' meeting, and was announced at every public meeting of the church during the two weeks immediately before the vote.

Article 9. Dispute Resolution

- **9.1.** Believing that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian church (see, e.g., Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 6:1-8), the church shall urge its members to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblically based principles, without resorting to the civil courts.
- **9.2.** In the case of alleged criminal behavior, it may be appropriate to resolve conflict in the criminal courts, not least because such alleged criminal behavior may in some cases legally be required to be reported to the government authorities (see Romans 13:3-4).
- **9.3.** Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the church shall encourage members to use biblical principles and avoid lawsuits to resolve disputes among themselves and with those outside the church—including believers and unbelievers, and individuals and

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corporations. The elders may adopt policies and procedures to encourage the church to live up to these aspirations.