

The Constitution and Bylaws of Northwest Hills Community Church Torrington, Connecticut

Ratified on May 20, 2012 by a unanimous vote of the Board of Elders: John Busa, Bill Lutton, Bob Marcotte, and Scotty Neasbitt.

Revised on November 10, 2014 by a unanimous vote of the Board of Elders: Mike Clark, Duane Doot, Bill Lutton, and Scotty Neasbitt.

Revised on May 1, 2017 by a unanimous vote of the Board of Elders: Mike Clark, Duane Doot, Bill Lutton, and Mike Ambrose.

Revised on November 13, 2017 by a unanimous vote of the Board of Elders: Mike Clark, Duane Doot, Bill Lutton, Mike Ambrose, and Michael Burgos.

Revised on December 18, 2018 by a unanimous vote of the Board of Elders: Michael Ambrose, Michael Burgos, Paul Carmen, Mike Clark, Duane Doot, Michael Ocain.

Revised on May 15, 2023 by a unanimous vote of the Board of Elders: Michael Ambrose, Michael Burgos, Michael Clark, Paul Carmen, Duane Doot, and Michael Ocain.

Revision Index

Revision #1, ratified 11/10/2014, is revised as shown:

1. Addendum #1 is added to this Constitution
2. Section VII B of this Constitution is revised to read:

TERM: Each elder, *including the Senior Pastor, will serve without any prescribed term.*

Addendum #1

Whereas this Constitution states in section VII A that a staff member, other than the Senior Pastor, may not serve on the Board (of Elders); and

Whereas an impending merger shall take effect between Calvary Baptist Church and Northwest Hills Community Church; and

Whereas the Board of Elders seeks to make a provision for the addition of a staff member to the Board of Elders in conjunction with said merger, changes to this Constitution will be in effect as follows:

1. Pastor Michael F. Ambrose will be appointed to the Board of Elders of Northwest Hills Community Church on the date the merger between Calvary Baptist Church and Northwest Hills Community Church shall take effect.
2. All other aspects of Pastor Ambrose's role as an associate pastor and member of the Board of Elders will be determined by this Constitution.
3. This addendum may be terminated or amended at any time by a majority vote of the Board of Elders.

Revision #2, ratified May 1, 2017, is revised as shown:

1. To correct punctuation and remove unnecessary legal jargon.
2. Extensive changes to section VII Board of Elders and section IX Staff
3. The fiscal year was changed from October 1 through September 30

Ratified on this 1st day of May, 2017 by unanimous vote of the Board of Elders:

Mike Clark

Bill Lutton

Duane Doot

Mike Ambrose

Revision #3, ratified November 13, 2017, is revised as shown:

1. The removal of *The Statement of Faith*.
2. The addition of *The Congregational Statement of Faith*.
3. The addition of *The Statement of Theological Distinctives*.
4. The amending of article VII (Membership) and article 3 to reflect the addition of the aforementioned statements.
5. A change in font and the addition of footnoted biblical citations.

Ratified on November 13, 2017 by unanimous vote of the Board of Elders:

Mike Clark

Bill Lutton

Duane Doot

Mike Ambrose

Michael Burgos

Revision #4, December 18, 2018, is revised as shown:

1. *The Constitution* was renamed *The Constitution and Bylaws* to accurately reflect the extent of the document. This revision constitutes extensive redactions, revisions, and additions.
2. Various points of pagination were corrected, including corrections related to grammar and syntax. Also, minor changes were made throughout to reflect semantic consistency.
3. Changes have been made to reflect NHCC’s departure from membership in Converge Northeast and its association with the Baptist Convention of New England and the Southern Baptist Convention (e.g., § II.C).
4. Sections VI and V of the previous edition were conflated into one section as the *Confession of Faith*.
5. Section V of this current edition was substantially changed to reflect guiding principles which better reflect the identity and values of Northwest Hills Community Church.
6. Section VI.A.2 was modified to include the Triune baptismal formula. Section VI.B.1 was modified to provide the Board of Elders more flexibility in identifying the inactivity of a member. Section VI.B.2 was modified to better accommodate a member’s transition to another church.
7. Changes and additions were made to sections VIII and IX to reflect a more robust process of evaluation, installation, and removal of non-vocation and vocational Elders/Pastors and Deacons.
8. Section XIV (i.e., “Bylaws”) of the previous edition has been omitted.
9. Appendices I-III were added.

Revised on December 18, 2018 by unanimous vote of the Board of Elders:

Mike Clark *Duane Doot* *Mike Ambrose* *Michael Burgos*

Paul Carmen *Mike Ocain*

Revision #5, May 15, 2023, is revised as shown:

1. Section VII.C.5 was redacted and made to accord with the legal counsel provided by the Alliance Defending Freedom. This affords members, in accordance with the first ammendment of the Constitution of the United States, the right to remove themselves from membership during the church discipline process.
2. Section X.C was added to accord with the legal counsel provided by the Alliance Defending Freedom to protect NHCC from wrongful termination litigation should an employee substantial change his or her views such that they are no longer in step with NHCC's doctrinal position.
3. Section VI.A.2 was redacted to extend church membership to those who share NHCC's evangelical faith but who also affirm paedobaptism.

Revised on May 15, 2023 by unanimous vote of the Board of Elders:

Mike Clark

Duane Doot

Mike Ambrose

Michael Burgos

Paul Carmen

Mike Ocain

II. Name, Incorporation, and Affiliations

- A. NAME: Northwest Hills Community Church (NHCC)
- B. INCORPORATION: NHCC was incorporated as a religious corporation in the State of Connecticut on May 27, 2007.
- C. AFFILIATIONS: NHCC is autonomous and maintains the right to govern its own affairs independent of any denominational control. Believing that we can accomplish more in partnership with other likeminded churches, we shall affiliate with the Baptist Convention of New England and the Southern Baptist Convention.

III. Purpose

Jesus, the Christ, is the true source of all the church is and does, and his glory is to be the objective of every act, function, and motive of the church, both individually and corporately.¹

Jesus, the Christ, has provided his thoughts and his direction for the church in the Word. The Bible reflects and contains his mind, his commands, his counsel, and his purpose for every follower.²

The church is to conform to his Word, thus carrying out his will to his glory. That is our reason for being.³

IV. Confession of Faith

Northwest Hills Community Church is committed to biblical fidelity and the Lordship of Jesus Christ. Our *Confession of Faith* is comprised of two sections, namely the *Congregational Statement of Faith* and the *Statement of Theological Distinctives*. Our *Congregational Statement of Faith* represents ‘mere Christianity.’ That is, it represents our core doctrines which comprise the biblical faith. For this reason, we require all members to affirm the *Congregational Statement of Faith*. Additionally, and in unity with the historic church, we believe and confess the Apostles’, Nicene, Chalcedonian, and Athanasian Creeds as accurate representations of Scripture’s teaching.

¹ 1 Cor 1:31.

² 2 Tim 3:16-17.

³ Col 3:15-17.

Congregational Statement of Faith

The Word of God

The sixty-six books contained in the Protestant canon are the Word of God. The Bible is completely inerrant⁴ and infallible,⁵ and is a product of the Holy Spirit's inspiration.⁶ The Bible alone is the infallible rule of Christian faith and practice.⁷

The Trinity

There is only one God at all times in all places.⁸ He is uncreated,⁹ eternal,¹⁰ personal, omnipotent,¹¹ omniscient,¹² immutable,¹³ and distinct from his creation. The one being of God eternally exists in three persons; namely the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.¹⁴

Jesus Christ

The Son of God is the Creator and is equal in divinity, glory, and power to God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.¹⁵ The Son is eternal and therefore preexisted his human birth at Bethlehem.¹⁶ In the fullness of time, Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary.¹⁷ His humanity was like us in all respects, yet he was without sin.¹⁸ He was crucified, buried, was bodily resurrected, and now sits at the right hand of God.¹⁹ As the incarnate Son of God, he is and will always be fully God and fully man, and the only mediator between man and God.²⁰

⁴ We are here defining inerrancy in accordance with *The Chicago Statement on Inerrancy*.

⁵ Psalm 12:6; Prov 30:5; John 10:35; Titus 1:2; Heb 6:18.

⁶ 2 Pet 1:20-21.

⁷ Matt 4:4; 2 Tim 3:16-17.

⁸ Deut 6:4; Isaiah 43:10.

⁹ Psalm 90:2.

¹⁰ Deut 33:27; Psalm 102:12; Rev 1:8.

¹¹ Isaiah 14:27; 43:13; 42:1-2.

¹² Psalm 139:4; 147:5; Isaiah 40:28; Heb 4:13.

¹³ Num 23:19; Mal 3:6; Jas 1:17; Heb 1:10-12; 13:8.

¹⁴ Gen 19:24; Matt 3:16-17; 28:19; 1 Cor 8:6; 2 Cor 13:14; Eph 4:4-6.

¹⁵ John 1:1-3; 1:18; 20:28; 1 Cor 8:6; Col 1:16; Heb 1:2-3; 1:8-12.

¹⁶ John 8:38; 8:58; 17:5.

¹⁷ Luke 1:34-35; John 1:14; Gal 4:4; Phil 2:6-8.

¹⁸ Rom 8:3; 2 Cor 5:21; Heb 2:17; 4:15.

¹⁹ Luke 24:51; John 19:20; 4:10; 1 Cor 15:3-4; Heb 1:3.

²⁰ Acts 1:11; 1 Tim 2:5.

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is fully God, co-eternal, and equal in divinity, glory, and power to God the Father and God the Son.²¹ The Holy Spirit is personal and was active in creation.²² He sovereignly regenerates sinners and convicts them of sin.²³ He empowers believers for service, sanctifies them, and seals them for the last day.²⁴

The Gospel

All of humanity is sinful by nature and by choice.²⁵ Because man cannot establish peace with God or atone for his sin,²⁶ the Father sent his Son into the world in order that he might save those who would repent and believe.²⁷ Jesus lived a life of perfect obedience to the law²⁸ and then was crucified in the place of sinners.²⁹ Upon the cross, the Son of God received upon himself the wrath of God on behalf of those who would repent and believe. Jesus atoned for the sins of his people, and in place of their sin he imputed his perfectly righteous life such that, when a sinner repents and places faith in Christ alone for his salvation, he receives comprehensive pardon for his sins and the perfect righteousness of Christ.³⁰ Sinners are justified by faith apart from any work of their own whatsoever.³¹ The applied salvific work of Christ results in the redeemed sinner receiving eternal life,³² adoption into the family of God,³³ and membership into the body of Christ.³⁴ Upon regeneration, the Holy Spirit inhabits the hearts of his people and convicts them of sin and teaches them the law of God.³⁵ As a result of the continual and relentless redemptive work of the Spirit, the believer becomes more and more like Christ.³⁶ Because it is God who saves sinners, and because no one can stay his hand,³⁷ those who are his will inevitably

²¹ Psalm 139:7-8; Isaiah 40:13; Acts 5:3-5; Heb 9:14; Jude v. 20.

²² Gen 1:2.

²³ John 3:1-15; Titus 3:5.

²⁴ Acts 2:38; Eph 1:13; 2 Thess 2:13; 1 Pet 1:2.

²⁵ Rom 3:9-18; 5:19.

²⁶ Rom 8:6-7.

²⁷ John 3:16-17; Rom 8:3.

²⁸ Matt 3:15; 5:17-20.

²⁹ Psalm 69:9; Isaiah 53:4-6; John 10:11; 2 Cor 5:14; Col 2:14.

³⁰ Jer 23:6; Rom 3:22; 5:17; 2 Cor 5:21.

³¹ Rom 4:1-8; Eph 2:8-9.

³² John 5:24.

³³ Rom 8:15; Eph 1:5; Gal 4:4-6.

³⁴ Rom 12:5; 1 Cor 12:27; Eph 3:6.

³⁵ Ezek 36:27; John 16:13; 1 Cor 3:16; Gal 5:18.

³⁶ Rom 6:5-14; 1 Thess 4:3; 2 Thess 2:13.

³⁷ Daniel 4:34-35; Rom 8:28; Eph 1:11.

persevere in faithfulness until their death or the return of Christ.³⁸ Those who depart from a professed faith in Christ never truly knew Christ, and were never of his flock.³⁹

The Church

The Christian church is comprised of those who have been baptized and profess repentance and faith in Christ.⁴⁰ It is the primary mission of the church to worship God on the Lord's Day, to evangelize the lost, to teach God's Word, and to observe all ordinances and commands given by Christ.⁴¹ All believers are obligated to join themselves to local churches when and where they have the opportunity.⁴² Likewise, all who are admitted to the privileges of a church are also subject to its discipline and governance, according to the rule of Christ.⁴³

Baptism and the Lord's Supper

The New Testament has given the people of God two ordinances to carry out in the life of the church. Baptism is the act in which a Christian is immersed in and brought out of water by another Christian.⁴⁴ The Triune formula as indicated at Matthew 28:19 is the only oral invocation utilized for Christians baptism. The Lord's Supper is the act in which a local church gathers and partakes of bread wine/grape juice in remembrance of Christ and his redemptive work.⁴⁵ Like baptism, the Lord's Supper is restricted to Christians.⁴⁶

Gender & Marriage⁴⁷

Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart.⁴⁸ God's revealed will for all people is chastity outside of marriage and fidelity within marriage. God has designed marriage to be a covenantal, sexual, procreative, lifelong union of only one man and one woman, as husband and wife, and is meant to signify the covenant love between Christ and his bride the

³⁸ John 6:44; Rom 11:29; Phil 1:6.

³⁹ Matt 7:21-23; 1 John 2:19.

⁴⁰ Acts 2:41.

⁴¹ Matt 28:19; John 4:24; 1 Cor 14:26; 2 Tim 4:2.

⁴² Matt 18:20; Acts 2:42; Heb 10:25; 13:17.

⁴³ Matt 18:15-20; 1 Thess 5:14; 2 Thess 3:6; 3:14-15.

⁴⁴ Acts 8:36-39.

⁴⁵ Matt 26:26-28; 1 Cor 11:17-34.

⁴⁶ 1 Cor 11:30.

⁴⁷ This section is an adaptation of both the Danvers and Nashville Statements.

⁴⁸ Gen 2:18; v. 21-24; 1 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Tim 2:12-14.

church. God has not designed marriage to be a homosexual, polygamous, or polyamorous relationship.

Last Things

Those who die in a state of peace with God before the general resurrection exist in a temporary disembodied state in paradise with Christ.⁴⁹ Those who die in their sin prior to the general resurrection exist temporarily in a place of torment.⁵⁰ On the last day, the Son of God will return in victorious judgement, establishing his kingdom upon a renewed earth.⁵¹ All people will be resurrected and judged, and only those who are in Christ, as evidenced by their good works, will enter into the Kingdom of God.⁵² Those who did not receive Christ by repentance and faith will enter into a place of eternal conscience torment.⁵³ There are gradations of rewards in heaven and punishments in hell.⁵⁴

Statement of Theological Distinctives

The Statement of Theological Distinctives reflects what distinguishes Northwest Hills Community Church from other churches who would affirm the same basic doctrines. These distinctives shape the way that NHCC is led and the direction the church is headed. We do not expect all members to embrace all aspects of these distinctives, but members should expect that the distinctives will be maintained in all ministry environments, and members may not teach contrary to them. While all members of Northwest Hills Community Church must affirm *The Congregational Statement of Faith*, both Elders/Pastors, Deacons, and all who teach within NHCC must also adhere to *The Statement of Theological Distinctives*.

Creation and Complementarity

God created all things⁵⁵ from nothing,⁵⁶ speaking creation into existence.⁵⁷ All things are dependent upon God, and nothing can exist apart from God's sovereign decree. God created all

⁴⁹ Luke 23:43; Phil 1:21-24; 2 Cor 5:8.

⁵⁰ Luke 16:19-30.

⁵¹ Dan 7:13-14; Matt 16:27 Titus 2:13.

⁵² Matt 25:31-40.

⁵³ Matt 25:41-46.

⁵⁴ Psalm 62:12; Prov 24:12; Jer 17:10; Eze 18:20, 30; Matt 11:21-24; 23:14; Luke 12:47-48; John 19:11; Rom 2:5-16; 1 Cor 3:8, 11-15; 2 Cor 5:10; Col 3:23-25; 1 Peter 1:17; Rev 20:12.

⁵⁵ Gen 1:1.

⁵⁶ Heb 11:3; Rev 4:11.

⁵⁷ Psalm 33:6.

things within the span of six ordinary twenty-four-hour days.⁵⁸ Every human from conception has been made in the image of God and is therefore intrinsically valuable.⁵⁹ The existence of every human is intended by God and is in no way accidental.⁶⁰ We deny that the existence of man is a result of godless, naturalistic, evolutionary processes. We deny that some humans are more or less valuable in the sight of God due to the color of their skin, stage of development, or the functionality of their body or mind.⁶¹ Both Old and New Testaments affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community.⁶²

The Fall & the Human Condition

Humanity was created good⁶³ and upon Adam's intentional act of rebellion against God, all of humanity was thrown into a state of guilt and condemnation before God.⁶⁴ Sin came into the world through Adam's sin, and all were made sinners.⁶⁵ Because of sin, the natural man is spiritually dead,⁶⁶ is enslaved to sin,⁶⁷ and is subject to physical death because the wages of sin is death.⁶⁸ The natural man is incapable of obedience to God, whether obedience to his holy law, or obedience in the form of repentance and faith in Christ.⁶⁹ Every part of the natural man is in some manner corrupted by sin, including the human will.⁷⁰ Sinful man loves his sin and is at war with God—he cannot of his own volition bend his knee in repentance toward God. God's existence is revealed to the natural man through his creation, but in his idolatry he suppresses that knowledge such that he is without a defense for his unbelief.⁷¹

The Sovereignty of God in All Things

The Triune God has decreed the end from the beginning,⁷² having ordained whatsoever comes to pass.⁷³ However, God is not the author of sin, nor is violence offered to the will of his creatures;

⁵⁸ Gen 1:3-31; Exodus 20:11; 31:17.

⁵⁹ Gen 1:26-27; Exodus 20:13.

⁶⁰ Psalm 119:73; 139:13

⁶¹ Acts 17:26.

⁶² Gen 2:18; Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Tim 2:11-15.

⁶³ Gen 1:31.

⁶⁴ Rom 5:18.

⁶⁵ Rom 5:19.

⁶⁶ Eph 2:1.

⁶⁷ John 8:34.

⁶⁸ Rom 6:23.

⁶⁹ Rom 8:7-8.

⁷⁰ Gen 6:5; 8:21; Jer 17:9; Rom 3:10-18.

⁷¹ Psalm 19:1; Rom 1:18-21.

⁷² Isaiah 46:10.

⁷³ Rom 11:33; Eph 1:11; Heb 6:17.

nor is the liberty or contingency of second causes taken away, but rather established.⁷⁴ God, upon the basis of his good pleasure alone, has elected those who will enjoy salvation in Christ.⁷⁵ Like creation, redemption is a work of the Triune God: God the Father predestined his elect according to his eternal decree, God the Son procured the salvation of sinners by his atoning death, and God the Holy Spirit applies the saving work of Christ to the life of the sinner.⁷⁶ God is perfectly just to have mercy upon whom he will have mercy, and compassion upon whom he will have compassion.⁷⁷ God has drawn only those whom Christ will raise.⁷⁸ Salvation therefore, does not hinge upon human will, but rather the will of God.⁷⁹ While man does make a choice as to whether to repent and believe in Christ, his decision to repent is predicated upon God's sovereign choice.⁸⁰

The Law of God

There exists within the Bible a threefold division in the law of God. First are those moral laws, which are binding on all people for all time. These laws, codified within the ten commandments,⁸¹ are a reflection of the perfect holy character of God, and are therefore unchanging. The moral law serves as the basis for civil government to rule well, as the means for sinners to learn of their sin,⁸² and as a rule for holy and acceptable living for the redeemed.⁸³ Those civil laws which pertain to the governance of the nation state of Israel are not binding. However, the underlying moral principle remains binding. Those ceremonial laws which belonged to the sacrificial system of ancient Israel are not binding. Rather, these laws, like priest and temple sacrifice itself, serve as a typological portrayal of the person and work of Christ.

The Church and Its Polity

Jesus is the Chief Shepherd of the church, and he has appointed under-shepherds to care for his flock (i.e., Elders). The Scripture recognizes only two offices to be observed in the local church, namely Elder and Deacon.⁸⁴ The office of Elder is restricted to qualified men, and the office of

⁷⁴ Matt 17:12; Acts 2:23; 4:27; 19:11.

⁷⁵ Rom 9:6-13.

⁷⁶ John 3:5-8; Ezek 36:25-27.

⁷⁷ Rom 9:14-16.

⁷⁸ John 6:44.

⁷⁹ John 1:12-13.

⁸⁰ Rom 9:21.

⁸¹ Exodus 20:1-17.

⁸² Rom 7:7.

⁸³ Rom 7:22.

⁸⁴ Acts 6:1-7; 14:26; 1 Tim 3:1-13; Titus 1:5.

Deacon is open to qualified men and women.⁸⁵

V. Guiding Principles

In addition to our *Confession of Faith*, which grounds us in truth, these distinctive principles guide our approach to ministry.

- A. **MISSION:** To glorify the Triune God through gospel-centered preaching, teaching, and worship.
- B. **VALUES:** Our values set us apart in how we do ministry and form a foundation for the kinds of ministries we will be involved in. Our values include:
 - 1. **Word Centered** – We desire to center all of our ministry on the sure foundation of the Word of God. We desire not only to involve the Scriptures in our ministry, but to derive the very content of our ministry from the Scriptures.
 - 2. **Gospel Centered** – The gospel is not merely a rite of passage for new believers, but is vital to every Christian every day.
 - 3. **Expository Preaching/Teaching** – Because the Scriptures are sufficient to equip us for every good work, we value careful and faithful expository preaching and teaching.
 - 4. **True Religion** – We want our lives to reflect the fullness of the glory and love of God. We’ve been saved by grace unto good works and therefore desire to serve orphans, the unborn, widows, and those who are in need.
 - 5. **Evangelism-Minded** – We preach Christ and him crucified for the forgiveness of sins for the salvation of the world.
 - 6. **Intentionally Theological** – The Bible tells us to love God with all of our heart and mind. Therefore, we desire to feast upon the Word and to revel in the deep truths of the faith. The more we know of Christ, the more we are drawn to worship.

VI. Membership

- A. **QUALIFICATIONS:** A person must meet all the following requirements to be a member of NHCC:
 - 1. Testify to two Elders of personal faith in Jesus Christ alone as Savior,
 - 2. Receive, or have previously received, the ordinance of baptism publicly in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
 - 3. Complete the NHCC Membership Class, affirm *The Congregational Statement of Faith*, be informed of *The Statement of Theological Distinctives*, ministry philosophy, and governance structure.

⁸⁵ 1 Cor 14:33-35; 1 Tim 2:12; 3:1-13.

4. Indicate personal willingness to live in accordance with the NHCC Members' Covenant by signing the Covenant and/or indicating such willingness on the NHCC Membership Application, and
 5. Be received by the Board of Elders approval by a majority vote.
- B. TERM: Membership is perpetual unless one or more of the following occurs, at which point membership will be revoked automatically:
1. Members who are found to be inactive in the worship, fellowship and ministry of the Church will be removed from the membership roll. Exception: the member who cannot attend regularly, but who would like to maintain membership, should notify the Board of Elders of such intent.
 2. A member who is not under discipline asks to be removed from the membership roll. Members in good standing may request a letter of recommendation to present to a different church. Members who unite with another Church will be removed from the membership roll.
 3. Membership is revoked by the Board of Elders in accordance with dismissal standards as outlined in this Constitution.
- C. DISMISSAL: The Board of Elders may terminate a person's membership if that person's conduct is contrary to the commitment that he or she made in affirming the NHCC Members' Covenant and/or due to unwillingness to follow the pattern established by the Lord Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17 as it pertains to confrontation, repentance, and reconciliation due to sin. If the member refuses to repent and seek restoration of fellowship, as determined by the Board of Elders, that person's membership may be revoked.
- D. REINSTATEMENT: A person whose membership has been revoked automatically or by action of the Board of Elders can have membership reinstated at the discretion of the Board of Elders following:
1. A period of living in accordance with the NHCC Members' Covenant, as determined by the Board.
 2. A meeting with at least two Elders for determining if membership reinstatement is appropriate.
 3. Receiving the Board of Elders approval.
- E. RIGHTS & DISPUTES: Members have no contract, property, or civil legal rights in the property or other ministry affairs of NHCC. Based on 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, all personal disputes between brothers and sisters in Christ, including disputes between a member and NHCC, shall be resolved based on Scripture's prescribed process. All members agree to submit to binding arbitration any matters which cannot otherwise be resolved, and expressly waive all rights in law and equity to bringing any civil disagreement before a court of law. The normal procedure includes bringing any dispute unresolved between brothers and sisters in Christ before the Board. If the Board cannot

find resolution, an appeal for resolution may be made to the Baptist Convention of New England.

VII. Church Discipline

- A. **DISTINCTION:** There are two kinds of discipline that occur in the church: daily/relational discipline and formal discipline.
- B. **RELATIONAL:** This kind of discipline is done in the context of grace-filled relationships among brothers and sisters in Christ. As the people of the church grow together in Christ they can be an example to one another and participate in mutual accountability. This accountability must always take place in love and with the acknowledgement that we all sin.⁸⁶ This discipline is not intended to be legalistic or harsh, but a ‘stretching’ of the body of Christ as we struggle to know one another and restore our relationships.⁸⁷ This kind of discipline is to be private, personal, informal, and ongoing.
- C. **FORMAL:** In the case of unrepentant sin of a church member, formal discipline may be led by the Board and carried out by the church.⁸⁸

Formal discipline can only be considered with the following criteria in mind:

1. If the offender is an Elder, there must be at least two witnesses to the indiscretion.⁸⁹
2. The offense considered for discipline must be shown to be unrepentant sin. The sin must be clearly defined by the tenor of Scripture. The individual must be refusing, when shown his fault, to struggle against this sin in his life.
3. Discipline may be instituted in instances of extreme public sin that may have the potential to hurt the reputation of Christ in the community.
4. The formal discipline process includes:
 - a. The Board must be informed of the situation.
 - b. If the offense is not a cause of imminent harm to others, the Board may approach the individual privately to personally establish facts and encourage repentance of any sin uncovered. The individual will be given reasonable opportunity to explain and defend his actions. If the individual recognizes the sin and repents, then the matter is considered resolved.
 - c. If an offense is likely to harm others or lead into further sin, or cause division or disruption, the Board may accelerate the process and move to promptly protect the church body.⁹⁰

⁸⁶ Heb 10:24-25.

⁸⁷ Matt 18:15-17.

⁸⁸ 1 Cor 5.

⁸⁹ 1 Tim 5:19-20.

⁹⁰ Rom 16:17; 1 Cor 5:1-13.

- d. As the disciplinary process progresses, the Board may impose a variety of sanctions to encourage repentance including private or public admonition, withholding the Lord's Supper, removal from office or ministry, withdrawal of normal fellowship, and/or removal of membership.
 - e. If the straying individual does not repent in response to the Board's actions, the Board may inform others in the church that may have a constructive influence upon the individual, such as a close friend or fellow small group member.
 - f. If, after a period defined by the Board, the individual still refuses to repent, the Board may remove him from membership and normal fellowship, and publicly inform the church. The individual will then be treated as one without the Gospel needing evangelism.
- 5. Should a member withdraw membership while discipline is pending and(or) cease church attendance for thirty days or more, the church will continue in her God-given responsibility to pursue repentance and reconciliation and will consider that person under discipline until restoration has been accomplished.
 - 6. All church discipline must be done with the goal of restoration and the spirit of love.⁹¹

VIII. Board of Elders

NHCC is guarded and led by a plurality of Elders who work together as a team under the headship of the Lord Jesus to provide oversight, accountability, and wisdom for the direction of the church. Elders are servant-leaders who accept the task of managing conflict, making decisions, and maintaining truth for the glory of God and the good of this church.

A. **NUMBER:** The Board of Elders (Board) will be comprised of no fewer than three men. Vocational Pastors will be constant members of the Board. The number, at any given time, will be determined by the Board. The majority of Elders on the Board must be non-vocational Elders.

B. **RESPONSIBILITIES:** The Board functions together to provide oversight, accountability, and wisdom for the direction of NHCC. The Board evaluates the effectiveness and direction of the church per NHCC's doctrine (§ III), guiding principles (§ IV), and resources – capital or otherwise.

- 1. Pray for the congregation, staff, and Board.
- 2. Protect the congregation from false teaching.⁹²
- 3. Monitor the church's spiritual, fiscal, and relational health.

⁹¹ Gal 6.

⁹² Acts 20:28.

4. Keep the church focused on the mission and vision.
5. Produce and authorize written policies that govern the Board itself and that reflect the church's theology and practices.
6. Provide fiscal accountability through the approval of an annual operating budget and oversight of major capital expenses as needed.
7. Exercise church discipline when necessary. The objective of church discipline is to seek correction and restoration rather than punishment.⁹³
8. License individuals to preach or ordain individuals for ministry.⁹⁴
9. Select other Elders and Deacons.
10. Provide supervision, accountability, protection, and development for the vocational Pastors/Elders, including:
 - a. Evaluating the skills in teaching, and leadership
 - b. Establishing fair compensation commensurate with training, experience, tenure, and results.
 - c. Providing an evaluation of performance and the compensation package no less than annually.
 - d. Making decisions based on NHCC's:
 - i. Doctrine (§IV),
 - ii. Guiding principles (§V), and
 - iii. Resources, capital or otherwise.

C. OPERATION: For all practical purposes, the Board has final say in all matters concerning the overall direction of NHCC. Elders will work together as a unified team in the best interests of the church.

1. The Board will generally meet monthly, but not less than once every two months.
2. The Board will select Elders to serve in the following administrative capacities:
 - a. Chairman: One elder will serve as Chairman of the Board. He will direct the work of the Board, preside at Churchwide Meetings, and serve as spokesman to the congregation and for the church. At times, he can delegate Chairman duties to another elder who is willing to serve as a temporary Chairman. The temporary Chairman cannot be currently serving as Secretary or Treasurer. The Board

⁹³ Matt 18:15-20; Gal 6:1; Titus 3:10; 1 Cor 5.

⁹⁴ Acts 14:23; 1 Tim 4:14; Titus 1:5.

will vote yearly to appoint the Chairman. Lead Pastor serves as Chairman of the Board as President of the Corporation during his tenure as Lead Pastor for the purposes of state law.

- b. Secretary: The Secretary will record and maintain the minutes of Board meetings and Churchwide Meetings. He will make a written record of the minutes available at the next meeting for Board approval. The elder chosen to serve as Secretary serves for a period of one-year. At the end of the year, the Board may re-assign the role of Secretary or renew the current elder's role for another one-year term. The Board will vote yearly to appoint the Secretary.
- c. Treasurer: The Treasurer will work directly with the Finance Team. The Finance Team advises the Board on all finance-related matters. This includes creating and abiding by policies and procedures to be approved by the Board which keep the church financially healthy and viable for the fulfillment of the mission. The Treasurer will ensure that the Board has the necessary financial information to lead the church in healthy stewardship of her resources and in approving processes that are above reproach. The elder chosen to serve as Treasurer serves for a period of one-year. At the end of the year, the Board may re-assign the role of Treasurer or renew the current elder's role for another one-year term.

- 3. Elders must commit to attend meetings regularly.
- 4. Elders must trust and respect one another.
- 5. Elders must keep matters confidential.
- 6. If a conflict of interest arises for an elder, that elder shall abstain from being involved in a decision related to the conflict of interest.
- 7. Decisions will be made by majority vote unless stated otherwise in this Constitution.
- 8. Disagreement is invited privately among Elders, but not acceptable publicly.
- 9. Final decisions will be the position of the Board, and will be represented publicly with one united voice.

D. LIMITATIONS: There are limits to an elder's authority and guidelines that direct relationships.

- 1. The Board may not take any of the following actions without first receiving the input/feedback of membership at a Churchwide Meeting:
 - a. Calling (hiring) vocational Pastors.
 - b. Changing the church's Constitution & Bylaws.
 - c. Commissioning, or re-commissioning, an Elder.
 - d. Incurring loan debt more than 25% of the church's previous

year's annual operating budget.

e. Purchasing, mortgaging, or selling church real estate.

2. No individual elder has authority to contractually bind the church verbally or in writing.

E. **SELECTING NON-VOCATIONAL ELDERS:** The Board will prayerfully and wisely select men who:⁹⁵

1. Are members of NHCC prior to selection.

2. Agree with, and are passionate about, the church's doctrine, guiding values, and strategy.

3. Are characterized by their servant-leadership.

4. Demonstrate the Fruit of the Spirit.

5. Have spouses that support their role as elder, if married.

6. Meet the biblical qualifications:

a. Only qualified men.⁹⁶

b. Spirit-given desire.⁹⁷

c. Willing heart.⁹⁸

d. *Moral/spiritual* aptitude.⁹⁹

F. **EVALUATION & INSTALLATION OF NON-VOCATIONAL ELDERS:** The Board of Elders will follow the following evaluation and installation process:

1. The Board will achieve a unanimous vote for the consideration of a prospective Elder who seems to meet the qualifications outlined in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

2. The Board will assign one Elder to approach the prospective Elder and invite him to begin to pray and consider his potential participation in the office. The prospective Elder will read any materials required by the board. The prospective Elder will be given a specified period of time to consider this proposal. The prospective Elder must affirm the *Confession of Faith* in its entirety.

3. The prospective Elder will either accept or decline participation in the Elder evaluation process by the end of the specified period.

4. The Board will announce a period of congregational evaluation and consideration of the prospective Elder during either a Sunday service or a

⁹⁵ See Appendix II.

⁹⁶ Titus 1:5-11.

⁹⁷ 1 Tim 3:1.

⁹⁸ 1 Pet 5:2.

⁹⁹ 1 Tim 3:1-17; Titus 1:5-9.

churchwide meeting. At this time a written testimony of his conversion and current theological views must be made available to the congregation. This period of evaluation must be no shorter than thirty days. During this time, the congregation ought to consider the prospective Elder in light of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Members or attendees are encouraged to interact with the prospective Elder.

5. At a churchwide meeting, members are provided the opportunity to affirm the appointment of the prospective Elder.
6. The Board ordains the prospective Elder by means of prayer and the laying on of hands at either a Sunday service or churchwide meeting.

G. EVALUATION, AND INSTALLATION OF VOCATIONAL

PASTORS/ELDERS: The Board of Elders will follow the following evaluation and installation process:

1. The Board of Elders will vote to determine the need of a vocational Pastor. However, in the event wherein there is not a vocational Pastor on staff, the board is required to begin the search process immediately.
2. Upon finding a candidate, the Board will evaluate him according to the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.¹⁰⁰ Because these qualifications assume the congregation's familiarity with the candidate, qualified members of NHCC will be evaluated and considered first. The prospective Pastor must affirm the *Confession of Faith* in its entirety.
3. If the prospective Pastor is not a member of NHCC, he must produce a Declaration of Faith detailing his theology and ministerial philosophy and a personal testimony. Additionally, he must submit sermons and(or) teachings for evaluation. Any materials published by the prospective Pastor also ought to be evaluated.
4. After much prayer, the Board should in either a Sunday service or churchwide meeting, announce their continued consideration and evaluation of the prospective Pastor. At this time the prospective Pastor's Declaration of Faith ought to be made available to the congregation. Additionally, the prospective Pastor will be invited to preach a minimum of one Sunday sermon and to make himself available for questions during a churchwide meeting.
5. At a churchwide meeting, members are provided the opportunity to affirm the appointment of the prospective Pastor.
6. The Board achieves a unanimous vote in affirmation of the candidate's appointment. The Board either ordains or recognizes the preexisting ordination of the prospective Pastor by means of prayer and the laying on of hands at either a Sunday service or churchwide meeting. If ordained, a certificate of ordination/license is issued to the Pastor for legal and tax purposes.

¹⁰⁰ See also Appendix II.

- H. DISMISSAL OF VOCATIONAL PASTORS/ELDERS AND NONVOCATIONAL ELDERS: Each elder will serve without any prescribed term. If it becomes apparent that an Elder/Pastor should not serve in the office, he may resign or, by unanimous vote of the Board of Elders, excluding the Elder under consideration, be immediately retired from the office. Where a grievance exists against an Elder/Pastor due to teaching contrary to the beliefs of the Church as set forth in the *Confession of Faith* or to alleged conduct on their part unfitting an Elder, such grievance may be brought before the Board of Elders by any two members in good standing. If the Board, after thorough investigation and consideration, believes the grievance to be true and substantial, then the call of the Elder may be terminated by a unanimous vote of the Board. His position will remain vacant until the Board of Elders chooses a qualified replacement.

IX. Deacons

- A. SELECTING DEACONS: The Board may appoint any number of Deacons to assist the Elders in the implementation of ministry. The qualifications of Deacons are essentially the same as Elders. Both qualified men and women are suitable candidates for Deacons.¹⁰¹
- B. EVALUATION & INSTALLATION: The Board of Elders will follow the following evaluation and installation process for Deacons:
1. The Board will achieve a unanimous vote on the consideration of a prospective deacon who seems to meet the qualifications outlined in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
 2. The Board will assign one Elder to approach the prospective deacon and invite him to begin to pray and consider his potential participation in the office. The prospective deacon will read any materials required by the board. The prospective deacon will be given a specified period of time to consider this proposal.
 3. The prospective deacon will either accept or decline participation in the Elder evaluation process by the end of the specified period.
 4. The Board will announce a period of congregational evaluation and consideration of the prospective deacon during either a Sunday service or a churchwide meeting. At this time a written testimony of his conversion must be made available to the congregation. This period of evaluation must be no shorter than thirty days. During this time, the congregation ought to consider the prospective deacon in light of 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Members or attendees are encouraged to interact with the prospective deacon.
 5. At a churchwide meeting, members are provided the opportunity to affirm the appointment of the prospective deacon.
 6. The Board ordains the prospective deacon by means of prayer and the

¹⁰¹ See Appendix III.

laying on of hands at either a Sunday service or churchwide meeting.

- C. **RESPONSIBILITIES:** Responsibilities will be assigned to each deacon per the church's needs in specific ministry areas.
- D. **DISMISSAL:** Each deacon will serve without any prescribed term. If it becomes apparent that a Deacon should not serve in the office, he may resign or, by unanimous vote of the Board of Elders, be immediately retired from the office. Where a grievance exists against an Deacon due to teaching contrary to the beliefs of the Church as set forth in the *Confession of Faith* or to alleged conduct on their part unfitting an Deacon, such grievance may be brought before the Board of Elders by any two members in good standing. If the Board, after thorough investigation and consideration, believes the grievance to be true and substantial, then the call of the Deacon may be terminated by a unanimous vote of the Board. His position will remain vacant until the Board of Elders chooses a qualified replacement.
- E. **OPERATION:** Each Deacon will report directly to the Board. Deacons may build a team of members and non-members to fulfill their assigned duties and in accordance with the guiding principles of NHCC.

X. Staff

Staff members are defined as paid employees of the church, whether full- or part-time.

- A. **Pastoral Staff:** Vocational Pastors will be recruited and hired by the Board of Elders according to the aforementioned process. The Board of Elders will take into consideration the feedback of the congregation when deciding to hire vocational Pastors.
- B. **Other Staff:** The Board of Elders has the responsibility to hire or dismiss staff members in consultation with the Board of Elders. Staff members are accountable to the Lead Pastor. All paid positions must be approved by the Board prior to recruitment.
- C. If a non-pastoral employee changes his or her views such that those views are incongruous to the *Congregational Statement of Faith*, that person is obligated to immediately notify the Board of Elders. Upon notification, the Board will investigate the matter and decide whether to retain or terminate the individual's employment.

XI. Meetings

- A. **PUBLIC WORSHIP:** NHCC shall offer regular opportunities for people to gather to worship, study the Bible, pray, and to observe the ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- B. **ANNUAL MEETING:** NHCC shall provide a minimum of one meeting per calendar year for dialogue between the Board and the membership. The annual meeting will be announced either from the pulpit, electronic media, postal mail, or a combination thereof at least two weeks prior to the annual meeting.

- C. SPECIAL MEETINGS: From time to time, as deemed necessary by the Board, a special meeting may be announced either from the pulpit, electronic media, postal mail, or a combination thereof at least two weeks prior to the special meeting.
- D. OPERATION: The Lead Pastor, or someone delegated by the Lead Pastor, will preside over the annual and special meetings. The Board Secretary will record the minutes of these meetings and make the record available for approval by the Board at the next Board meeting.

XII. Financial Matters

- A. FISCAL YEAR: The fiscal year shall be May 1 through April 30.
- B. CONTRIBUTIONS: The designation of gifts or contributions, whether pre-approved by the Board or not, shall be considered advisory rather than mandatory in nature. All contributions are subject to the exclusive control and discretion of the Board.
- C. FINANCE TEAM: This team will strive to lead the church in healthy stewardship of the church's financial resources by developing and executing processes that are above reproach. The Finance Team will advise the Board on all finance-related matters, including creating and abiding by policies and procedures to be approved by the Board which keep the church financially healthy and viable for the fulfillment of our mission. See the church's Bylaws for specific requirements of Finance Team members and the Finance Team leader and the team's duties under the leadership of the Board.

XIII. Dissolution

Should it be determined by the Board of Elders that NHCC has ceased to function as a church of like faith and practice, or if the membership should dissolve due to a split or other disaster, all debts will be settled by liquidation of assets and subsequent property rights will be assigned to the Baptist Convention of New England, the Southern Baptist Convention, or to another Christian ministry as determined by the Board of Elders.

XIV. Revisions to the Constitution

Revisions may be proposed by any member, but the proposal must be made in writing to the Board. The Board, after deliberation on the matter, may call a special meeting to bring the revision proposal to membership before deciding about the proposed revision.

Appendix I: Member's Covenant

Having been brought by the grace of God to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give ourselves to him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and of the Son and the Holy Spirit, we now, relying on his gracious aid, make this covenant with each other:

We will love each other, not just with words, but with deeds and in truth.¹⁰² We will rejoice at each other's happiness and with tenderness and sympathy bear each other's burdens and sorrows.¹⁰³ We will watch over each other with love, pray for each other, and faithfully admonish and encourage each other as occasion may require.¹⁰⁴

We will submit to the Elders and other appointed leaders of the church, and diligently strive for unity and peace within the church, being slow to take offence and quick to pursue reconciliation.¹⁰⁵

We will regularly meet together on the Lord's Day for corporate worship, with the preaching of the Word and observance of baptism and the Lord's Supper.¹⁰⁶

We will contribute cheerfully and regularly, according to our means, to the financial support of this church and its mission to spread of the Gospel through all nations. And we will joyfully serve this body with our time, talents and spiritual gifts.¹⁰⁷

We will, by God's grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, strive to live holy lives at home, in the church, and in the world, turning away from ungodliness and worldly lusts, and letting our light shine before others "so that they may see [our] good deeds and give glory to [our] Father in heaven."¹⁰⁸ We will seek the salvation of family, neighbors and friends by sharing the gospel and living lives that commend it.¹⁰⁹ We will endeavor to bring up any children the Lord gives us in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.¹¹⁰

We will submit our marriages to teaching of Scripture so that they reflect the union between Christ and his church.¹¹¹ Whether married or single, we will pursue purity and flee from all forms of sexual sin, including adultery, premarital sex, pornography and homosexual practice.¹¹² If single, we will only marry a fellow believer.¹¹³

We will humbly submit to the church's discipline, graciously repenting when approached about

¹⁰² 1 John 3:16-18.

¹⁰³ Rom 12:15; Gal 6:2.

¹⁰⁴ Col 3:16; 1 Thess 5:14.

¹⁰⁵ Matt 5:21-25; Eph 4:1-3; Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 5:5.

¹⁰⁶ Acts 2:41-42; 20:7; Heb 10:24-25.

¹⁰⁷ 2 Cor 8:1-15; 9:6-14; 1 Pet 4:10-11.

¹⁰⁸ Matt 5:16; Col 3:1-7; 1 Pet 1:13-16.

¹⁰⁹ Matt 28:19; Acts 1:8.

¹¹⁰ Eph 6:4.

¹¹¹ Matt 19:3-9; 1 Cor 7:1-16; Eph 5:22-23.

¹¹² Rom 13:13-14; 1 Cor 6:18; 1 Thess 4:3-7.

¹¹³ 1 Cor 7:39.

personal sin, and lovingly restoring others who become entangled in sin.¹¹⁴

We will, when we move from this place, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴ Matt 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:19-13; 2 Cor 2:5-11; Gal 6:1.

¹¹⁵ Rom 12:4-13.

Appendix II: Qualifications for Elders/Pastors

A. Men Who Possess a Desire for Eldership Motivated by the Holy Spirit

Upon the basis of the chronology of creation and the deception of Eve at the garden, Paul prohibits “a woman to teach or to exercise authority over a man.”¹¹⁶ This teaching is confirmed more generally in Scripture by the principal of male headship in the home,¹¹⁷ and by Paul’s statement in 1 Corinthians 14:33-35.

Subsequently, the office of Elder/Pastor is restricted to qualified men who desire “the noble task”¹¹⁸ of shepherding the people of God. Elders must be “eager” shepherds who desire the flourishing of the flock.¹¹⁹

B. Moral-Spiritual Qualifications

The Holy Spirit makes men “overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.”¹²⁰ The Holy Spirit does this by means of the local church. Paul outlines both positive and negative criteria in 1 Timothy 3:2-3, vv. 6-7 and Titus 1:6-9. The negative criteria is as follows:

- Not addicted or a drunkard
- Not violent
- Not quarrelsome
- Not greedy
- Not a recent convert
- Not arrogant
- Not quick tempered

Paul’s positive criteria is as follows:

- One-woman man
- Gentle
- Able to teach
- Sober-minded
- Above reproach
- Self-controlled
- Respectable
- Hospitable

¹¹⁶ 1 Tim 2:12.

¹¹⁷ 1 Cor 11:1-16; Eph 5:22-24; 1 Pet 3:1.

¹¹⁸ 1 Tim 3:1.

¹¹⁹ 1 Pet 5:2.

¹²⁰ Acts 20:28. It should be noted that the terms “Elder” (Gk. *Presbuteros*), “Overseer” (*Episkopos*), and “Shepherd” or “Pastor” (from the verb *poimen*) all refer to the same office. In Acts 20:17 and v. 28, Paul uses all of these terms to refer to the same group of Ephesian Elders.

- Well thought of by outsiders—not open to a charge of debauchery or insubordination
- A lover of good
- Upright
- Holy
- Disciplined
- Hold fast to the Word

Moreover, the Apostle provides a means of evaluating the prospective Elder’s/Pastor’s management and dignity, namely, the management of his household. He wrote, “He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive.”¹²¹ If a man does not manage his household well, he is unfit for the office of Elder: “For if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for the church of God?”¹²² A prospective Elder’s children should be believers.¹²³ This evaluating criteria implies that the church and its Board of Elders are familiar enough with the candidate to sufficiently judge his performance as a father and a husband.

Twice, in both 1 Timothy 3:2 and Titus 1:9, Paul makes clear that an Elder ought to be capable of teaching the Word well. He must be a mature believer “having the powers of his discernment trained with constant practice,”¹²⁴ being able to “give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.”¹²⁵ He must be capable of “enduring suffering” and doing “the work of an evangelist.”¹²⁶ Thus, an Elder/Pastor must be a teacher of “sound doctrine,” being able to adequately refute false doctrine, protecting the flock of God.¹²⁷ These criteria imply the following:

- Elders are well-equipped students of Scripture.
- Elders are highly discerning.
- Elder have considerable theological convictions.

¹²¹ 1 Tim 3:4.

¹²² 1 Tim 3:5.

¹²³ Titus 1:6.

¹²⁴ Heb 5:14.

¹²⁵ Titus 1:9.

¹²⁶ 2 Tim 4:5.

¹²⁷ Titus 2:1.

Appendix III: The Qualifications and Responsibilities of Deacons

A. Men and Women Both Appropriate Candidates for the Diaconate

When Paul began his discussion of the qualifications of the office of Deacon he was speaking of men.¹²⁸ The adverb *hosautos*, translated “likewise,” indicates continuity between the qualifications for male elders and the qualifications of male Deacons. Verse 11 states in the English Standard Version, “Their wives likewise must be dignified.” The term *gunē*, translated “wives,” is legitimately translated “women,” and may therefore refer to female Deacons (i.e., Deaconesses). That Paul mentions these women within the middle of a discussion of the qualifications for the office of Deacon is a good indication that women are suitable candidates for the diaconate. This interpretation is confirmed by Paul’s identification of Pheobe in Romans 16:1-2. Paul wrote, “I commend to you our sister Pheobe, a servant of Cenchreae.” The term translated “servant” is the noun *diakonos*, the term from which we get the English term “Deacon.” The phrase, “a servant/Deaconess of Cenchreae,” is indicative of the office of Deacon. While women may not preach or possess teaching authority over men,¹²⁹ both men and women are suitable candidates for the office of Deacon.

B. Qualifications for Appointment

In Paul’s letters the qualifications for Deacons are essentially the same for elders with one notable exception. Of the qualifications of elders Paul wrote, “He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also rebuke those who contradict it.”¹³⁰ Elders are teachers, and therefore they must possess the ability to proclaim and defend the Word especially. While all Christians must be capable of teaching the Scriptures¹³¹ and giving a defense of the faith,¹³² Elders are unusually well-equipped for this task. However, when the Apostles chose Deacons, they sought “seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom.”¹³³ Therefore, Deacons ought to be Spirit-filled and wise, having an excellent understanding of the Bible and of Christian theology. Like Elders, Deacons must possess good moral character. They must have a dignified personality, not garish or reckless. Deacons must have good social skills since they represent the fellowship and must interact with others regularly. A Deacon’s children and household are a reflection of their ministry, and thus potential Deacons must manage “their children and their own household well.”¹³⁴

¹²⁸ 1 Tim 3:8.

¹²⁹ 1 Tim 2:12.

¹³⁰ Titus 1:9.

¹³¹ Matt 28:19.

¹³² 1 Pet 3:15.

¹³³ Acts 6:3.

¹³⁴ 1 Tim 3:13.

C. The Roles of the Christian Deacon

A Deacon is a Christian Minister. While Deacons are not Elders, they are appointed (i.e., ordained) with ministering to both the fellowship and our community.¹³⁵

Whereas Elders are charged with the leadership of the church, the teaching and proclamation of the Word, and prayer, Deacons serve and even specialize in a variety of roles. Since the qualifications of Deacons are managing a household properly, Deacons may serve in an administrative capacity, such as the head of a ministry team. They are to “not to be addicted to much wine,” and therefore, perhaps they function as a godly counselor to individuals who have been addicted. Deacons are “not greedy for dishonest gain,” and therefore they may be charged with handling the church’s finances. Deacons may serve in a variety of tasks wherein they capably meet the church’s needs. Traditionally, Deacons have specialized within a particular area of service in which they possess gifting.

¹³⁵ The Greek term *kathistēmi*, often translated either “appoint” or “ordain” refers to the formal ordination of Elders and Deacons wherein Elders lay hands upon and pray for the anointing of the Holy Spirit on the new Elder or Deacon. Cf. Acts 6:3; 14:23; 2 Tim 2:2; Titus 1:5.