

FIRESIDE BAPTIST FELLOWSHIP

The Fireside Baptist Church
Statement of Faith and Bylaws

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Elizabethtown, Kentucky

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PREAMBLE

The Preamble is still being formulated.

FIRESIDE BAPTIST CHURCH STATEMENT OF FAITH

I. The Scriptures

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were given by inspiration of God. Therefore, all Scripture is authoritative, infallible, and inerrant. The Scriptures are the only sufficient rule for faith and practice (Ps. 19:7; 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:20-21).

II. God

There is but one God, the Maker, Preserver and Ruler of all things, having in and of Himself, all perfections, and being infinite in them all; and to Him all creatures owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience (Deut. 6:4; Ps. 145:3; John 1:3; 1 Cor. 8:4-6; 1 Tim. 1:17).

III. The Trinity

The Scriptures reveal that the one God eternally exists in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Each person is distinct, but God is without division of nature, essence, or being (Matt. 3:16-17; 28:19; 2 Cor. 13:14).

IV. Providence

God, from eternity, decrees or permits all things that come to pass, and perpetually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and all events; yet He is not in any way the author or approver of sin, nor does He destroy the free will and responsibility of intelligent creatures (Isa. 46:9-11; Prov. 16:33; Col. 1:17; Heb. 1:3; Jas. 1:13-15).

V. Election

Election is God's eternal choice of some persons unto everlasting life—not because of foreseen merit in them, but of His mere mercy in Christ—in consequence of which choice they are called, justified, sanctified, and glorified (Rom. 8:28-30; 1 Cor. 1:27-31; Eph. 1:4, 11).

VI. Evangelism

Since faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the Word of Christ, evangelism is the necessary means through which one may be saved. Therefore, it is the responsibility of every Christian to share the gospel, in order that all may hear, repent, and believe upon Jesus. Every Christian must also become all things to all people so that by all possible means they might save some. Therefore, every Christian must understandably communicate the gospel to all in a biblically consistent manner for the greatest possible evangelistic impact (Rom. 10:14-17; 1 Cor 9:19-22; Matthew 28:19-20).

VII. The Fall of Man

God originally created Man in His own image, and free from sin; but, through the temptation of Satan, Adam transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original holiness and righteousness; whereby his posterity inherit a nature corrupt and wholly opposed to God and His law. As a result, they are under condemnation, and as soon as they are capable of moral action, become actual transgressors (Gen. 1:26-27; 3:1-7; 6:5; Rom. 3:9-18; 5:12-19; 8:5-8; Eph. 2:1-3).

VIII. The Mediator

Since Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, is fully God and fully man, He is the divinely appointed mediator between God and man. Having taken upon Himself human nature,

yet without sin, He perfectly fulfilled the law; suffered and died upon the cross for the salvation of sinners. He was buried, rose again the third day, and ascended to His Father; at whose right hand He ever lives to make intercession for His people. He will return again visibly and bodily. He is the only Mediator, the Prophet, Priest, and King of the church, and Sovereign of the universe (Isa. 53:10-12; John 1:1, 14; Acts 1:9-11; Rom. 3:21-26; 8:34; 1 Cor. 15:3-4; Gal. 3:13; 1 Tim. 2:5; Heb. 1:1-3; 7:25).

IX. The Holy Spirit

We believe that God the Holy Spirit brings glory to the Father and the Son. He applies the work of Christ to believers and distributes spiritual gifts to every believer according to His sovereign good pleasure for the purpose of building up the body of Christ. He is the Comforter, the Spirit of Adoption, the Seal of our Salvation, and the Guarantor of our inheritance in Christ (John 14:16-17; 16:14; Acts 5:3; Rom. 8:14-17; Eph. 1:13-14).

X. Regeneration

Regeneration is a change of heart, wrought by the Holy Spirit, who gives life to those dead in trespasses and sins, enlightening their minds spiritually and savingly to understand the Word of God, and renewing their whole nature, so that they love and practice holiness. It is a work of God's free and special grace alone (John 3:3-8; Eph. 2:1-6; Tit. 3:5; 1 John 5:1).

XI. Repentance

Repentance is an evangelical grace, wherein a person being by the Holy Spirit, made sensible of the manifold evil of his sin, humbles himself for it, with godly sorrow, detestation of it, and self-abhorrence, and turns from it with a purpose and endeavor to walk before God so as to please Him in all things (Ps. 32:1-5; Isa. 6:5; 55:7; Luke 5:8; 18:9-14; Acts 2:37-38; 11:15-18; 2 Cor. 7:10-11; 2 Tim. 2:25).

XII. Faith

Saving faith is the belief, on God's authority, of whatever is revealed in His Word concerning Christ, accepting and resting upon Him alone for justification and eternal life. It is wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit, and is accompanied by all other saving graces, and leads to a life of holiness (Rom. 3:27-28; 4:1-5; 4:17-25; 10:14, 17; Phil. 1:29; Eph. 2:8; Jas. 2:14-26).

XIII. Justification

Justification includes the pardon of sin and the promise of eternal life on principles of righteousness. It is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer, by virtue of which faith his perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us of God, that it brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God (Rom. 3:21-26; 4:4-9, 23-25; 5:1-2, 9, 17-21; 8:28-34; 10:3-4; 2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:7-9; Titus 3:5-7).

XIV. Sanctification

Those who have been regenerated are also sanctified by God's Word and Spirit dwelling in them. This sanctification is progressive through the supply of Divine strength, which all saints seek to obtain, pressing after a heavenly life in cordial obedience to all Christ's commands (Jer. 31:31-34; Ezek. 36:27; Rom. 8:1-17; Gal. 5:13-25; Eph. 3:14-21; Phil. 2:12-13; Col. 3:1-17; 2 Pet. 1:3-11).

XV. Perseverance of the Saints

All those whom God has regenerated will never totally nor finally fall away from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere to the end; and though they may fall through neglect and temptation into sin, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, bring reproach on the Church, and temporal judgments on themselves, yet they shall be renewed again unto repentance, and be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (John 6:37-40; 10:28-29; Rom. 8:28-39; 1 Cor. 1:8-9; Phil. 1:6; 1 Thess. 5:23-24).

XVI. The Church

The Lord Jesus is the Head of the church, which is composed of all His true disciples, and in Him is invested supremely all power for its government. Christians are to associate themselves into particular societies or local churches, and to each of these local churches he has given needful authority for administering that order, discipline, and worship which He has appointed. Each local church operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a local church, each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord and to that local church's members as brothers and sisters in Christ. The scriptural officers of a church are Elders (Pastors) and Deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of elder (pastor) is limited to biological men as qualified by Scripture (Matt 18:17-20; Matt. 28:18-20; John 10:16; Acts 20:17, 28; Eph. 1:22; 5:23; 1 Tim. 3:1-13; 5:17-18; Tit. 1:5-9; Heb. 10:25; Hebrews 3:12-13).

XVII. Baptism

Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus, obligatory upon every believer, wherein he or she is immersed in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, as a sign of his union with the death and resurrection of Christ, of remission of sins, and of his or her giving themselves up to God, to live and walk in newness of life. It is prerequisite to local church membership (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38; Rom. 6:3-5; 1 Cor. 12:13).

XVIII. Membership

Membership in the invisible body of Christ takes place upon conversion, in which the believer is unified with Christ and, thus, saved. Membership in the visible body of Christ occurs after baptism and upon a mutual covenant between a believer and a local church to live in shared Christian accountability, fellowship, and edification. Local church membership in good standing, at a visible body of Christ of like mind, is prerequisite to participation at the Lord's table (Rom. 6:5; 1 Cor 12:13; Matt 18:18; Hebrews 3:12-13; Acts 2:42; 1 Cor 1:2; 1 Cor 5:11b).

XIX. The Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper is a new covenant ordinance of Jesus Christ, to be administered with the elements of bread and the fruit of the vine, and to be observed by His churches till the end of the world. It is in no sense a sacrifice, but it is designed to commemorate and proclaim His death. (Matt. 26:26-29; 1 Cor. 10:16-17; 11:23-34).

XX. Liberty of Conscience

God alone is Lord of the conscience; and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men, which are in anything contrary to His word, or not contained in it. Although all legitimate human authority is ordained by God's decree it is also limited by God's ultimate authority. For example, civil magistrates, being ordained of God, subjection in all lawful

things commanded by them ought to be yielded by us in the Lord, not only for wrath, but also for the sake of conscience. However, when they call us to disobey God then we must, with a clear conscience, obey God rather than man (Matt. 15:9; Rom. 13:1-7; 14:4; Acts 5:29; Col. 2:20-23).

XXI. Family

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one biological man and one biological woman¹ in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents. (Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7).

XXII. The Resurrection

The bodies of men, after death, return to dust. At death, believers go to be with the Lord and unbelievers enter torment. The bodies of all the dead, both just and unjust, will be raised (Gen. 3:19; Luke 16:22-26; 23:43; John 5:28-29; 1 Cor. 15:12-28; 2 Cor. 5:1-10; Phil. 1:23).

XXIII. The Judgment

God has appointed a day wherein He will judge the world by Jesus Christ, when everyone shall receive according to his deeds; the wicked shall go into everlasting punishment; the righteous, into everlasting life (Matt. 25:46; John 5:22, 27-29; Acts 17:31; 2 Cor. 5:10; 2 Thess. 1:7-10).

¹ The definition of "biological man" is someone who is born with XY chromosomes. The definition of "biological woman" is someone who is born with XX chromosomes.

FIRESIDE BAPTIST CHURCH BYLAWS

ARTICLE 1: NAME AND PRINCIPAL OFFICE

Section 1: Name

The name of the corporation of Fireside Baptist Church, which is located in Elizabethtown, Kentucky, hereinafter referred to as “Fireside,” the “local church,” the “congregation” or “the church.”

Section 2: Principal Office

The principal office of Fireside is located at 137 Camara Ct., Elizabethtown, Kentucky, 42701.

ARTICLE 2: PURPOSE

Section 1: The Purpose of the Church

1. Fireside exists by the grace of God, for the glory of God. The glory of God will be the ultimate purpose for all that we do. Fireside glorifies God by building and furthering the kingdom of God on earth, until His return. Scripture models four primary means by which this purpose has been accomplished:²

- a) Devotion to the teachings of Jesus Christ, as revealed through the 66 books which comprise the inspired cannon of the Old and New Testaments
- b) Building a community and culture that displays the unity and love of Christ
- c) Overseeing the administration and application of the biblical ordinances
- d) By calling on the name of the Lord through prayer

2. Fireside is organized exclusively for charitable, religious, educational, and/or scientific purposes, including, for such purposes, the making of distributions to organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code. No part of the net earnings of the corporation shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributable to its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the corporation shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in Article Two of these Bylaws.

Section 2: The Purpose of the Bylaws

The purpose of these bylaws is to guide Fireside in self-governing under direction of the Holy Bible. These bylaws are intended to liberate Fireside to move in an expeditious and safe manner in fulfilling her purposes as outlines in Article 2, Section 1, and they are also intended to help protect her from the unbiblical and destructive abuses of power by its members. Each

² Acts 2:42.

individual article must be read in light of the whole set of Fireside's Bylaws, Confession of Faith, and Church Covenant.

ARTICLE 3: MEMBERSHIP

Section 1: Qualification for Membership

1. To qualify for membership in Fireside, a person must repent of his or her sins, confess faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, give evidence of regeneration by means of living consistently with his or her profession, have been baptized by immersion following his or her regeneration, and wholeheartedly believe in the Christian faith as it is revealed in the Bible. Each member must not hold settled convictions that are contrary to the teaching of Scripture as expressed in Fireside's Confession of Faith, and each member must promise to keep the commitments expressed in the Church Covenant.

2. If there are any objections to The Confession of Faith and/or Bylaws by a prospective member, they must make those known during the membership interview. At the discretion of the elders, the prospective member may or may not be allowed to place membership with Fireside Baptist Church depending on the nature of the objection. If the prospective member has settled convictions that are contrary to the Statement of Faith and/or Bylaws, the elders have the option to extend "associate membership" to the prospective member. This would allow the prospective member to place membership at Fireside, fulfill the biblical commands associated with membership, and partake in communion. However, the associate member would forfeit all voting privileges.

3. Settled convictions contrary to the Fireside Church Covenant are not allowed.

4. The elders will be responsible for determining each person's qualification for membership via personal interview. In making their determination, they will rely on the person's confession of repentance and faith, evidence of regeneration in his or her life, and, when possible, a letter from the person's previous church.

Section 2: Admission of Members

The admission of members will be approved by vote of the church upon recommendation of the elders. Applicants for membership will provide a public declaration of their faith in Jesus and will, by publicly agreeing to submit to the elders of Fireside, give verbal waiver of their right to voluntarily withdraw from membership. This vote may take place at any of the regular meetings of the church, and it will require a 75% majority of votes cast to admit a new member into Fireside. Once admitted, members will relinquish their membership in any other churches.

Baptism will be administered to a candidate for membership who is recommended to the congregation by the elders and who meets the above qualifications for membership but has not yet been baptized as a believer. The candidate will then be baptized at the church's earliest convenience and will become a member upon receiving baptism.

Section 3: Duties and Privileges of Membership

A. The New Testament Christian is charged with the duty to minister.³ Membership *is* ministry. Each member is expected to be faithful to a New Testament Christian life as outlined in the Church Covenant and to recognize that he or she is the fundamental minister to those in the church. Therefore, each member will diligently seek to grow in knowledge of the scriptures, discover his or her giftings, and volunteer within Fireside in order to become equipped for and to fulfill the responsibility of ministering to others in the church.

B. Only members and associate members of the congregation will be entitled to the privilege of regular, consistent service in the ministries of the church, to include any teaching capacity. Non-members may serve on an ad-hoc basis with the approval of the elders. Non-members may also serve the church for the purpose of administration, facilities maintenance, professional consultation, and construction, at the discretion of the elders.

C. It is the responsibility of members to attend all members' meetings and vote on the election of elders and deacons, on decisions regarding the admittance and excommunication of members, modification of the Statement of Faith and these Bylaws, on the adoption of an annual budget, and on any other matters that the elders may submit to a vote. Only "resident" members may vote in a member's meeting.⁴ Because of the sensitive and often complex nature of some matters which members vote on, such as ex-communication, only members who are 18 years will have a vote in the church.

D. In accordance with Fireside's Statement of Faith, formal membership in Fireside bestows the privilege of partaking in the Lord's Supper. However, any person who is a resident member in good standing with a like-minded church of faith and practice may also partake of the Lord's Supper.

E. In the event that the members of Fireside Baptist Church vote to dissolve as an organization, the members will determine by simple majority of votes cast what will happen to the assets of the Fireside Baptist Church. Assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code. This vote will take place in the same meeting as the vote for dissolution.

ARTICLE 4: CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Section 1: General Statements

The purpose and practice of Corrective Discipline should seek to accomplish:

1. the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the disciplined party in a manner that is gentle and gracious.⁵

³ 1 Pet 2:5-9

⁴ A "resident member" is defined as currently attending Fireside Baptist Church. If a member has not attended church for a period of more than six months, they are no longer considered a "resident" member, and they can be removed from the membership roll of Fireside. See Article 4, Section 4.

⁵ See Prov 15:5; 29:15; 1 Cor 4:14; Eph 6:4; 1 Tim 3:4-5; Heb 12:1-11; Ps 119:115, 141:5; Prov 17:10, 25:12, 27:5; Ecc 7:5; Matt 7:26-27, 18:15-17; Lk 17:3; Acts 2:40; 1 Cor 5:5; Gal 6:1-5; 2 Thess 3:6, 14-15; 1 Tim 1:20; Titus 1:13-14; Jas 1:22

2. instruction in righteousness and the good of other Christians as an example to them.⁶
3. the purity of the church as a whole.⁷
4. the good of our corporate witness to unbelievers.⁸
5. the glory of God by reflecting the holy nature of His character.⁹

Section 2: Formative Church Discipline

Formative church discipline is inherent in the preaching, teaching, and exercising of other ministries in the church through which the people are conformed to the image of Christ. Practically, this happens when we are “formed” by the preaching and teaching of the scriptures, and there is a subsequent conformity to the truth of the scriptures in both thought and deed. Often, this happens internally and without any face-to-face confrontation; however, it also occurs during the course of Christian fellowship as believers open the Word of God together and minister to each other.

Section 2: Corrective Church Discipline

A. Corrective church discipline occurs when a member is found in sin, and Fireside seeks his or her repentance and restoration to obedience to Christ. Corrective discipline consists of individual confrontation and possibly admonition to turn from sin. The duty of corrective church discipline is not limited to the elders of Fireside Baptist Church, because every member of Fireside is a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

B. After refusing formative and corrective discipline, and after a period of time when the member of the church remains unrepentant, the elders may then choose to withhold communion from the unrepentant member. This is done with two primary purposes. The first would be to bring about a sobriety to realize the gravity of their sin, and the second would keep the member from harm because of a failure of self-examination.¹⁰ To eat and drink in such an unrepentant state is to call forth the disciplining hand of God.¹¹ While the Lord’s Table is only for the converted, it is also only for the convert who is living the examined and, consequently, repentant life. The Lord’s Supper is for believers. And yet, the admonition to believers is plain in the Bible: “Let a person examine himself, then, and so eat of the bread and drink of the cup.”¹²

10:24-25 6 Prov 13:20; Rom 15:14; 1 Cor 5:11, 15:33-34; Col 3:16; 1 Thess 5:14; 1 Tim 5:20; Titus 1:11-12; Heb

7 1 Cor 5:6-7; 2 Cor 13:10; Eph 5:27; 2 Jn 10; Jude 24; Rev 21:2, 7-8

8 Prov 28:7; Matt 5:13-16; Jn 13:35; Acts 5:10-14; Eph 5:11; 1 Tim 3:7; II Peter 2:2; I John 3:10

9 Deut 5:11; 1 Ki 11:2; 2 Chron 19:2; Ezra 6:21; Neh 9:2; Isa 52:11; Eze 36:20; Matt 5:16; Jn 15:8; Rom 2:24, 15:5-6; 2 Cor 6:14-7:1; Eph 1:4, 5:27; I Peter 2:12

¹⁰ 1 Cor 11:31

¹¹ 1 Cor 11:32

¹² 1 Cor 11:28

Section 3: Excommunication

A. After a significant period of time when a member of the church refuses formative and corrective church discipline, and the member does not respond in repentance when communion is withheld from them, the elders then may initiate the formal process of excommunication from the membership of the church. This process includes a recommendation of the elders to Fireside and a vote of 75% of the members cast at a regular members' meeting. Ex-communication will be carried out during members' meetings, and all non-members are excluded from attendance, by the authority and guidance of pertinent scriptures.¹³

B. In rare cases, sin may be so egregious, so aggravated, that the protracted time afforded to someone to respond in repentance may be bypassed. Examples of such sin are extreme sexual sin or persistent divisiveness.¹⁴ In no way does this forego the necessary responsibility to minister to the person by calling the person to repentance, seeking to restore them to the church, and to restore the person Christ.¹⁵

C. Ex-communication is not to be entered into lightly. By no means should anyone in the church understand ex-communication in a simplistic manner. Those who are put before the church for ex-communication forfeit their vote in the matter.

D. Excommunicated members are to be treated the same as any other unbelievers. We are to share the gospel with them, and they are welcome to attend church services. The primary disposition of the church toward the person excommunicated person should not be fellowship, but admonition. In some cases where the sin of the excommunicated person is extremely divisive, dangerous, or poses a risk to the congregation's unity, the person can be barred from the premise. The goal of church discipline is restoration. However, while the excommunicated may be allowed to attend service, all the benefits and privileges of membership are not afforded to those who are excommunicated.¹⁶

Section 4: Termination of Membership

A. Termination of membership will be recognized by the church following the death of a member, ex-communication of a member, a member who has not attended the church in over six months, the transfer of membership to another church, or the honorable release of membership upon the recommendation of the Elders. Membership transfers and releases will be passed by a majority of votes cast at a regular Members' Meeting. Membership may also be terminated as an act of Corrective Discipline upon the recommendation of the elders and with the vote of 75% of votes cast. Members who are under corrective discipline or ex-communication by Fireside forfeit and waive the right to resign from membership in this assembly in order to prevent absconding. Resignations from membership are possible only by those members in good standing and according to the parameters outlined in this article and section of these Bylaws and who are not under any disciplinary action.

B. If a member, in otherwise good standing, fails to attend church for a period of six months, then the member will forfeit their membership in the church (see Article 4, Section 4, paragraph A). Exceptions to this rule could be extended illness, extended travel connected with

¹³ Matt 18:15-17, 1 Cor 5:1-8, Gal 6:1-2, 1 Thess 5:14.

¹⁴ 1 Cor 5:1-5; Tit 3:10

¹⁵ Gal 6:1; 2 Cor 2:5-11

¹⁶ 2 Thess 3:13-15; Matt 18:17; Tit 3:10-11

employment, or military service member who is deployed. The elders can present the person's name and membership status before the congregation at a member's meeting and the church can vote to remove the member. However, if a member's attendance and participation in the church has been severely neglected over a protracted amount of time, then the elders can present the member to the congregation to be moved from the membership roll.

ARTICLE 5: CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Section 1: General Statements

A. The biblical offices in the church are elders and deacons. In addition to these offices, and in deference to the non-profit corporation laws of the state of Kentucky, Fireside will also recognize the administrative offices of clerk and treasurer, whose responsibilities will be outlined in these Bylaws. All officers must be members of Fireside prior to taking office or assuming their responsibilities.¹⁷ No one may hold more than one biblical office at the same time. However, Fireside will strive for administrative offices to be held by only one person at a time.

B. Any officer of the church who is ex-communicated will also be removed from the office that he or she holds, because their membership in Fireside would also be terminated.

C. Congregationalism and Elder Leadership. Because of the fundamental equality of believers, each member plays an important role in the mission of Fireside. Fireside members are called to a shared life together, which involves fellowship, discipline, and care. Although the entire church does not have responsibility for the governance of the church, each member contributes greatly to the health or demise of Fireside. The leadership of elders in no way contradicts the prerogatives and liberties given to all who are in Christ. Among other authority enumerated in Article 3, Section 3, sub-section C of these Bylaws, Fireside members participate, under the leadership of the elders, in the joyful welcoming of new members and the excommunication of unfaithful members (1 Cor 5; Tit 3:10-11). The congregation is involved in the evaluation and election of elder and deacon candidates (Acts 6:3-6) and has a responsibility to bring charges to the elders against a leader in persistent sin (1 Tim. 5:19-20). All believers are responsible to reject false teachers and unbiblical leadership (Gal. 1:1-2; 2 Tim. 4:3), therefore, it is the congregation which establishes and maintains a doctrinal statement of commonly held truths. All believers have the right to approach God freely through Christ and to study the Scriptures for themselves. All believers are gifted by the Holy Spirit for active ministry in the church. Of course, the congregation must also recognize the value and role of elders in the church, because the scriptures command believers to do so. We should pray for our leaders, maintain the unity of the Spirit with them, and joyfully submit to their biblical leadership.

D. No church polity will work without the necessary qualifying character on the part of the elders and the correspondent faith-filled submission of the congregation. Within the general equality of all believers, God orders and gives leaders to his church. The congregation's submission to Christ finds expression in its submission to godly elders.¹⁸ All ministry to the church is ultimately Christ's own ministry and, as gifts from God, elders are an extension of Christ's ministry to his people. Jesus is *the* apostle, *the* prophet, *the* teacher, *the* shepherd, *the*

¹⁷ This deters anyone from joining for the sole purpose of holding such offices in the church.

¹⁸ 1 Thess 5:12-13; Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 5:5

evangelist, *the* preacher, and *the* servant.¹⁹ All leaders in the church carry on Jesus' own ministry. This is a voluntary submission which must not be coerced, which assumes that elders are serving as faithful examples and are faithfully leading the congregation in obedience to God's Word. God's Word limits the elders' authority. Only Scripture can bind the conscience of the Christian, and leaders forfeit their authority when they deviate from God's Word. Biblical texts that specifically address the notion of authority, with respect to the relationship between elders and the congregation, affirm elder leadership and congregational submission.

a. Elders rule/govern/manage	1 Tim. 3:4-5; 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:12; Rom. 12:8
b. Elders lead	Heb. 13:7, 17, 24
c. Elders exercise oversight	Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:2
d. The congregation respects	1 Thess. 5:12
e. The congregation esteems	1 Thess. 5:13
f. The congregation obeys	Heb. 13:17
g. The congregation submits	Heb. 13:17
h. The congregation imitates	Heb. 13:7; 1 Cor. 11:1; 2 Thess. 3:7, 9

Section 2: Elders

A. In keeping with the principles set forth in New Testament,²⁰ the elders will oversee the ministry and the resources of the church. They will seek the mind of Christ through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God as they shepherd the flock of God. They will be given to prayer, study, and teaching of the Word; they will gladly and honorably shepherd the flock, teach and exhort, refute those who contradict the truth, pray for the sick, and care for the souls of the church members. Elders will also be responsible for interviewing candidates for membership, examining and recommending all prospective candidates for offices, overseeing the work of the deacons, conducting worship services, overseeing the administration of baptism and the Lord's Supper, equipping the members for the work of the ministry, encouraging sound doctrine, overseeing church discipline, and mobilizing the church for world missions.

B. Fireside will strive to have no less than three men who meet the qualifications of the office as set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:6-9. Only men can serve as elders in accord with 1 Tim. 2:12, 3:2-7; Titus 1:5-9, and following the example elsewhere set forth in Scripture. All elders must wholeheartedly, entirely, and without reservation, subscribe to Fireside's Confession of Faith and Church Covenant. Elders may or may not be in the regular pay of the church. These men will be recognized by the church as gifted and willing to serve in this calling, and they will be received as gifts of God to the church and set apart as elders. If an insufficient number of qualified men are available, then the church is not biblically required to have three elders. However, the church should seek the leadership of a biblically qualified elder.²¹

C. An elder's term of office may be terminated by resignation or dismissal. Any member with reason to believe that an elder ought to be dismissed should express such concern

¹⁹ Heb 3:1; Matt 13:57; 10:24-25; John 10:11; 1 Pet 5:4; Luke 4:18; Matt 4:17.

²⁰ Acts 6:1-7, 20:28-31; 1 Tim 3:1-7, 5:17; Titus 1:5-9; Heb 13:17; James 5:14; and 1 Pet 5:1-4

²¹ See Titus 1:5

to the elders. Any such action ought to be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and 1 Timothy 5:17-21. Any elder may be dismissed at the recommendation of the elders and then by a vote of 66% of the votes cast at any regular members' meeting.

D. The elders have the primary responsibility for the employment, supervision, evaluation, and termination of staff members, any of which they may delegate to others. The elders will organize themselves however they discern best for the overall accomplishment of Fireside's vision and mission.

E. The elders will elect a chairman who will chair elders' meetings and act as moderator in members' meetings. In his absence, the elders will appoint another to fill his place. For the purpose of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the state of Kentucky, the chairman of the elders will serve as the president of the corporation.

F. In accord with KRS273.161(7), the Council of Elders serve as the "Board of Directors" of the corporation.

Section 3: Deacons

A. In keeping with the principles set forth in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7, deacons will be given to serving the temporal needs of the church (so that the elders can be given to prayer and the ministry of the Word) and guarding the unity of the body. Deacons will be received as gifts from God to the church and set apart as deacons (publicly appointed?).

B. In the Bible, deacons are servants. They are assistant to the elders and the church, and under the leadership of the elders. In this function, they are servants to the entire body by seeking to understand the temporal needs of the members of the church.

C. The deacons also care for the temporal needs of the corporate church: mercy ministries, accommodations for public worship, overseeing the church property. The deacons may be organized by the elders in the most fitting way to accomplish their mission to the church. At the recommendation of the elders, the church may recognize deacons to serve in other specific capacities as needs arise in the church.

D. A deacon's term of office may be terminated by resignation, church discipline, dismissal, or when the elders judge that a particular deacon's area of ministry is no longer needed.

Section 4: Secretary

The elders will appoint a secretary who will record the minutes of all regular and special members' meetings. The secretary will serve a one-year term, which is renewable. For the purpose of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the state of Kentucky, the secretary will serve as the secretary of the corporation. In the absence of a secretary, an elder may fulfill the responsibilities of the secretary.

Section 5: Treasurer

The elders will appoint a treasurer who will be sure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as designated by the elders. The treasurer will be elected to a one-year term, which is renewable. The treasurer will 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 agents of the church. The treasurer will render to the elders, the deacons, and the church annually an account of all transactions as treasurer and of the financial condition of the church. For the purpose of compliance with the

nonprofit corporation laws of the state of Kentucky, the treasurer will serve as the treasurer of the corporation.

ARTICLE 6: ELECTION OF BIBLICAL OFFICERS

Section 1: Principles

Worship services will be held each Lord's Day and may be held throughout the week as the elders determine. Communion will be served during regular worship services at the elders' discretion and only immersed believers who are members of Fireside Baptist Church, or members of another church of similar faith, will be invited to partake. The elders may cancel any worship service on a specific occasion, due to inclement weather or other like occurrence, if they see fit.

Section 2: Selection of Officers

A. The elders should seek input and recommendations from the members when appointing members to the biblical offices. These recommendations for any office within the church will go to the elders for their approval. Only elder-approved nominees will be presented to the congregation.

B. The elders will inform the church of officer nominees at least two weeks prior to voting. Any member with reason to believe a candidate nominated by the elders is unqualified for an office should express this concern to the elders as soon as possible.

C. The chairman of the elders will declare elected all persons receiving a 75% majority of all votes cast for any office. The persons elected will assume office immediately unless another date has been specifically designated by the elders. Elections to fill any vacancies that may occur during the course of the year may be held at any members' meeting upon the recommendation of the elders.

D. Members who are unable to attend member's meetings may still vote via direct communication with an elder. Voting via pr

ARTICLE 7: MEETINGS

Section 1: Worship Meetings

Worship services will be held each Lord's Day and may be held throughout the week as the elders determine. Communion will be served during regular worship services at the elders' discretion and only immersed believers will be invited to partake. The elders may cancel any worship service on a specific occasion, due to inclement weather or other like occurrence, if they see fit.

Section 2: Member's Meetings

A. *Disposition in meetings.* In every meeting together, members will act in that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration that is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. In special circumstances, when it is deemed necessary by the elders, non-members will not be allowed to attend members' meetings.

B. *Member's meetings.* Regular members' meetings will be held at least bi-annually and at a time agreed upon by the elders and acceptable to the church. An annual members' meeting will be held for the approval of the new year's budget at least one month prior to the

new year. The chairman of the elders will moderate members' meetings. In his absence the elders will appoint a moderator.

C. *Notice.* The date, time, and purpose of all members' meetings must be announced at Sunday public worship gatherings for at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

D. *Special Meetings.* May be called by the elders or by a written request to the elders by 10% of the members. If a special meeting is called for by 1/3 of the members, this meeting will take place within one month of the request. The date, time, and purpose of all special meetings must be announced at Sunday services for at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

E. *Emergency Meetings.* May be called by a majority of the elders. All resolutions passed at emergency meetings are subject to review at the next regular members' meeting.

F. *Practice of meetings.* Meetings will be conducted according to these by-laws. On any matter that is brought to vote, a vote of 66% is needed for it to pass unless these by-laws specify otherwise. Abstentions will not be considered as votes cast.