

Three Strands Church – Constitution & Bylaws

I. Name

The name of this church will be Three Strands Christian Church, also DBA Three Strands Church. (From this point forward, in this document, referred to as Three Strands or The Church). It will have no denominational affiliation but hold tightly to its core biblical beliefs as an Inter-Denominational church.

II. Business Location

The address of the principal office of this church will be: PO Box 1731, Whitley City, KY 42653. A Post Office Box will presently function as the primary business location since the church owns no permanent structures to date.

III. Purpose

3.1 – Mission Statement:

Three Strands exists to create a culture of redemption where people are free to experience the truth and grace of Jesus Christ.

3.2 – General Purposes:

- To glorify God by seeking to obey the Great Commandment. (*Matthew 22:36-40*)
- To glorify God by living out Jesus Christ's Great Commission. (*Matthew 28:19-20*)
- To glorify God by using our individual gifts to serve Christ and other Christ-followers. (*Ephesians 4:15-16*)
- To do any and all things related to and in connection with the carrying out of the object and purpose herein above set forth.

IV. Articles of Faith

4.1 – Statement of Biblical Authority

At the center of Christian faith and practice stands the belief that God has spoken to the world in the person and work of Jesus Christ, which is accurately and authoritatively revealed in the Christian Bible ("the Bible," "Scripture" or "the Scriptures"). The Bible is the inspired, inerrant and sufficient Word of God and is thus the ultimate authority for life, faith and morals. Though the various theological statements of the Church reflect succinct summaries of biblical boundaries, it is the Bible itself to which we are in ultimate submission.

Members have the responsibility and opportunity to engage our Elders and Church staff on areas of theological disagreement. However, membership carries with it the implicit understanding that the Elders shall function as the interpretive authority on biblical meaning and application for the purpose of Church doctrine, practice, policy and discipline.

4.2 – Statement of Core Beliefs **

The following Statement of Core Beliefs represents the core orthodox beliefs of the Church from a biblical perspective. While Church Members are not required to fully understand or articulate all aspects of the Statement of Core Beliefs, the explicit rejection of any part of it disqualifies one from membership at Three Strands Church. Revisions to the Statement of Core Beliefs (or the Full Statement of Belief) in

Three Strands Church – Constitution & Bylaws

order to more clearly align to Scripture shall be at the sole discretion of the Elders, with the understanding that such changes will be communicated to the Members of the Church.

We Believe...

- There is one God, who is perfect, existing eternally and equally in three persons: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. (*Deuteronomy 6:4; Matthew 5:8; Matthew 28:19; Isaiah 44:6*)
- Jesus Christ is the Son of God. He lived a perfect life, died on the cross to pay the punishment for the sins of humanity, rose from the dead, and stands alone as the one and only source of eternal salvation. (*Philippians 2:6-11; Luke 1:34-38; 1 Peter 3:18; Hebrews 2:9*)
- The Bible is the completed revelation of God's will for the salvation of men and the glory of His own name. (*Exodus 24:4; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; Matthew 5:17-18*)
- Sin is violating God's law and rebellion against God. All people (Christ excluded) are guilty of sin and all sin carries with it the consequence of death (physical and spiritual). (*Genesis 2:16-17; Romans 3:23; Romans 6:23; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-9*)
- Salvation from the punishment for sin is available to all people. It has been provided through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for all men; and those who repent and believe in Him receive this gift. (*John 3:16; Hebrews 9:11-28; Acts 16:31; 1 Peter 3:18*)
- If a person has truly repented and believed in God's plan for salvation, he/she will never lose that salvation. (*John 10:27-29; Romans 4:4-8; Romans 5:8-11; 1 John 5:10-13*)

** For an exhaustive list of church doctrinal beliefs, along with biblical support for those beliefs, see the *Three Strand Full Statement of Belief*

4.3 – Statement on Marriage and Sexuality

It is the biblical position that marriage involves the union of one man and one woman in permanent sacred fidelity. Though various cultures and customs have evolving definitions of marriage, it is God alone who has ultimate authority to prescribe and describe the marital relationship (*Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:1-9, Mark 10:1-12*).

Furthermore, sexual intimacy is only properly exercised and pursued within the confines of this marital relationship. Sexual immorality, defined as any sexual activity outside of the boundaries of the sacred marital relationship between one man and one woman, is clearly and expressly prohibited by the Lord (*Matthew 15:19, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, 1 Thessalonians 4:3, Hebrews 13:4*).

As a consequence, Three Strands regards any and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography or even lustful intent toward such, as sinful and ultimately unsatisfying. Moreover, Three Strands also regards as sinful the intent or desire to surgically alter one's biological sex to a different sex. Since the body is a creation of God, Three Strands holds sexual identity to be biologically determined, and associated gender norms are to be observed as appropriate to biblical standards. Disagreement with one's biological sex only leads to spiritual confusion and emotional chaos (*Genesis 1:27, Romans 1:26-32, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11*).

In order to preserve the function and integrity of the Church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical example to the Church Members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by Three Strands in any capacity or united to Three Strands in membership should abide by and agree to this §4.3, "Statement on Marriage and Sexuality," and conduct themselves accordingly.

Three Strands Church – Constitution & Bylaws

Though sinful sexual expression is egregious (as is all sin), the gospel provides redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (*1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Ephesians 2:1-10, Titus 3:3-7*).

Furthermore, there is a difference between temptation and unrepentant sin. Jesus was tempted in all ways as we are, yet He never sinned. Members, employees, volunteers and attendees of Three Strands, wrestling with all manner of sexual temptation, will find a Church ready to point them to Jesus and join with them to fight for their obedience to Christ. Jesus called the weary and heavy-laden to Himself. As a church desiring to follow Christ fully, Three Strands will be a safe place for men and women fighting sexual temptations of all kinds. For those fighting temptation and repenting of sin, Three Strands will provide love, care and direction (*Matthew 11:28-30, 1 Corinthians 10:13, Hebrews 2:17-18, Hebrews 4:14-16*).

The Church's Statement on Marriage and Sexuality does not provide grounds for bigotry, bullying or hate, as we fully believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect and dignity, regardless of his or her lifestyle. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated as sinful and are neither in accordance with the Scriptures nor the doctrines of Three Strands.

This §4.3 specifically gives the Elder board the right and authority to prohibit acts or omissions, including but not limited to (a) permitting any Church assets or property, whether real property, personal property, intangible property, or any property or asset of any kind that is subject to the direction or control of Three Strands, to be used in any manner that would be—or, in the sole determination of the Elders, could be perceived by any person to be—inconsistent with this Statement on Marriage and Sexuality; and (b) permitting any Three Strands facilities to be used by any person, organization, corporation, or group that would or might use such facilities to convey, intentionally or by implication, what might be perceived as a favorable impression about any definition of marriage other than that contained in this Section.

The Church's Statement on Marriage and Sexuality is based upon God's will for human life as conveyed to us through the Scriptures, upon which this Church has been founded and anchored, and this §4.3 shall not be subject to change through popular vote; referendum; prevailing opinion of Members or the general public; influence of or interpretation by any government authority, agency, or official action; or legal developments on the local, state, or federal level.

V. Affiliation

Three Strands is autonomous and maintains the right to govern its own affairs, independent of denominational control. Recognizing, however, the benefits of cooperation with other churches in the fulfillment of its purposes, the Church may voluntarily affiliate with other churches and conventions by a passing vote of the Elders, as defined in §9.8 of these Bylaws.

VI. Nonprofit Status and Dissolution

Three Strands is not organized for profit and is in compliance with nonprofit corporation guidelines under the laws of the state of Kentucky. Federal tax exemption is granted under Internal Revenue Code 501(c)(3) and Three Strands is in compliance with all federal guidelines for this status.

“Dissolution” means the complete disbanding of the Church so that it no longer functions as a congregation or as a corporate entity. Upon the dissolution of the Church, its assets and property of every nature shall be applied and distributed as follows:

Three Strands Church – Constitution & Bylaws

(1) all liabilities and obligations of the Church shall be paid and discharged, or adequate provision shall be made therefore; (2) assets held by the Church upon condition requiring return, transfer, or conveyance, which condition occurs by reason of the dissolution, shall be returned, transferred, or conveyed in accordance with such requirements; (3) assets received and not held upon a condition requiring return, transfer, or conveyance by reason of the dissolution, shall be transferred or conveyed to one or more domestic or foreign corporations, societies, or organizations that qualify as exempt organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Internal Revenue Law), and are engaged in activities substantially similar to those of the Church, including agreement with Article IV (Articles of Faith) of these Bylaws and the Church's basic form of government; this distribution shall be done pursuant to a plan adopted by the Elders by a passing vote as defined in §9.8 of these Bylaws.

VII. Meetings

7.1 – Public Worship

Meetings for public worship shall be held at such times and places as may be provided for under the direction of the Elders.

7.2 – Church Business Meetings

The Elders shall have the authority to call a Church business meeting or special meeting as needed.

VIII. Membership

8.1 – Process

Membership at Three Strands Church is first predicated on one becoming a genuine follower of Jesus Christ through having responded by faith to the drawing of the Holy Spirit's message of the Gospel. This response of faith manifests itself through a belief in one's heart and declaration with one's mouth that Jesus Christ is your Lord and only hope for eternal salvation.

At Three Strands, as in the New Testament, believers are to publicly proclaim this transformation from death to life through Jesus Christ by baptism. At the moment of baptism and with agreement to the Three Strands Statement of Core Beliefs and these Bylaws, as evidenced by signing the Three Strands Membership Covenant, membership begins. This process may take place at Three Strands Church or at one's previous church and then communicated to Three Strands through his/her story of becoming a wholehearted follower of Jesus Christ.

A church membership class will be offered periodically to explain what true Biblical church membership is and to help new members experience all of the rewards & responsibilities that come with being a member of the church of Jesus Christ.

8.2 – Responsibilities

As a Christian, we are to pray for and pursue both individual holiness and corporate health. As such, following Jesus Christ with your whole heart includes certain responsibilities to your local church. Those responsibilities are comprehensively, though not exhaustively, outlined below. Following these responsibilities, set forth by Jesus and His apostles, not only demonstrates your allegiance to the one true

Three Strands Church – Constitution & Bylaws

God, but also brings great individual, corporate, and communal rewards with it. In signing the Three Strands Membership Covenant, members attest that they have completed the membership process as instructed, read the Membership Covenant, and are willingly covenanting to:

- PARTICIPATE IN REGULAR CORPORATE WORSHIP –
(1) Remember the Lord in communion – *Luke 22:14-20; 1 Corinthians 11:23-30* (2) Sing – *Colossians 3:16* (3) Pray – *Ephesians 6:18* (4) Learn the Apostles teachings – *Acts 2:42; Ephesians 2:19-20* (5) Use your Spiritual gift(s) to build up the body of Christ – *1 Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:11-16* (6) Give financially – *2 Corinthians 9:5-10* (7) Strive for unity – *Ephesians 4:1-3; Philippians 2:1-3; 1 Corinthians 1:10*

- ACTIVELY ENGAGE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY –
(1) Seek Christian accountability – *James 5:16; Proverbs 27:17; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12* (2) Give encouragement – *1 Thessalonians 5:11; Hebrews 10:23-25* (3) Pray for each other – *James 5:16; Colossians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18* (4) Confess your faults/sins to other Christ-followers – *James 5:16; Proverbs 28:13* (5) Submit to church discipline – *Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:12-13* (6) Gently restore fellow believers who are overtaken by sin – *Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20* (7) Follow the Apostles teachings – *Acts 2:42; Ephesians 2:19-20*

- PURSUE MISSIONAL SERVICE IN THE NAME OF JESUS CHRIST –
(1) Preach the Gospel – *Mark 16:15; 1 Peter 3:15* (2) Make Disciples – *Matthew 28:19; 2 Timothy 2:2* (3) Serve those inside and outside the Church – *Galatians 5:13-14; 6:10* (4) Humbly live a life of sacrifice – *Philippians 2:3; 1 Peter 5:5-6* (5) Follow the Apostles Teachings – *Acts 2:42; Ephesians 2:19-20*

8.3 – Voting

Nowhere in the Bible are church members instructed or invited to vote. Therefore, Three Strands Church will have no decisions that must be mandatorily decided by a members vote. However, the Elders may, at their discretion, request a members' vote on certain issues for the purpose of unity within the Church.

When votes of this nature occur, public announcement will be made at least 14 days prior to the day of voting. Also, a simple majority vote (greater than 50%) will be used to determine the outcome of these votes unless otherwise stated in advance of the vote.

8.4 – Dispute Resolution

Members shall refrain from filing lawsuits against the Church or other members within the Church. In keeping with *1 Corinthians 6:1-8*, all formal disputes, other than those dealt with under Article XIII (Church Discipline) of these bylaws, will be resolved by mediation within the church, and if not resolved by this mediation, then by outside mediation or binding arbitration under the procedures and supervision of the Rules of Procedure for Christian Conciliation, Institute for Christian Conciliation, or similar faith-based mediation and arbitration group. Judgment upon an arbitration award may be entered in any court otherwise having jurisdiction. The parties each agree to bear their own costs related to any mediation or arbitration proceeding including payment of their own attorneys' fees. Either party may file a motion seeking temporary injunctive relief from a court of competent jurisdiction in order to maintain the status quo until the underlying dispute or claim can be submitted for mediation or arbitration.

If a dispute may result in an award of monetary damages that could be paid under a Church insurance policy, then use of the conciliation, mediation, and arbitration procedure is conditioned on acceptance of

Three Strands Church – Constitution & Bylaws

the procedure by the liability insurer of the Church and the insurer's agreement to honor any mediation, conciliation or arbitration award up to any applicable policy limits. The mediation, conciliation, and arbitration process is not a substitute for any disciplinary process set forth in these Bylaws, and shall in no way affect the authority of the Church to investigate reports of misconduct, to conduct hearings, or to administer discipline of Members.

8.5 – Removal

Membership is reviewed and renewed on a periodic basis. Members can be removed through: (a) failure to renew their membership (b) voluntary resignation of membership by a member in good standing, (c) death, or (d) a decision by the Elders as a result of the disciplinary process set forth in Article XIII (Church Discipline) of these Bylaws. Members are prohibited from voluntarily resigning their membership while subject to the formal disciplinary process.

IX. Elders

9.1 – General Responsibilities

The terms Elder, Pastor, and Bishop are used interchangeably within Scripture and this document. The overall policy, direction and management of the ministry, operations and finances of the Church shall be vested in the Church Elders. At Three Strands, Elders fall into three categories: Lead Elder, Lay Elders, and Vocational Elders.

Elders are entrusted with the overall direction of the Church and leading the Church from a centralized vantage point. The Elders' oversight includes, but is not limited to, teaching, protecting, leading, disciplining, equipping and caring for the corporate Church body and its individual Members as well as the oversight of all ministry, operations and finances of the Church. The Elders are also responsible for being obedient to the Scriptures in the doctrine of the Church, establishing the overall vision of the Church and appointing new Elders. Above all, Elders are to be wholehearted followers of Jesus Christ, who, through their individual gifts, lead others closer to Jesus Christ.

The Elders shall make the final determination in regards to any ecclesiastical questions. The Elders shall be the express and final arbiter of ecclesiastical polity, religious doctrine, and questions of Church property, and shall make the final decision with respect to any other matter that shall arise concerning the Church, its internal workings, and its governance in every respect, consistent with these Constitution and Bylaws. In deciding such matters, the Elders shall use the standards of: (a) the best spiritual, financial, and operating interests of the Church in light of the Bible and the tenets of faith of the Church; and (b) the furtherance of the religious purposes of the Church as discerned by the Elders according to the teachings of the Bible.

9.2 – Lead Elder, Lay Elders and Vocational Elders

The Lead Elder is defined as the primary vision caster who seeks to lead, serve and coordinate all Church Elders to help the Church carry out its mission and purposes for Jesus Christ. The Lead Elder is also a Vocational Elder. Lay Elders are defined as those Elders who are not in the employ of the Church as a regular part-time or full-time staff member. Vocational Elders are defined as those Elders who are in the employ of the Church as a regular part-time or full-time staff member.

The Lead Elder may receive reasonable compensation for fulfilling his vocational responsibilities as an employee of the Church. Vocational Elders may also receive reasonable compensation for fulfilling their

Three Strands Church – Constitution & Bylaws

vocational responsibilities as employees of the Church. Lay Elders shall not receive compensation or salaries for their service. A Lead or Vocational Elder shall neither vote on nor determine their own personal salary or benefits or designate his personal housing allowance.

9.3 – Qualifications

The minimum qualifications for Elders will be based on those characteristics listed in: *1 Timothy 3:1-7* and *Titus 1:6-9*. An Elder is not required to have perfectly mastered these qualities, but rather, to be striving in the direction of them. These character qualities make up that which all Elders should be wholeheartedly seeking in their lives. In other words, the minimum qualification for Elders is not godly perfection, it is godly direction.

In addition to the minimum qualifications given in Scripture, Elders must be Members who fully subscribe to the Church's *Full Statement of Belief*, these *Constitution & Bylaws*, and are actively involved in the ministry of the Church.

9.4 – Duties

- Teach the Word of God: (*Acts 6:2-4; 1 Thessalonians 5:12*) – this includes, but is not limited to, preaching, counseling sessions, spiritual guidance, corporate & small group instruction, and written forms of communication
- Pray: (*Acts 6:4; James 5:14*) – this includes, but is not limited to, private prayer, public prayer, and anointing & praying for the sick
- Protect/Guard the Church: (*Acts 20:28-30*) – from doctrinal error and those who would seek to destroy unity within the church
- Willingly Care for/Watch Over the Church: (*1 Peter 5:1-4; Hebrews 13:17*) – seeking God's best interest for the people He has entrusted to the church... this should flow from an eagerness to serve God (not a desire for self-gain)
- Lead/Vision Cast for the Church: (*1 Peter 5:1-4; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Timothy 4:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:12*) – based on God's Word and by good example
- Make Ecclesiastical Decisions: (*Acts 15:1-35*) – with a focus on doctrinal determinations and cultural practices as they relate to God's Word

9.5 – Selection and Term

The Elders shall have the sole authority to appoint new Elders. An Elder shall be appointed as an Elder by a passing vote of the existing Elders (as defined in §9.8 below) after they have been tested and proven to meet the qualifications stated in §9.3 above. The Elders may appoint a committee or group to vet Elder candidates and report its findings to the entire Elder body. The Elders may also receive recommendations for Elder candidates from Church Members.

The proposed appointment of any Elder will be communicated to the Church at least ten (10) days in advance and Church Members shall have an opportunity to submit questions, comments and concerns, which will be considered by the Elders on a case-by-case basis. Regardless of how an Elder candidate is selected, confirmation and appointment of a new Elder shall still be at the sole and final discretion of the existing Elders.

Once an Elder is appointed to the Elder body as a Lay, Vocational or Lead Elder, they are expected to serve in this capacity for life or until the leading of the Holy Spirit convinces the Elder to serve Jesus Christ at another local church or in a different capacity. If the Elder body determines that an Elder

Three Strands Church – Constitution & Bylaws

requires an extended leave of absence because of a legitimate need (e.g., illness or tragedy), then such Elder may transition to being an active but nonvoting Elder for a set period of time determined by the Elder body.

To resign from the Elder body, an Elder shall notify, in writing, the Lead Elder or the entire Elder body of the Church. The Elders shall then determine the most fruitful and edifying way to notify the remaining Church Members. A vacancy in the Elder body because of death, resignation, removal or any other cause shall be filled only in the manners prescribed in these Bylaws. Such vacancies may be filled as they are deemed necessary by the Elders.

Elders may also be removed as part of a disciplinary process with the goal being that of restoration and Christ-centered help for the individual believer, as described in §9.6 below.

9.6 – Removal

Any Elder may be removed from the office of Elder for valid cause. Discipline of Elders must be consistent with the standards set forth in Article XIII (Church Discipline) of these Bylaws. The Elder body will determine the specific procedure for removal of an Elder. This procedure may be altered, amended, repealed or restated by a resolution of the Elders. The Elders shall have the sole authority to remove an Elder.

A written notice of the proposed removal of any Elder shall be given to such Elder at least ten (10) days prior to the meeting at which an action to effectuate such removal is to be taken to ensure that the Elder is given a reasonable opportunity to defend himself. The Elder shall have the opportunity to answer the charges in the presence of his accusers, but shall not be present during the discussion and vote on his removal. Such removal shall take place only upon and after a passing vote of the Elders. The Elder under consideration for removal shall not have voting rights while such removal is considered.

The goal of removing an Elder shall be the spiritual health and restoration of the Church and the individual Elder in question. All Christians within the Church shall seek to gently restore a removed Elder to healthy interaction with Jesus Christ and the Church body. This process shall be consistent with that prescribed in the Scriptures (*Galatians 6:1-10, Matthew 18:15-20; James 5:19-20*).

9.7 – Meetings

Elder meetings will take place as deemed needed by the Lead Elder and/or the entire Elder body. Reasonable effort will be made to notify all Elders of any meeting that shall take place concerning voting matters.

9.8 – Voting Procedures

The Elders of the Church shall vote on the matters of (a) appointment of any Elder, (b) doctrinal issues, (c) removal of any Elder, (d) yearly operating budget, (e) buying/selling of land, buildings, or vehicles, (f) changes to these *Constitution & Bylaws*, and (g) other actions deemed major and extraordinary by the Elders. Elder votes on any matter may be communicated to the Church at the sole discretion of the Elders.

A proper quorum is defined as two-thirds (2/3) of the total church Elders. A quorum is required for all voting matters. A passing vote must be equal to or greater than two-thirds (2/3) of the Elders present at the meeting. Voting by proxy is prohibited in all matters.

Three Strands Church – Constitution & Bylaws

9.9 – Cultural Clarification

- Women: While many have elected to open up the office of Church Elder to women, we believe the teaching throughout the New Testament calls upon men to function in this role. This does not mean that women are less important, less competent, or less qualified than men. Instead, it is the recognition that God has created men and women differently and called every member of His church to a unique function and role within the assembly.

This standard does not preclude women from serving in any other role within the Church, nor does it exclude women from other functions, such as teaching or the office of Deacon. All roles, offices, gifts, and ministries within the Church are equally important and vital to the overall health of the Church.

- Divorce: While there is much disagreement over the role of divorcee's within the local church, it is clearly a forgivable sin and covered, like all sin, by God's grace through the blood of Jesus Christ. It is not the role of the local church to hold someone as guilty whom Jesus has forgiven. At Three Strands, we believe the Bible teaches no distinction between those who have been divorced and those who have not been divorced. Therefore, divorce is not a qualifier or a disqualifier when considering someone for the office of Elder.
- Singleness: Three Strands Church does not believe the Scriptures teach that singleness disqualifies an individual for the office of Elder. While marriage is a blessing, it is not a prerequisite for Eldership and there are examples of Church leaders in the New Testament who were unmarried (i.e. Jesus and Paul).

X. Deacons

10.1 – General Responsibilities

The New Testament text uses three primary words that refer to Deacons: *diakonos*, which means “servant”; *diakonia*, which means “service”; and *diakoneō*, which means “to serve.” Thus, in the most literal sense, Deacons are servants. That being said, the primary responsibility of Deacons is to locate and meet specific needs within the body of Christ through the platform of service.

10.2 – Qualifications

The minimum qualifications for Deacons will be based on those characteristics listed in: *1 Timothy 3:8-13* and *Acts 6:1-7*. A Deacon is not required to have perfectly mastered these qualities, but rather, to be striving in the direction of them. These character qualities make up that which all Deacons should be whole-heartedly seeking in their lives. As is also the case with Elders, the minimum qualification for Deacons is not godly perfection, it is godly direction.

In addition to the minimum qualifications given in Scripture, Deacons must be Members who fully subscribe to the Church's *Full Statement of Belief*, these *Constitution & Bylaws*, and are actively involved in the ministry of the Church.

Deacons may be men or women, in keeping with the examples laid out in Scripture (*Acts 6:1-7; Romans 16:1-2*)

Three Strands Church – Constitution & Bylaws

10.3 – Duties

The duties of the Deacons are not explicit within the biblical text. The overall responsibility of the Deacons is to assist the Elders by helping to organize and facilitate areas of ministry need within the church. This important function allows the Elders to focus on the duties which God has entrusted to them. The practical duties of Deacons shall be as follows:

- **Prayer**: May every ministry and role within Three Strands church be first surrounded by prayer. Pray for the body of Christ, the spiritual health of the church, and the glory of Christ to be revealed through the ministry of the church. In addition, they shall pray for God’s wisdom to identify and meet specific needs within the church.
- **Identify Needs**: This may be achieved in a variety of different ways (i.e. Deacons meetings to discuss church needs, individual conversations that reveal specific needs, meetings with the Lead Team and/or Elders to identify specific needs within the church, or individual burdening of one’s heart after spending time with Jesus).
- **Serve Others to Meet Needs**: Develop specific strategies and implement specific actions to meet the identified needs within the church. These steps can be completed by the Deacons themselves or be organized efforts to include the entire church (or a subset of the church).

10.4 – Selection and Term

The Elders shall have the sole authority to appoint Deacons. A man/woman shall be appointed as a Deacon by a passing vote of the Elders (as defined in §9.8 above) after he/she has been tested and proven to meet the qualifications stated in §10.2 above. The Elders may appoint a committee or group to vet Deacon Candidates and report its findings to the Elder body. The Elders may also receive recommendations for Deacon Candidates from Church Members.

The proposed appointment of any Deacon will be communicated to the Church at least twenty-one (21) days in advance and Church Members shall have an opportunity to submit questions, comments and concerns, which will be considered by the Elders on a case-by-case basis. Regardless of how a Deacon Candidate is selected, confirmation and appointment of a new Deacon shall still be at the sole and final discretion of the Elders.

Once a man is appointed to be a Deacon, he is able to serve in this capacity for life or until the leading of the Holy Spirit convinces him/her to serve Jesus Christ in a different capacity. If the Elder body determines that a Deacon needs an extended leave of absence because of a legitimate need (e.g., illness or tragedy), then such Deacon may transition to a period of furlough while recovering from those life events.

To resign from being a Deacon, a Deacon shall notify, in writing, the Lead Elder or the entire Elder body of the Church. The Elders shall then determine the most fruitful and edifying way to notify the remaining Church Members. The vacancy of a Deacon because of death, resignation, removal or any other cause shall be filled only in the manners prescribed in these Bylaws. Deacon vacancies will be filled as they are deemed necessary by the Elders. The Elders shall appoint the number of Deacons required to meet permanent and short-term needs of the Church.

Diacons may also be removed as part of a disciplinary process with the goal being that of restoration and Christ-centered help for the individual believer, as described in §10.5 below.

Three Strands Church – Constitution & Bylaws

10.5 – Removal

Any Deacon may be removed from the office of Deacon for valid cause. Discipline of Deacons must be consistent with the standards set forth in Article XIII (Church Discipline) of these Bylaws. The Elder body will determine the specific procedure for removal of a Deacon. This procedure may be altered, amended, repealed or restated by a resolution of the Elders. The Elders shall have the sole authority to remove a Deacon.

A written notice of the proposed removal of any Deacon shall be given to the Deacon in question at least ten (10) days prior to the meeting at which an action to effectuate such removal is to be taken to ensure that the Deacon is given a reasonable opportunity to defend himself/herself. The Deacon shall have the opportunity to answer the charges in the presence of his or her accuser(s), but shall not be present during the discussion and vote on his or her removal. Such removal shall take place only upon and after a passing vote of the Elders.

The goal of removing a Deacon shall be the spiritual health and restoration of the Church and the individual Deacon in question. All Christians within the Church shall seek to gently restore a removed Deacon to healthy interaction with Jesus Christ and the Church body. This process shall be consistent with that prescribed in the Scriptures (*Galatians 6:1-10, Matthew 18:15-20; James 5:19-20*).

10.6 – Meetings

Deacon meetings will take place as deemed needed by the Deacons. Meeting times, days, and locations will be determined by the Deacons as they communicate together and seek unity amongst themselves. Reasonable effort will be made to notify all Deacons of any meeting that shall take place.

Occasionally, the Elders may request that the Deacons or a subset of Deacons attend Lead Team or Elder meetings in order to discuss specific needs within the church.

XI. Staff

All personnel employed by the Church shall act in accordance with the current Elder-approved Personnel Policies and Procedures document, as it may be revised, amended or restated from time to time.

The Church will furthermore reserve employment for men and women who believe and confess essential biblical convictions, as expressed within this document (§4.2) and within the Church's Full Statement of Belief. All Church employees are expected to act in accordance with these beliefs. Additionally, the Church reserves the right to terminate the employment of any existing employee who fails to meet this general standard of faith and practice.

The employment or termination of all staff will be at the sole discretion of the Elders and will be determined by a passing vote as defined in §9.8 above. Each employee (excluding paid Elders) will have a written job description provided to them and shall be expected to adhere to the duties and responsibilities contained within that document. The duties and responsibilities of all paid Elders will be those set forth in Article IX of these Bylaws.

Any vacancy in the Church Staff shall be filled only in the manners prescribed in these Bylaws. Such vacancies may be filled as they are deemed necessary by the Elders.

Three Strands Church – Constitution & Bylaws

XII. Ordination

The Bible is not specific on the subject of “Ordination” and therefore will be treated as an area of freedom within Christian liberty. Three Strands Church will consider ordaining duly qualified pastoral men for full-time ministry.

Within the Church, ordination is an appointment to the office of Elder. While the Holy Spirit is the only source of ministry calling and appointment, the Elders of Three Strands will seek to identify men who desire to be Elders, meet the qualifications for the office of Elder, and share a doctrinal distinctiveness with the Church. In addition to this appointment, ordination also serves as a unifying symbol of confirmation for God’s calling and gifting on one’s life.

The Bible never describes a formal ordination ceremony. Therefore, at Three Strands, no formal ceremony will need to take place within the entire church assembly in order for ordination to be complete. Ordination will be conferred upon the appointee in a gathering with the Elders of the Church. This gathering will include prayer, the laying on of hands, and words of encouragement, unity, and support within the collection of Elders. (See also: *1 Timothy 4:14; 1 Timothy 5:22; Acts 13:1–3*)

XIII. Church Discipline

Church discipline is a necessary mark of a healthy church and shall be applied in cases of known, unrepentant or habitual sin. This is to be done in accordance with the biblical pattern generally outlined by Jesus in *Matthew 18:15-35*.

It is the responsibility of every godly member to actively engage other Christ-followers in Church discipline if sin is witnessed (*Galatians 6:1-5*). This includes but is not limited to, gentle confrontation, continual prayer, willing assistance and readily available forgiveness. Any person who evidences sin will be confronted in an initial one-on-one meeting, followed by escalating engagement by members, Elders, other staff members or other Church leaders.

Where the steps of discipline are exhausted in cases of continued unrepentant and/or habitual sin, the Elders will consider removing a person from membership by a passing vote of the Elders as defined in §9.8 above. Any removal of membership as a result of the disciplinary process is always done so with the hope of eventual reconciliation and restoration. This removal may or may not include a public disclosure of removal from membership and the circumstances leading to this decision to the corporate membership of the Church. Those so disciplined will in turn be restored to fellowship where the Elders have determined that repentance has occurred. Repentance is always evidenced by humility and a desire to change the direction of sinful behavior. (See also: *Titus 3:9-11; 1 Corinthians 5; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11; 2 Thessalonians 3:11-15; James 5:19-20*)

XIV. Church Disruptions

Any person deemed by a member of the Elders or Church Staff to pose a physical or psychological threat to any person or to the Church, or to be causing, about to cause, or capable of causing disruption to the religious services and activities of the Church, shall be considered a trespasser on Church property and may be ejected summarily. No Church employee or Elder shall incur any liability for acting in good faith in the interests of the Church pursuant to this section.

Three Strands Church – Constitution & Bylaws

XV. Transactions of the Church

15.1 – Contracts and Legal Instruments

The Elders shall have authority to transact business, execute contracts and legally bind the Church in its respective ministry and business affairs. The Elders may also authorize an individual Elder, officer, employee or agent of the Church to enter into a contract or execute and deliver any instrument in the name of and on behalf of the Church. This authority may be limited to a specific contract or instrument, or it may extend to any number and type of possible contracts and instruments.

15.2 – Deposits

All funds of the Church shall be deposited to the credit of the Church in banks, trust companies, or other depositories that the collective Elders select.

15.3 – Gifts

The Elders may accept, on behalf of the Church, any contribution, gift, bequest, or devise for the general purposes or any special purpose of the Church including, but not limited to, gifts of money, annuity arrangements, securities, and other tangible and intangible personal property, real property, and interest therein. The Elders may make gifts and give charitable contributions that are not prohibited by these Bylaws, state law, or any requirements for maintaining the Church's federal and state tax status.

The Elders also reserve the right to refuse acceptance of any gift or contribution if they deem such acceptance to be in moral conflict with the biblical doctrine or practices of the Church. No conditions will be accepted in conjunction with any gift or contribution made to the Church. Furthermore, no goods or services will be provided by the Church in exchange for any gift or contribution.

15.4 – Ownership and Distribution of Property

The Church shall hold, own, and enjoy its own personal and real property, without any right of reversion to another entity, except as provided in these Bylaws.

XVI. Books and Record

16.1 – Required Books and Records

The Church shall keep correct and complete books and records of account.

16.2 – Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of the Church shall begin on the first day of January and end on the last day in December in each year.

XVII. Amendments and Alterations

These Bylaws or any provision contained herein may be altered, amended, repealed or restated, and a new Bylaws adopted, by a passing vote of the Elder body as defined in §9.8. Such vote shall take place at any

Three Strands Church – Constitution & Bylaws

special or regular Elder meeting duly noticed to all Three Strands Elders. “Duly noticed” is defined as a twenty-four (24) hour pre-notification via email or other communication means.