

# FIRST ROCK FELLOWSHIP

## Constitution and By-Laws

### CHURCH COVENANT

This church shall be bound together by the following covenant:

Having been led, as we believe by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and, on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

**For the Advancement of This Church:** We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines;

**As Christian Stewards:** To contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.

**Alone and at Home:** We also engage to maintain family and secret devotions; to teach our children the Word of God, to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances;

**Before The World:** To walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger; to follow scriptural exhortation to avoid excessive drinking of alcoholic beverages; to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

**Toward One Another:** We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and Christian courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay;

**When We Move:** We, moreover, engage that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with a Christian church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

# **CONSTITUTION**

## **ARTICLE I**

### **PREAMBLE**

In order to preserve the principles of our faith and to the end that this body may be governed in an orderly manner consistent with the accepted doctrines of our Baptist denomination, and for the purpose of preserving the liberties inherent in each individual member of this church, and the freedom of action of this body, with respect to its relations to the other churches of the same faith, we do declare and establish this Constitution.

## **ARTICLE II**

### **NAME AND INCORPORATION**

**Section 1. Name:** This body shall be known as First Rock Fellowship, located in the City of Aubrey, in the County of Denton, in the State of Texas.

**Section 2. Incorporated:** This church shall be incorporated in accordance with the laws of the State of Texas.

## **ARTICLE III**

### **PURPOSES**

**The purpose of this church shall be:**

1. To maintain regular services.
2. To proclaim earnestly the gospel message and urge its personal acceptance.
3. To cooperate wholeheartedly by prayer, gift, and service in the effort to establish the kingdom of Christ throughout the world.
4. To promote systematic Bible study and training for Christian service, and to encourage in every possible way, life enlistment in some form of Christian service.
5. To urge our members to live daily according to the principles set forth in the Scriptures.

## **ARTICLE IV**

### **ARTICLES OF FAITH**

The Articles of Faith are those adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention on June 14, 2000, as well as multiple SBC Resolutions, and are listed herein following the By-Laws.

## **ARTICLE V**

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**For the Advancement of This Church:** We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines;

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**When We Move:** We, moreover, engage that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with a Christian church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.

## **ARTICLE VI**

### **CHARACTER**

**Section 1. Polity:** The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body.

**Section 2. Doctrine:** This church believes that the Bible was written by holy men inspired of God. We believe in the infallible, inerrant Word of God. We believe the scripture has been preserved through the years without mixture of error.

This church believes in the validity of the holy scriptures, the deity of God, the virgin birth of Christ, the sinfulness of man, the blood-bought plan of God for man's redemption, the bodily resurrection of Jesus Christ, the second coming of Christ, and the final rapture of the church.

## **BY-LAWS**

### **ARTICLE I RELIGIOUS AUTHORITY**

#### **Section 1. The Charge:**

First Rock Fellowship explicitly charges the Pastor, Associate Pastor, and Elders as the designated religious authority with oversight of all areas of First Rock Fellowship's governance, particularly issues of faith, practice, theology, moral and scriptural interpretation.

#### **Section 2. The Scope of Authority:**

The designated religious authority is the final authority on:

- (1) Scripture, faith, morals, and employee/member discipline;
- (2) Formal employment or membership requirements vis-à-vis eligibility, morals, discipline, removal, and rescission;
- (3) Statements of Faith and Doctrine;
- (4) Standards of Morals and Conduct;
- (5) Internal dispute resolution; and,
- (6) Enforcement of conformity of belief and practice relating to religious teaching and practice.

Ecclesiastical government of all members and officers within First Rock Fellowship is unquestioned. The designated religious authority is the authority for the decision of controverted questions of faith with in First Rock Fellowship. In conclusion, the decisions of the established authority are "binding in all cases of ecclesiastical cognizance, subject only to appeals" as First Rock Fellowship itself provides for.

#### **Section 3. Religious Purpose for exercising authority:**

The purpose and motivation for this authority comes from Holy Scripture. Timothy is charged by Paul to “guard what has been entrusted to your care” from opposing ideas and false teaching. (1 Timothy 6:20), “What you have heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you...” (2 Timothy 1:13-14). Other passages from scripture establishing religious authority for the protection of the message and witness of the church include but are not limited to:

Titus 1:5-9,	Titus 2:1-2	1 Corinthians 5:1-5
1 Corinthians 5:9-13	1 Corinthians 14:26-40	Hebrews 6:4-6
Ephesians 5:24	James 4:7	Hebrews 13:17
Galatians 2:4-5	1 Peter 2:12	2 Corinthians 9:12-15
Titus 2:15	Acts 21:17-26	Acts 15:1-35

“Religious authority necessarily pervades” all aspects of First Rock Fellowship governance and operations. Everything that occurs in First Rock Fellowship affects its ministry and mission and is therefore under its religious authority. The religious purpose in exercising said authority is for the church to practice its religion, foster, repeat, advertise, and disseminate First Rock Fellowship’s view, message, and statements.

#### **Section 4. Leadership:**

First Rock Fellowship is an autonomous local church of baptized believers and has an interest, as a religious institution, in “autonomy in ordering its internal affairs, so that it may be free to: select its own leaders, define its own doctrines, resolve its own disputes, and run its own institutions.”

#### **Section 5. Employment and Volunteer Policies:**

First Rock Fellowship’s mission includes: instruction, supervising, and providing a moral example for members and non-members alike, particularly as its staff and volunteers convey the church’s religious message and carries out its mission. First Rock Fellowship and its members draw much of their emotional enrichment from close ties with others. Therefore, all volunteers, staff members, and leadership play a critical role in the culture and traditions of First Rock Fellowship by cultivating and transmitting shared ideals and beliefs, thereby fostering a religious environment that propagates church beliefs by joining in a common religious endeavor.

First Rock Fellowship places its faith in the hands of its ministers, administrators, officers, employees, and volunteers to teach and promote the ministry and mission of the church. For this reason, First Rock Fellowship exercises complete control over the selection of those who will personify its beliefs. Our church effectively shapes its own faith and mission through said appointments. It is a necessity to First Rock Fellowship that we exclusively employ or associate with Christians “who demonstrate a commitment to Christian living, are endowed with and espouse a Christian philosophy of life, and belief in the Christian Church and her teachings” in accordance with First Rock Fellowship’s stated policies and beliefs. Our employees and volunteers possess the “obligation to be a visible witness to the Church’s philosophy and principles.” First Rock Fellowship “remains committed to living out its faith through its work, because we demonstrate our faith through life, deed, word, and sign; our Christian witness is integrated into and communicated through all that we do.” Therefore, the designated religious

authority of First Rock Fellowship has the authority to establish requirements for employment and volunteering at or within the body of First Rock Fellowship and is “instituted for the purpose of ecclesiastical government.”

## **ARTICLE II**

### **MEMBERSHIP**

#### **Section 1. Qualification:**

The membership of First Rock Fellowship shall consist of such persons who confess Jesus Christ to be their Lord and Savior and are in agreement with the church’s Constitution/Bylaws and Articles of Faith.

The church shall receive members as follows:

- A. By public profession of faith in Christ and by being fully submerged in baptism.
- B. By letter from any other church of like faith and practice showing them to be in good standing and that they have been fully submerged in baptism.
- C. By satisfactory statement of an experience of grace, that the individual has been a member of a church of like faith and practice and is unable to obtain a letter due to circumstances beyond their control.

If the potential member finds that they are in agreement with the faith and practices of First Rock Fellowship they should move ahead to joyfully unite with this body in membership.

First Rock Fellowship will select those individuals with whom it wishes to join in a common endeavor or mission because membership will play a critical role in the culture and traditions of the church by cultivating and transmitting shared ideals and beliefs. In addition, we believe individuals draw much of their emotional and spiritual enrichment from close ties with others.

All new members are required to complete First Rock Fellowship’s membership orientation class.

#### **Section 2. Duties:**

Members are expected to be faithful in all of the duties essential to the Christian life; to attend faithfully and invite others to the services of the church; to give regularly for its support and its causes; to share in its organized work; to extend a cordial welcome to all visitors at all times; and to notify the church office prior to change of address.

#### **Section 3. Rights:**

All active members are equal in rank and privilege. However, members must be at least 15 years old to vote in the transactions of the church. An active member is one who attends at least three Sunday services in any three-month period, unless providentially hindered.

#### Section 4. Discipline:

Because members in good standing have consented to abide by and adhere to church authority, church discipline may occur when necessary.

A. Definition of terms, to avoid misunderstandings. The word submission, for example, does not mean blind obedience. Webster defines it as “the act of yielding to authority.” The Greek word *hypotasso* which is translated as submit comes from two other Greek words—*hypo*, meaning ‘to place oneself under or, in an inferior position,’ and *tasso*, meaning “to arrange in an orderly manner.” (Greek is what the oldest manuscripts of the New Testament are recorded in.) Literally, then, it means “to place oneself under one who will arrange things in an orderly manner.” Or we can say that we submit by agreeing to allow someone to put something in order for us. An example is the use of binding arbitration to settle disputes. Both parties submit to the arbiter and agree that they will abide by whatever decision is made.

“Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your souls as those who will give an account . . .” Hebrews 13:17

“Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves.” Romans 13:1-3

God’s reason for commanding believers to submit to His leaders is expressed in Ephesians 5:21: “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”

Also widely misunderstood—and abused—is the word discipline. It is derived from the Latin word *disco*, meaning to learn. Discipline means “to instruct or educate, to inform the mind, to prepare by instructing in correct principles and habits.” And, yes, it also means, “to correct, chastise, or punish.” Unfortunately, many of us are familiar only with the second definition and do not yet understand the value of chastisement.

“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” Hebrews 12:11

To the leaders God has placed among us, He says,

“Preach the Word; be prepared in season and out of season; correct, rebuke and encourage—with great patience and careful instruction.” 2 Timothy 4:2

As the leaders of First Rock Fellowship submit themselves to God and to one another and strive to follow Paul’s admonition to Timothy, the congregation serves as a safe place for the believer. It is the eyes for our blind spots, the arbiter of our quarrels, and a faithful guide and counselor to

help each person walk out his or her salvation. Church discipline is a safeguard against marriages breaking up with no one to help. It prevents terrible, infectious feuds between families that divide congregations. It helps individuals overcome destructive sinful habits. And it promotes restoration and healing among those who have been emotionally and spiritually crippled or wounded. Finally, church discipline provides solid biblical standards that direct our walk with God and keep us on the path of holiness and righteousness.

“Your commands make me wiser than my enemies, for they are ever with me. I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes. I have more understanding than the elders, for I obey your precepts. I have kept my feet from every evil path so that I might obey your word . . . Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light for my path.” Psalm 119: 98-101, 105

B. There are two types of church discipline:

(1) The first type settles disputes between or among members, seeing that all rights are preserved, and all obligations fully discharged. Exodus 18:13-27 offers a model for this type of discipline. And later, in the New Testament, we hear Paul rebuke the believers in Corinth for taking one another to secular courts instead of settling matters among themselves (see 1 Corinthians 6:1-8).

(2) The second type of church discipline has to do with confronting sinful habits and behavior, many of which are listed in Romans 1:26-32 and 1 Corinthians 6. They include; adultery, fornication, homosexuality, physical, sexual, and substance abuse, slander and gossip, theft, murder, habitual lying and cheating, and habitual rebellion against parents. Why? One reason is to preserve God’s honor, as it is written: “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you” (Romans 2:24). Another reason is the protection of fellow members from being tempted, misled, or divided. “Don’t you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough?” (1 Corinthians 5:6). Finally, God has provided this type of church discipline for the purpose of restoring fallen believers to fellowship with Himself and His people.

C. Discipline shall be administered when a member openly and willfully violates the Church Covenant and or Standards of Morals and Conduct as well as any form of counter-witnessing including teaching doctrines opposed to the Articles of Faith of First Rock Fellowship. In the event that a member is found to be living in or practicing sinful acts as defined in the afore mentioned documents, the following steps shall be a biblical guide to assist in carrying out any discipline that may be deemed necessary by the designated authority.

(1) In accordance with God’s Word found in Matthew 18:15 our first step shall be to go to our brother or sister and show their fault in hopes that they would listen and be won over. Galatians 6:1&2 goes on to say “Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way, you will fulfill the law of Christ.” Therefore, since our heart should always be after men and women’s reconciliation to God, the first step is



offering the grace of God and a loving call to turn from the sinful behavior. If the member is serving in any form of leadership, as a volunteer or staff, they may be asked to step down from their place of leadership or service upon a first refusal to repent. This place of leadership or service may be restored if true repentance occurs and upon approval by the designated authority. The timing of any restoration to leadership or service will be determined by the governing authority and based upon the offense committed. Leadership is a privilege, not a right at First Rock Fellowship. Counter-witnessing will not be tolerated among any form of leadership and is cause for a member's immediate removal from their position if there is no repentance.

(2) If the member in sin will not listen to the loving call for repentance, then as Scripture tells us, we should approach them with 2 or 3 others. These persons may be from among the Deacons or Elders or one whom the Elders recommend, male or female. Again, we should seek to restore him or her gently yet with urgency and pleading that further discipline might not be necessary or come about to bring them back to repentance.

(3) Further discipline may simply be the church body's reaction to a member walking in unrepentant sin. Scripture tells us to "treat him as a pagan or a tax collector," (Matthew 18:17) which is to say avoid close friendship and fellowship with him or her (2 Thessalonians 3:14). [This is not a directive to the designated authority, to call the church to such action but merely commentary on how God's Spirit works in and through His body when sin is being paraded.] The passages are a directive from God on how to treat an unrepentant believer in the hopes they will repent. It should be remembered that God also says love is to be the motivation behind anything we do, including discipline. In 2 Corinthians 2:5-8 Paul writes how we should respond after having separated ourselves from someone for a time. "If anyone has caused grief, he has not so much grieved me as he has grieved all of you, to some extent—not to put it too severely. The punishment inflicted on him by the majority is sufficient for him. Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him." We should be sure to forgive "in order that Satan might not outwit us" (2 Corinthians 2:10-11). Timing on this type of separation will depend on each person who felt the need to separate. For some it may only be a few weeks before God's grace allows them to restore fellowship, for others it may be months. All should be done prayerfully and with love for the sinner not in arrogance or haughtiness.

(4) If a member goes into a sinful lifestyle and chooses to no longer fellowship or worship with this church on any kind of regular basis then they have in essence separated themselves from the body. The designated authority may choose to allow their membership to become inactive instead of pursuing termination of membership. An inactive member has no rights or voice in the church and has lost all benefits of membership. They are restricted from use of church facilities, voting, or serving in a leadership role within the church until active membership has been restored. Active membership will only be restored when an inactive member reaffirms their covenant to First Rock Fellowship's mission and purpose which is found in the Church Covenant. In addition, they must agree to and be willing to abide by the church's Bylaws/Constitution; Standards of Morals and Conduct; and Procedures for Discipline, Mediation and Termination.

(5) If the first three steps of discipline still do not bring him or her back around to repentance and their original covenant with the church; if he or she is committed to walk away from the doctrines and morals they originally agreed to in membership; then their name may be brought before the church in accordance with Article II section 5-D of the bylaws of First Rock Fellowship, to recommend termination of his or her membership. This action is reserved for the most detrimental sins accompanied by a hardened unrepentant heart and attitude. Such sins would include but are not be limited to (Theft, Murder, Adultery, Homosexuality, Bisexuality, Pedophilia, Apostasy, Heresy, Witchcraft and any other sinful behavior that causes the member to become an offense to First Rock Fellowship (1 Corinthians 5:1-13). Unrepentant sins of this nature disqualify any person from becoming a member of First Rock Fellowship. Likewise, members who break their covenant with this church and pursue a lifestyle of unrepentant sins like those listed above are subject to having their membership revoked.

The United States military as well as other nations military, have a term that First Rock Fellowship relates to at this point. It is "Conduct Unbecoming an Officer and a Gentleman." The nature of this offense is: *"action or behavior in an official capacity which, in dishonoring or disgracing the person as an officer, seriously compromises the officer's character as a gentleman, or action or behavior in an unofficial or private capacity which, in dishonoring or disgracing the officer personally, seriously compromises the person's standing as an officer. There are certain moral attributes common to the ideal officer and the perfect gentleman, a lack of which is indicated by acts of dishonesty, unfair dealing, indecency, indecorum, lawlessness, injustice, or cruelty. Not everyone is or can be expected to meet unrealistically high moral standards, but there is a limit of tolerance based on customs of the service and military necessity below which the personal standards of an officer, cadet, or midshipman cannot fall without seriously compromising the person's standing as an officer, cadet, or midshipman or the person's character as a gentleman."*

As with the United States Military, First Rock Fellowship believes its members both in any official or private capacity should maintain "certain moral attributes common to the ideal" Christian. This ideal Christian comes from the example of Jesus Christ and His Word (The Bible). The United States Military punishes "Conduct Unbecoming" by court-martial. First Rock Fellowship will bring disciplinary action to any member guilty of "Conduct Unbecoming a Christian" according to First Rock Fellowship's Articles of Faith, Constitution/Bylaws, and Standards of Morals and Conduct. We the church, do not expect unrealistic moral perfection from anyone and we get that grace from God since we all need it. There is however "a limit of tolerance based on" God's Word and the necessity for the church to not have members who counter-witness by their life or speech since that can be detrimental to our mission.

#### Leaving while under discipline

If the person leaves First Rock Fellowship during the disciplinary process or while these actions are being taken, and if the elders learn that he has joined another church, the elders may inform the leadership of that church that the person is currently under church discipline. The elders may also ask that church to encourage the person to repent of his sin and be restored to the Lord and to any people whom he has offended (Matthew 18:12-24). If the person has left First Rock Fellowship and not joined another church, the elders will continue to encourage his restoration and continue the disciplinary process in his absence until it is concluded.

## **Section 5. Mediation**

If a person believes they have been misunderstood or treated in an unjust manner by church staff or leadership, they may ask for a meeting with the church elders. This is the body designated by the church to hear such disputes with the hope of finding resolution. The goal of Mediation in this setting is to bring both parties into a closer alignment with the Word of God and allow it to speak into the situation for both individuals.

## **Section 6. Termination:**

The termination of church membership shall be effective on the following conditions:

- A. By death.
- B. Any member in good standing who desires a letter of recommendation to any other Baptist church of like faith and order is entitled to it upon request of that church.
- C. In the event a member unites with a church not of like faith and order or of some other denomination, membership in this church ceases and is formally terminated by vote of the church.
- D. Should a member become an offense to the church, and to its good name, by reason of immoral or unchristian conduct, or by persistent breach of his or her covenant vow, the church shall terminate his or her membership, but only after due notice and hearing, and after faithful efforts have been made to bring such member to repentance and amendment.
- E. If a member requests to be released from his or her covenant obligations to this church, the church shall patiently and kindly endeavor to secure his or her continuation in its fellowship. If the church is unsuccessful in the endeavor, such request shall be granted and his or her membership terminated. The person shall be notified by the clerk.
- F. Any member refusing to have fellowship with the church and failing to communicate with the church in some way during the period of one (1) year shall, after due notice and kindly effort, have his or her membership terminated by vote of the church.
- G. The membership of any persons shall not be terminated (except by letter) at the meeting when the recommendation for such action is made. There must be a waiting period of one (1) month before final termination of membership is effective (except in case of letter).

## **Section 7. Non-Resident Members:**

Members who move to a community where there is no Baptist church of like faith and order are encouraged to keep in contact with this church.

### **Section 8. Inactive membership:**

Any member who does not attend at least three Sunday services in any three-month period, unless providentially hindered will be moved to an inactive status. An Inactive member has no membership rights and no voice in the church, they are not allowed to vote, serve in leadership or reserve church facilities for personal use without approval of designated authority. This is not a punishment for missing church services. This policy exists to protect the church from members who no longer share the same core beliefs and who may desire to reserve church facilities for practices that go against our deeply held beliefs and governing documents.

### **Section 9. Restoration:**

Any person whose membership has been terminated for any offense may be restored by vote of the church, upon evidence of his or her repentance and reformation, or if an account of continued absence, upon satisfactory explanation.

### **Section 10. Sending Out:**

Upon request, a member leaving the church to follow a call of ministry, will be sent out with a blessing ceremony in one of the services.

## **ARTICLE III**

### **GENERAL CHURCH OFFICERS**

#### **Section 1. General Officers:**

The primary officers for this church shall be the pastor & staff, elders, deacons, moderator, clerk, treasurer, financial secretary, trustees and any other officers that may be deemed necessary to carry out a full church program. All officers shall be active members of this church.

#### **Section 2. Pastor and Associate Pastor:**

A. The Call: The pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs. His election shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose. A pulpit committee shall be appointed by the church to seek out a suitable pastor, and their recommendation will constitute a nomination. The committee shall bring to the consideration of the church only one man at a time. Election shall be by ballot, and affirmative vote of three-fourths (3/4) of those present being necessary to a choice. The pastor, thus elected, shall serve until relationship is terminated by his

voluntary resignation or by a 51% quorum vote of active members at a special business meeting called for this purpose with one-week prior notice.

B. Qualifications: The pastor shall be ordained or a candidate for ordination. He shall meet all the Biblical qualifications as set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7.

C. Duties: The pastor shall preach the Gospel, administer the ordinances, watch over the membership, have in his charge the spiritual welfare of the congregation, and shall preside at all meetings of the church, except as herein provided.

D. Privileges of the Pastor and Associate Pastor:

- (1) The pastor shall be paid a salary and shall have an annual vacation of no less than two weeks with pay.
- (2) The pastor will be given any vacation due him in case of dismissal from the church.
- (3) The pastor shall have permission to have revivals or mission trips or speaking engagements during the year.
- (4) The church shall pay the expense of moving the pastors from former location to local field. The mode of moving must be approved by both.
- (5) Cell phones and laptops will be provided by the church to the pastors, the service and specifics of which will be determined by the Finance Committee.
- (6) A housing allowance determined by the Finance Committee will be provided by the church.

### **Section 3. Elders:**

The number of Elders will be determined by the pastor. Elders will be appointed by the pastor and approved by the members. The purpose of the elders is to provide counsel, accountability and prayer support to the pastor(s) and to be the designated authority along with pastor and associate pastor.

- In case of absence or inability of the pastor, subject to advice from and conference with him, they will provide for the pastor's replacement in the pulpit. In any period when the church is without a pastor, unless the church shall otherwise provide, the deacons will arrange the temporary ministry and take counsel with reference to the method by which the church shall proceed in securing a pastor.

### **Section 4. Trustees:**

There shall be three (3) trustees, which number may be increased by vote of the church. Trustees are to be elected by the church. They will be the official signatory based on a vote of the church for buying and selling real property. They shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer any property, unless so authorized by vote of the church. The trustees will have rotating term positions for three (3), four (4) and five (5) years.

## **Section 5. Worship Leader:**

The Worship Leader will be a staff position as set forth in Article III, Section 1. He or she shall be charged with the responsibility of working with the pastor correlating the music and worship activities to the needs of the church.

## **Section 6. Deacons:**

### **A. Election:**

- a. The church shall decide the number of deacons needed to care for its people and see to its needs according to 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7
- b. There shall be a waiting period of at least Twelve (12) months before a man can be selected by the church after he becomes a member of our body. This will give the church time to examine him and his qualifications.

### **B. Duties:** In accordance with the meaning of the word and the practice of the New Testament, deacons

- Are to be servants of the church.
- They are to be zealous to guard the unity of the spirit within the church in the bonds of peace.
- They shall serve as a council for advice and conference with the pastor in all matters pertaining to the welfare and work of the church by proper organization and method among themselves.
- They are to maintain paternal relations with all the membership of the church. Especially are they to seek to know the physical needs and the moral and spiritual struggles of the brethren and sisters; and to serve the whole church in relieving, encouraging and developing all who are in need.
- They shall work with staff & deacons for the preparation and assist in the observance of the Lord's Supper. They shall organize themselves as they deem best for this part of their work, calling to their assistance other members of the church as they see fit.

### **C. Meetings:** The deacons will meet as needed to fulfill their duties as listed above

## **Section 7: Moderator:**

The pastor shall be moderator. In the absence of the pastor, the elders will decide who may preside. In the event none of these are available, the church clerk may call the church into conference and a moderator may be elected by the church. The moderator, when requested by a quorum of the church, may call a special business meeting, provided one week's notice has been given.

## **Section 8. Church Clerk:**

The duties (which may be shared by more than one staff member) of the church clerk are as follows:

- A. Record and maintain in a suitable book an accurate record of all the actions of the church.
- B. Maintain an up-to-date register of the names and addresses of all members, with dates and manner of administrations, dates and manner of termination of membership, marriages, etc., together with a record of baptisms.
- C. Maintain records of special attendances; ordination of new deacons; men licensed or ordained to preach, volunteers for other church related vocations; and any important date, event, or activity that would be considered a vital part of the church's history.
- D. Request letters of recommendations the week request is received by clerk, issue letters of dismissal and/or recommendations voted by the church; preserve on file all communications and written official reports; and give legal notice of all meetings where such notice is necessary.
- E. Prepare and send to the associational clerk the annual church letter
- F. Take every precaution to provide for the safe keeping of the church records in his or her charge. All minutes and records of the church shall be open to inspection to church members at all times, provided such records are open ones. In the case of unpaid staff workers, records such as minutes to a meeting that need to be typed, may be taken home for updating. A hard copy must be kept on file at the church. The records shall be done at the church office, and at no time shall they be removed from said church building.
- G. Make every effort to attend all business meetings of the church.

## **Section 9. Treasurer:**

The duties of the treasurer are as follows:

- A. Receive, preserve, and pay out, all money or things of value, keeping at all times an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements. Payment of bills for local expenses shall be made promptly by check, and all funds received for denominational or other causes shall be remitted at least monthly by check.
- B. Render to the church a report of receipts and disbursements for the preceding quarter. This report shall be presented to the church in written form at its regular quarterly business meeting.
- C. This report, upon completion by the treasurer, shall be audited by the Finance Committee quarterly. All books, records, and accounts kept by the treasurer are the property of the church and shall be open to inspection by any member except for private giving of church members.
- D. Deliver the annual report rendered at the end of the church year to the clerk, who shall preserve it as a part of the permanent records of the church.
- E. Handle the recording of the offering envelopes, properly keeping records, and filing them for future reference.

F. Make every effort to attend all business meetings of the church.

## **Section 10. Employee and Non-Employee Volunteer Eligibility Requirements:**

Employment and volunteer service for First Rock Fellowship is akin to a religious calling. Every employee and volunteer's lifestyle, conduct, morals and ethics reflect on the reputation and integrity of the church and thereby may affect the mission and witness of First Rock Fellowship and the Kingdom of God.

### Requirements include:

- A. A personal relationship with Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
- B. Ministry volunteers must be a member or regular attendee of First Rock Fellowship for no less than six months.
- C. All staff and ministry volunteers working with minors (anyone 18 and under) must have completed a Background Check Authorization form provided by First Rock Fellowship.
- D. All staff and ministry volunteers must have a knowledge of and respect for the Christian faith. They must also commit to abide by the tenets of the Christian Church, to exhibit a commitment to the ideals of Christian living and to be supportive of the Christian faith.
- E. Any ministry performed by an employee of First Rock Fellowship, whether in an official or non-official capacity, should not be in conflict with the church's Articles of Faith or Standards of Moral and Conduct. Any such action is counter-witnessing and therefore harmful to the mission and testimony of First Rock Fellowship.
- F. First Rock Fellowship will employ only persons whose beliefs and conduct are consistent with the church's religious precepts and who agree to accept and adhere to its Statement of Faith, Standards of Morals and Conduct, Procedures for Discipline, Mediation and Termination and Employee Handbook.
- G. First Rock Fellowship will only allow volunteers whose beliefs and conduct are consistent with the church's religious precepts and who agree to accept and adhere to its Statement of Faith, Standards of Morals and Conduct, and Procedures for Discipline, Mediation and Termination.
- H. Requirements for volunteering in ministry as a student assistant to a teacher or staff include, being in the 7<sup>th</sup> grade or above; actively involved and in good standing with FRF student ministry; having their parent's permission; and committing to abide by the Standards of Morals and Conduct of First Rock Fellowship.

## **Section 11. Officers of Church Organizations:**

All organizations of the church shall be under the church control, all officers being elected by the church and reporting regularly to the church. It is understood that the pastor is ex-officio head of all the organizations named, and his leadership is to be recognized in them all.



## **ARTICLE IV**

### **CHURCH COMMITTEES**

We recognize that committees are needed in the church. These committees shall be elected by the church, as needed, to do the specific job assigned to them, and be dismissed upon completion of that responsibility. These committees may be elected from the floor or appointed by the pastor, in accordance with the wishes of the church.

## **ARTICLE V**

### **CHURCH MEMBERS**

#### **Section 1. Worship:**

- A. Public services shall be held on the Lord's Day and on some regular evening or evenings of each week, or as may be deemed necessary by the leadership or vote of the church.
- B. The Lord's Supper shall be observed at least once a quarter, or at such other times as the church may deem necessary.
- C. Occasional religious meeting may be appointed by the pastor at his discretion, or by vote of the church.

#### **Section 2. Business:**

A regular business meeting shall be held at least once a quarter, or at such other times as the church may deem necessary. A one (1) week public notice shall be given on all called special meetings.

The pastor may, and shall when requested by the deacons, trustees, or ten (10) active adult members of the church, call a special business meeting. In the absence of the pastor, the chairman of deacons may call a special meeting of business in the manner prescribed herein; provided one (1) weeks' notice has been given. In the event none of these persons are available, the church clerk may call the meeting to order and request a moderator be elected. The object of the meeting must be stated and read in a worship service on the Lord's Day next preceding the day fixed for the meeting.

At the regular and all special business meetings a quorum shall consist of those active resident members in attendance.

In all questions of procedures in any business meeting, the church shall be governed by Robert's Rules of Order Revised.

## **ARTICLE VI GENERAL**

### **Section 1. Use of Buildings and Equipment:**

The use of the buildings and equipment by the church shall be in accordance with the church calendar. Inactive members are not permitted to reserve church facilities for personal use except by approval of designated authority. No secular organization or group shall be allowed to use the church buildings except by vote of the church. This policy exists to protect the church from having its sacred facilities reserved for practices that go against our deeply held beliefs and governing documents. Because our facilities are a place of worship and holiness, we cannot allow sinful practices to occur and defile God's house. Any other use of the buildings and equipment will be determined using procedures established by and with oversight from staff having all reservations logged into the official logbook.

### **Section 2. Procedure for Licensing and Ordaining Members**

A. Licensing: Any member of the church who, by his piety, zeal, and aptness to teach, gives evidence that he is called by God to the work of the ministry may, by a vote of the majority of the members present and voting at a regular or special business session and, after examination by the pastor and deacons as to his Christian experience, be licensed by the church to the Christian ministry.

B. Ordaining: When a church of like faith and order calls a member of this church as its pastor, and shall request in writing that he be ordained, this church shall consider such request. If the church honors such request by a majority vote of members present at its business meeting, it shall authorize and direct the pastor to assemble a council of ordained ministers and deacons of like faith and order to examine the candidates and bring to the church, if it can, a satisfactory recommendation. This council then shall help in the ordaining service, which can be a regular service, or one specially called.

Likewise, when the church elects a member or members to the office of deacon, a council shall be formed as above and proceed in like manner.

### **Section 3. Financial Policies:**

General financial policies not otherwise covered in these By-Laws are as follows:

A. This church recognizes and adopts the Scriptural method of tithes and offerings as its plan of finance.

B. The fiscal year shall be January 1 through December 31, and the church year October 1 through September 30.

C. All funds, for any and all purposes, shall pass through the office of the treasurer and be properly recorded on the books of the church. The expenses of all organizations, as approved by the church, shall be paid from the accounts provided.

D. Receipts from all sources shall be deposited in a bank at least weekly and kept in such accounts as the church may care to designate. The church may designate an alternate to sign checks in the event the treasurer is unavailable.

E. This church will participate in worldwide mission causes through the Southern Baptist Convention or other causes the church deems necessary to carry out its wishes. These monies will be channeled through proper organizations monthly.

F. The revival expenses will be cared for by our local church. Meals and lodging will be paid by the local church, and a love offering will be taken.

#### **Section 4. Dissolution.**

At the discontinuation of this organization, the organization assets are to be transferred to a church of like mind and similar organization that is qualified for exception under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Service code. No part of the assets of the Church shall inure to the benefit of, or be distributed to, its members, officers, or any person except that the Church shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered, and to make payments in the furtherance of the Church.

### **ARTICLE VII**

#### **AMENDMENTS**

This constitution may be amended, with the exception of Article VI, Character – Section 1, Polity – and Section 2, Doctrine, at any regular or specially called business session by a three-fourths (3/4) vote of the active members present if the proper notice as described below has been given. Prior to acting upon any proposal to change the constitution, the proposal shall be read at a business session and shall not be acted upon until at least one (1) month has elapsed, and it shall be read from the pulpit on the Lord's Day next preceding the time for action. The By-Laws, in like manner, may be amended by a two-thirds (2/3) vote. Similarly, a notice of one (1) month must be given before amending the By-Law

# **ARTICLES OF FAITH**

## **I. The Scriptures**

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.

## **II. God**

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

### **A. God the Father**

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.

### **B. God the Son**

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His

substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 53:1-12; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.

### C. God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration, He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.

## III. Man

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to

fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

## IV. Salvation

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

A. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Savior.

B. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

C. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

D. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

## V. God's Purpose of Grace

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man and comprehends all the means

in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7, 19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.

## VI. The Church

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.

## VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper.

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the church, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

## VIII. The Lord's Day

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.

## IX. The Kingdom

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come, and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10,23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.

## X. Last Things

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

## XI. Evangelism and Missions



It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8, 16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

## XII. Education

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.

In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.

Deuteronomy 4:1, 5, 9, 14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff.; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7, 11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2; 7:24ff.; 28:19-20; Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3, 8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.

## XIII. Stewardship

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4, 19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21, 42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.

## XIV. Cooperation

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.

Exodus 17:12; 18:17ff.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; Matthew 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff.; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1ff.; 4:31-37; 13:2-3; 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 1:15-18.

## XV. The Christian and the Social Order

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.

Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16, 43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.

## XVI. Peace and War

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.

The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9,38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36,38; Romans 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.

## XVII. Religious Liberty

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.

## XVIII. The 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 man and one woman 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.

## **XIX. Abortion**

We believe that all matters of faith and conduct must be evaluated on the basis of Holy Scripture, which is our inspired, infallible, and inerrant guide. (2 Timothy 3:16–17). Because Holy Scripture speaks to creation and human life, it is imperative that we correctly understand, articulate, and abide by what Holy Scripture teaches on this matter.

We believe that God has created mankind in His image (Imago Dei) and that human life begins at fertilization. God, in his infinite sovereignty, uniquely formed human beings and gave them a special dignity, personal freedom, and individual accountability among all the works of creation. Human beings have been made for relationship with God and to be good and faithful stewards of creation. God created each person's inmost being, knitting each person together in his mother's womb. (Psalm 139:13). As God's individualized and personal creation, each person is fearfully and wonderfully made. (Psalm 139:14). God has ordained all the days of each person's life before they came to be. (Psalm 139:16).

## **Religious Beliefs**

Based on Holy Scripture and the constant moral teaching of the universal Church, we believe:

- From the moment of fertilization until natural death, every human life is sacred because every human life has been created by God, in His image and likeness.
- From the moment of fertilization, every human life must be recognized, respected, and protected as having the rights of a person and the inviolable right to life.

- The right to life and physical integrity of every unborn human life is inviolable —it is not a concession made by society or the state but is instead inherent to the unborn human life by virtue of its creation in the image of God.
- Because human life begins at the moment of fertilization, it is against our religious and moral conviction to formally or materially cooperate in the termination of unborn human life.
- We are strongly committed to the preservation and defense of unborn human life, which compels our religious, moral, and ethical duty to defend unborn human life from destruction, whether by surgical abortion or use of drugs, devices, or services that have the intent, design, effect, or risk of terminating unborn human life or preventing its implantation and growth post-fertilization.
- The Church and all her ministers and ministries should publicly witness to society and to the state regarding the intrinsic, inherent, and inviolable dignity of all human life, from fertilization to natural death.

### **Holy Scripture**

In standing against abortion, this church incorporates by reference the following Holy Scriptures (NIV), which are cited in the statements, resolutions, commentaries, or doctrines of Christian denominations that are expressly and vocally opposed to abortion: Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, Presbyterian Church in America, Roman Catholic Church, and Southern Baptist Convention.

**Genesis 1:26-27** – Then God said, “Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.” So, God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

**Genesis 25:21-22** – Isaac prayed to the Lord on behalf of his wife, because she was childless. The Lord answered his prayer, and his wife Rebekah became pregnant. The babies jostled each other within her, and she said, “Why is this happening to me?” So, she went to inquire of the Lord.

**Exodus 20:13** – You shall not murder.

**Psalms 22:9-10** – Yet you brought me out of the womb; you made me trust in you, even at my mother’s breast. From birth I was cast on you; from my mother’s womb you have been my God.

**Psalms 139:13-16** – For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the

days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

**Isaiah 44:1-2** – This is what the Lord says: he who made you, who formed you in the womb, and who will help you: Do not be afraid, Jacob, my servant, Jeshurun, whom I have chosen.

**Isaiah 49:5** – And now the Lord says—he who formed me in the womb to be his servant to bring Jacob back to him and gather Israel to himself, for I am honored in the eyes of the Lord and my God has been my strength.

**Job 10:8-12** – Your hands shaped me and made me. Will you now turn and destroy me? Remember that you molded me like clay. Will you now turn me to dust again? Did you not pour me out like milk and curdle me like cheese, clothe me with skin and flesh and knit me together with bones and sinews? You gave me life and showed me kindness, and in your providence watched over my spirit.

**Jeremiah 1:4-5** – The word of the Lord came to me, saying, “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, before you were born I set you apart; I appointed you as a prophet to the nations.”

**Luke 1:39-45** – Mary got ready and hurried to a town in the hill country of Judea, where she entered Zechariah’s home and greeted Elizabeth. When Elizabeth heard Mary’s greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. In a loud voice she exclaimed: “Blessed are you among women and blessed is the child you will bear! But why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? As soon as the sound of your greeting reached my ears, the baby in my womb leaped for joy. Blessed is she who has believed that the Lord would fulfill his promises to her!”

### **Early Church Fathers**

“Thus, you read the word of God, spoken to Jeremiah: ‘Before I formed thee in the womb, I knew thee.’ If God forms us in the womb, He also breathes on us as He did in the beginning: ‘And God formed man and breathed into him the breath of life.’ Nor could God have known man in the womb unless he were a whole man. ‘And before thou camest forth from the womb, I sanctified thee.’ Was it, then, a dead body at that stage? Surely it was not, for “God is the God of the living and not the dead.”

—Tertullian, *De Anima*

“It is not permissible for us to destroy the seed by means of illicit manslaughter once it has been conceived in the womb, so long as blood remains in the person.”

—Tertullian, *Apologia*

“Why sow where the ground makes it its care to destroy the fruit? Where there are many efforts at abortion? Where there is murder before the birth.... Why then dost thou abuse the gift of God,

and fight with His laws, and follow after what is a curse as if a blessing, and make the chamber of procreation a chamber for murder, and arm the woman that was given for childbearing unto slaughter?”

—John Chrysostom, Homily 24

“[T]his lustful cruelty, or if you please, cruel lust, resorts to such extravagant methods as to use poisonous drugs to secure barrenness; or else, if unsuccessful in this, to destroy the conceived seed by some means previous to birth, preferring that its offspring should rather perish than receive vitality; or if it was advancing to life within the womb, should be slain before it was born.”

—Augustine, *De Nube et Concupiscentia*

“Therefore brothers, you see how perverse they are and hastening wickedness, who are immature, they seek abortion of the conception before the birth; they are those who tell us, ‘I do not see that which you say must be believed.’”

—Augustine, Sermon 126

“Thou shalt not slay the child by procuring abortion; nor, again, shalt thou destroy it after it is born.”

—Barnabas, Letter

## **Written Statements**

### *Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod*

Our church’s explanation of the Small Catechism puts the matter well when it says, “The living but unborn are persons in the sight of God from the time of conception. Since abortion takes a human life, it is not a moral option except to prevent the death of another person, the mother.” The sin of willfully aborting a child, except in those very rare situations where it may be necessary to save the life of the mother, is a sinful act, totally contrary to the will of God. (p. 1)

Since 1973, abortions have been legal in the United States. Abortion remains a sin against God, whether or not it is legal in our society; therefore, we must “obey God rather than men.” (Acts 5:29)

A personal decision is not necessarily a private decision. The church, and the church’s ministers, have God-given responsibilities to warn, exhort and rebuke from the Word of God with all authority. (2 Tim. 4:2).

The church is very concerned when Christians make decisions that are contrary to the Word of God and thus place themselves outside the will of God. Living in a state of unrepentant sin is a very serious situation. Thus, the church must warn its members against the temptations of abortions. Furthermore, the church needs to speak out against the sin of abortion, since it is widely presented in our culture as perfectly acceptable.

### *Presbyterian Church in America*

Abortion in distinction from miscarriage and is the intentional killing of an unborn child between conception and birth. The moral question raised in any abortion is whether the life of the unborn child is included in the Biblical teaching respecting the sanctity of life. The special protection God gives to human life is founded upon His making man “in His own image.” (Gen. 1:26, 27 (p. 14))

What we see revealed in Scripture is a marvelous truth, often expressed in doxological language, that there is a continuity of the individual man from “before the foundation of the world” into eternity. (Psalm 139, Luke 1:24-56, Gen. 25:22, Job 3:3, Isa. 44:2, 49:5, Hos. 12:3 (p.15))

In Psalm 51:5, the continuity extends back to the actual time of conception. “Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.” The point of continuity is David’s humanness even at conception. To speak of oneself at conception in terms of personal sinfulness is to affirm one’s humanity. (pp. 15-16)

Our obedience to the Word of God leaves us with no option regarding how we perceive the unborn child. He is a person, providentially given and cared for by God, with uninterrupted continuity into post-natal life. There are many explicit and implicit passages of Scripture that further support this conclusion. (p. 18)

We are not given unlimited or autonomous sovereignty over our own bodies or the bodies of others. (1 Cor. 6:15, 7:7 (p. 18))

Scripture repeatedly affirms the joy and blessing of conception, while barrenness is seen as a curse. God’s involvement with the unborn child has already been mentioned. We are even told that John the Baptist was “filled with the Holy Spirit, while yet in his mother’s womb.” (Luke 1:15 (p.18))

These and many other references are adequately set forth in other studies. (p. 18)

Although there has been much discussion of when life begins, the scientific community does not seem to have much doubt on this issue. The question is usually raised to obscure the real issue, namely, that abortion is the intentional killing of a living unborn child. The conclusion of the First International Conference on Abortion held in Washington, D.C., in October of 1967, was that no point in time could be found between the union of sperm and egg and the birth of the infant which could not be considered human life. (p. 18)

It must be pointed out here that this developing baby is a separate but dependent new life with its own chromosomal pattern and at no stage of development can be considered as an appendage or part of the mother’s own body. Physiologically it is the baby that determines the development



of the pregnancy not the mother. The baby, however, is highly dependent upon its mother for protection and nourishment. (p. 20)

### *Roman Catholic Church*

#### Abortion

2270 – Human life must be respected and protected absolutely from the moment of conception. From the first moment of his existence, a human being must be recognized as having the rights of a person – among which is the inviolable right of every innocent being to life.

“Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you.”

“My frame was not hidden from you, when I was being made in secret, intricately wrought in the depths of the earth.”

2271 – Since the first century the Church has affirmed the moral evil of every procured abortion. This teaching has not changed and remains unchangeable. Direct abortion, that is to say, abortion willed either as an end or a means, is gravely contrary to the moral law:

“You shall not kill the embryo by abortion and shall not cause the newborn to perish.”

“God, the Lord of life, has entrusted to men the noble mission of safeguarding life, and men must carry it out in a manner worthy of themselves. Life must be protected with the utmost care from the moment of conception: abortion and infanticide are abominable crimes.

2272 – Formal cooperation in an abortion constitutes a grave offense. The Church attaches the canonical penalty of excommunication to this crime against human life:

“A person who procures a completed abortion incurs excommunication *latae sententiae*,” “by the very commission of the offense,” and subject to the conditions provided by Canon Law.

The Church does not thereby intend to restrict the scope of mercy. Rather, she makes clear the gravity of the crime committed, the irreparable harm done to the innocent who is put to death, as well as to the parents and the whole of society.

2273 – The inalienable right to life of every innocent human individual is a constitutive element of a civil society and its legislation:

“The inalienable rights of the person must be recognized and respected by civil society and the political authority. These human rights depend neither on single individuals nor on parents; nor do they represent a concession made by society and the state; they belong to human nature and are inherent in the person by virtue of the creative act from which the person took his origin. Among such fundamental rights one should mention in this regard every human being's right to life and physical integrity from the moment of conception until death.”

“The moment a positive law deprives a category of human beings of the protection which civil

legislation ought to accord them, the state is denying the equality of all before the law. When the state does not place its power at the service of the rights of each citizen, and in particular of the more vulnerable, the very foundations of a state based on law are undermined. . . . As a consequence of the respect and protection which must be ensured for the unborn child from the moment of conception, the law must provide appropriate penal sanctions for every deliberate violation of the child's rights."

2274 – Since it must be treated from conception as a person, the embryo must be defended in its integrity, cared for, and healed, as far as possible, like any other human being. Prenatal diagnosis is morally licit, "if it respects the life and integrity of the embryo and the human fetus and is directed toward its safe-guarding or healing as an individual.... It is gravely opposed to the moral law when this is done with the thought of possibly inducing an abortion, depending upon the results: a diagnosis must not be the equivalent of a death sentence."

2275 – "One must hold as licit procedures carried out on the human embryo which respect the life and integrity of the embryo and do not involve disproportionate risks for it, but are directed toward its healing the improvement of its condition of health, or its individual survival."  
"It is immoral to produce human embryos intended for exploitation as disposable biological material."

"Certain attempts to influence chromosomic or genetic inheritance are not therapeutic but are aimed at producing human beings selected according to sex or other predetermined qualities. Such manipulations are contrary to the personal dignity of the human being and his integrity and identity," which are unique and unrepeatable.

In Brief

2318 – "In [God's] hand is the life of every living thing and the breath of all mankind" (Job 12:10).

2319 – Every human life, from the moment of conception until death, is sacred because the human person has been willed for its own sake in the image and likeness of the living and holy God.

2320 – The murder of a human being is gravely contrary to the dignity of the person and the holiness of the Creator.

2322 – From its conception, the child has the right to life. Direct abortion, that is, abortion willed as an end or as a means, is a "criminal" practice (GS 27 § 3), gravely contrary to the moral law. The Church imposes the canonical penalty of excommunication for this crime against human life.

2323 – Because it should be treated as a person from conception, the embryo must be defended in its integrity, cared for, and healed like every other human being.

*Southern Baptist Convention*

WHEREAS, The Southern Baptist Convention, meeting in New Orleans in June 1982, clearly stated its opposition to abortion and called upon Southern Baptists to work for appropriate legislation and/or constitutional amendment; and

WHEREAS, In addition to legislative remedies for this national sin, it is incumbent that we encourage the woman who is considering abortion to think seriously about the grave significance of such action by presenting information to her about the unborn child in her womb, who is a living individual human being, and encourage her to consider alternatives to abortion; and

WHEREAS, Christlike love requires that such alternatives be made available.

Therefore, be it RESOLVED, That the Southern Baptist Convention meeting in Kansas City, Missouri, June 12-14, 1984, encourage all of its institutions, cooperating churches, and members to work diligently to provide counseling, housing, and adoption placement services for unwed mothers with the specific intent of bringing them into a relationship with Jesus Christ and/or a sense of Christian responsibility; and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we deplore the practice of performing abortions, as well as dispensing to minors without parental consent or even notification, contraceptive medications which have potentially dangerous side effects, and deplore also the use of tax funds for such activities; and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we call upon all Southern Baptists to renew their commitment to support and work for legislation and/or constitutional amendment which will prohibit abortion except to save the physical life of the mother; and

Be it further RESOLVED, That we encourage Southern Baptists to inquire whether or not their physicians perform abortions on demand or give referrals for abortions, and that we commend those of the medical profession who abstain from performing abortions or making abortion referrals; and

Be it finally RESOLVED, That we urge our agencies and institutions to provide leadership for our cooperating churches and members, by preparing literature to take a clear and strong stand

against abortion, and to inform and motivate our members to action to eliminate abortion on demand.

## **APPLICATION**

All of our members, employees, and volunteers must affirm and adhere to this Statement of Faith on Abortion to qualify for involvement with the ministry of this church. This is necessary to accomplish our religious mission, goals, and purpose. Behavior or counter-witnessing that does otherwise will impede and burden our integrity and religious mission, inviting scandal on this church.

This church believes that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and should seek redemption through confession, repentance, baptism, and faith in Jesus Christ. Consequently, church members must welcome and treat with respect, compassion, and sensitivity all who have endured the tragedy of abortion but are sincerely and resolutely committed to conform their behavior to this church's Statement of Faith on Abortion.

## **AUTHORITY**

Holy Scripture is the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God, acting as the source of authority over morality, our beliefs, Christian lifestyle, and conduct. Elders are charged with the ministerial responsibility of Biblical interpretation and application as well as determining final matters relating to church policies, Christian practice, faith, divine truth, morality, and theological and doctrinal resolutions.

## **XX. Marriage and Human Sexuality**

We believe that all matters of faith and conduct must be evaluated on the basis of Holy Scripture, which is our infallible guide (2 Timothy 3:16-17). Since the Holy Bible does speak to the nature of human beings and their sexuality it is imperative that we correctly understand and articulate what the Bible teaches on these matters.

We are committed to the home and family as set forth in Holy Scripture. We believe God has ordained and created marriage to exist between one man and one woman, with absolute marital fidelity. The Bible sets forth specific home and family values, which include the distinct roles of

husbands and wives, fathers and mothers, and children. It is our firm conviction that we uphold the dignity of each individual as we embrace the unchanging and longstanding principles of scriptural truth.

## **RELIGIOUS BELIEFS**

Based on Holy Scripture and the constant moral teaching of the Baptist Faith and Message as well as the Southern Baptist Convention ("SBC"), we believe:

### **Marriage**

"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 man and one woman 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 leadership 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 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; I Samuel 1:26-28 Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139: 13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 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 4:9-129:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32:18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12 Romans 1:18-32; I Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; I Timothy 5:8, 14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; I Peter 3:1-7*

### **The SBC Resolution on Biblical Sexuality and Public Policy**

"WHEREAS, From the beginning, the Bible establishes the basis for sexuality by declaring that human beings are created in God's image as "male and female" and that "a man leaves his father and mother and bonds with his wife, and they become one flesh"; and

WHEREAS, Jesus answered questions about marriage by reaffirming this male/female and “one flesh” creation pattern for sexuality; and

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the SBC meeting in Louisville, Kentucky, June 23-24, 2009, reaffirm our historic and consistent support of the biblical definition of marriage as the exclusive union of a man and a woman.”

## **Section 2. Sexual Immorality**

“In the Spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose ...all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography ... Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant for a lifetime ... the channel of expression according to biblical standards.”

*Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16, 43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25 John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; James 1:27; 2:8*

### **The SBC Resolution on Biblical Sexuality**

“WHEREAS, Any sexual behavior outside of this husband/wife marriage relationship is sinful, including premarital sex, adultery, bestiality, and pornography (Hebrews 13:4, Galatians 5:19, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, Leviticus 18:23)

WHEREAS, Homosexual behavior is specifically prohibited and condemned in both the Old and New Testaments (Genesis 19:1-27, Leviticus 18:22, Romans 1:18-25, 1 Corinthians 6:9-11)

RESOLVED, That we encourage all Christians to be “salt and light” on these issues by exemplifying sexual purity in our lifestyle, speaking prophetically to the culture, and acting redemptively towards individuals”

### **Southern Baptist Convention**

“Sexuality – We affirm God’s plan for marriage and sexual intimacy – one man, and one woman, for life. Homosexuality is not a “valid alternative lifestyle.” The Bible condemns it as sin. It is not, however, unforgivable sin. The same redemption available to all sinners is available to homosexuals. They, too, may become new creations in Christ.”

*Leviticus 18:7-23; Leviticus 20:10-21; Deuteronomy 5:18; Matthew 15:19; Matthew 5:27-28  
Matthew 15:19; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-13; 1 Thessalonians 4:3; Hebrews 13:4  
Galatians 5:19; Ephesians 4:17-19; Colossians 3:5*

### **Section 3. Sexual Identity**

“Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God’s creation.”

#### **The SBC Resolution of Transgender Identity**

‘WHEREAS, God’s design as the creation of two distinct and complementary sexes, male and female (Genesis 1:27; Matthew 19:4; Mark 10:6) which designate the fundamental distinction that God has embedded in the very biology of the human race; and

WHEREAS, The separation of one’s gender identity from the physical reality of biological birth sex poses the harmful effect of endangering an understanding of sexuality and parenthood that is fluid; and

RESOLVED, That the messengers to the SBC meeting in Baltimore, Maryland, June 10-11, 2014, affirm God’s good design that gender identity is determined by biological sex and not by one’s self-perception – a perception which is often influenced by fallen human nature in ways contrary to God’s design (Ephesians 4:17-18); and be it further

RESOLVED, That we oppose efforts to alter one’s bodily identity (e.g., cross-sex hormone therapy, gender reassignment surgery) to refashion it to conform with one’s perceived gender identity”

*Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:5-9; Romans 1:26-27; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11  
Ephesians 5:25-27; Revelations 19:7-9; Revelations 21:2*

### **Section 4. Sexual Redemption**

First Rock Fellowship believes that all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and should seek redemption through confession, repentance, baptism, and faith in Jesus Christ.

Consequently, First Rock Fellowship members must welcome and treat with respect, compassion and sensitivity all who experience same-sex attractions or confess sexually immoral acts but are committed to resisting sexual temptations, refraining from sexual immorality, and conforming their behavior to First Rock Fellowship’s Statement of Faith.

*Matthew 11:28-30; Romans 3:23; Ephesians 2:1-10; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Hebrews 2:17-18  
Hebrews 4:14-16*

## **Section 5. Celibacy**

First Rock Fellowship believes that Holy Scripture grants two life-enhancing options for human sexual behavior: (1) the conjugal “one flesh” marital union of one man and one woman, and (2) celibacy. Either is a gift from God, given as He wills for His glory and the good of those who receive and rejoice in His gift to them. Celibacy and faithful singleness is to be celebrated and affirmed within First Rock Fellowship.

*Genesis 1:27-28; 2:18, 21-24; Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:5-8; Hebrews 13:4;  
1 Corinthians 7:1-8; Matthew 19:12; 1 Corinthians 12:12-13; Romans 12:10  
1 Timothy 5:1-2*

## **APPLICATION**

All of our members, employees, and volunteers must affirm and adhere to this Doctrinal and Religious Absolute statement on marriage and human sexuality to qualify for involvement with the ministry. This is necessary to accomplish our religious mission, goals and purpose. Behavior or counter-witnessing that does otherwise will impede and burden our integrity and religious mission. We believe that God’s grace can wipe the slate of guilt and sin, though the consequences are still incurred.

## **AUTHORITY**

The Bible is the inspired and infallible Word of God, acting as the source of authority over morality, our beliefs, Christian lifestyle and conduct. The Pastor and Elders are charged with the ministerial responsibility of Biblical interpretation and promulgating religious policy. The Pastor and Elders will determine life application as well as final matters relating to church theology, philosophy, Christian practice, faith, divine truth, morality and theological and doctrinal resolutions.