



SOLI DEO GLORIA
CHRISTIAN CHURCH

Church Manual

and

Philosophy of Ministry

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Preface

This manual of the Soli Deo Gloria Christian Church is a comprehensive discussion of this church's mission, vision, central beliefs, and practices. In brief, this manual is a snapshot of her culture. It not only contains rules and regulations for the members or attendees. This document records what this church celebrates, what she lives for, what she stands for and why, as one component of the universal body of Christ.

To cite an example, the portion discussing the history of this church is no mere narrative of events. It is a synthesized discourse on that one event that defined our church history—the schism which birthed this church.

Thus, the possession and study of this material is definitely not limited to the members and attendees of the Soli Deo Gloria Christian Church. Any believer in Christ, or any other person interested in the Christian life itself for that matter, may find in these pages, gems in the comprehensive exposition of the central tenets of the Christian faith. Indeed, several of the sections of this manual also serve to define what sets our church apart from other Bible-believing churches in the non-essentials of the faith. Anyone can refer to this manual to review the arguments that support our stand on such gray and debatable matters amongst Christian circles.

This church manual is the product of countless hours of work of the Board of Elders. They were led to several good materials—very biblical in their approach to ministry, some of which were adopted to fit into the context of the uniqueness of Soli Deo Gloria Christian Church. With wisdom and the guidance of the Holy Spirit, we really did not have to re-invent the wheel. Hence, we acknowledge the contributions of the many wise church leaders of the other CCM churches.

Ultimately, this is no work of man but a work possible only by the strength, wisdom, and guidance provided by our Almighty God. These pages have only but one end for its reader: that he or she may glorify God, and enjoy Him forever.

Soli Deo gloria!

Chapter 1: That We May Not Forget

A. The Beginnings of a Flame

The Soli Deo Gloria Christian Church (SDGCC) was registered with the Securities and Exchange Commission last July 24, 1996. However, our church existed even before the SEC registration. From 1989 till May of 1996, SDGCC was called Bread of Life

Davao, formerly connected to the Protestant charismatic denomination Bread of Life Christian Ministries.

In December 20, 1995, the senior pastor of Bread of Life Central Church in Quezon City, at the time, preached a controversial message regarding a new approach to church ministry which he initially called the *New Paradigm*. This produced no small stir among those who first heard him introduce this novel approach. In spite of the negative reactions and criticisms from well-meaning ministers of BOL, he resolutely held on to his position and even aggressively promoted it to others. This inevitably led to the separation from BOL in 1996 of eight of the 12 members of National Ministerial Board, 16 established churches, and an estimated 37 outreaches. Pastor Jurem Ramos resigned as member of the Ministerial Board and as pastor of Bread of Life Davao in May 19, 1996. About ten days later, the former BOL Davao, led by eighteen of its leaders, separated from the BOL denomination.

B. Preparing for the Gathering Storm

In August of 1996, the pastors who left BOL formed the *Communion of Christian Ministries* (CCM). It was to be a non-denomination association of independent and autonomous churches dedicated to upholding the truth of Scripture in life and ministry and supporting its members by guarding and strengthening each other's walk with God in the spirit of love and unity. This alignment resulted in a severe reaction from BOL. In a letter written in February of 1997 by the Board members of CCM to the churches under their care, we get a glimpse of the trouble that the CCM churches had to undergo in its early existence. The letter, which was entitled "Preparing for the Gathering Storm," was a call to the CCM churches to "contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3), but it was a call that involved much pain and controversy as its opening paragraphs show:

We are saddened to inform you that in recent months CCM has been the subject of unfair accusations by those who disagree with our position, particularly the leadership of the church from which we came. These individuals have accused us (a) of stealing their churches, (b) of stealing church assets, (c) of rebellion against their authority, (d) of selfish ambition and (e) of proselyting their members. We have thoroughly investigated these claims, and even assessed our hearts and have found these charges to be distorted, inaccurate and untrue. We have even examined the Scriptures and have found their positions against us unbiblical. We are appalled at these accusations because there was no attempt at all to clarify them with us, nor consider our past relationship with them, nor even accord us the benefit of the doubt.

They have even implied that we are enemies of God and destroyers of the Body of Christ. They have impugned our character, questioned our integrity and maligned our good name and the churches we represent.

.....

For the most part we have kept silent even though attack after attack has been leveled against us. But these recent developments are indications of the seriousness of their opposition to the stand we have taken. We feel strongly that the vehemence

of their opposition has a greater impact on gospel work than most people realize. We are now sounding the alarm that the tide of modernism, pragmatism and user-friendly methodologies, is threatening to sweep away the foundations of God's church in this country. We take a stand against a watered-down message, focusing largely on values. We also do not agree to adjusting the message of the cross to remove its offence in order to elicit a favorable response to our message and our identity as Christians. We stand on the same ground as C. H. Spurgeon, A. W. Tozer, Francis Schaeffer, D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones and more recently, John MacArthur who have been warning the church of this ever-present danger.

Thus, anyone could get a glimpse of the persecution of these new churches (including SDGCC), as well as the nature of the controversy. But what exactly led to us to this troublesome point in our church's history?

In December of 1995, the leader of the Bread of Life Central Church in Quezon City introduced a teaching and approach in ministry he originally called the "New Paradigm." This was a turning point in the history of the BOL denomination. 1995 was the time when it began to drift from its orthodox beginnings.

Sadly, what happened to BOL fulfilled the woeful prediction that the late Dr. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote of:

All institutions tend to produce their opposite. ... There is this testimony from history to the terrible danger of institutions which start on the right lines and excellently, gradually changing, almost imperceptibly, into something which is almost the exact opposite (*Knowing the Times*, p. 281).

[There] is the danger of assuming that because a church, or an institution, or a movement, was once right, it will continue to be right. The same body, the same institution, the same cause, the same movement with the same organization, can move from its position and end up being almost the exact opposite of what it was at the beginning (p. 284).

This so called "New Paradigm" was an unbiblical pragmatic approach in ministry. John MacArthur, in his book *Ashamed of the Gospel*, explains pragmatism in this way:

Pragmatism is the notion that meaning or worth is determined by practical consequences. It is the belief that usefulness is the standard of what is good. To a pragmatist, if a technique or course of action has the desired effect, it is good. If it doesn't seem to work, it must be wrong.

There's nothing wrong with common sense that involves a measure of legitimate pragmatism. But when pragmatism is used to make judgment about right and wrong, or when it becomes a guiding philosophy of life, theology, and ministry, inevitably it clashes with Scripture. Spiritual and biblical truth is not determined by testing what "works" and what doesn't. We know from Scripture, for example, that the gospel often does not produce a positive response (1Co 1:22, 23; 2:14). On the other hand, satanic lies and deception can be quite effective (Mt 24:23, 24; 2Co 4:3, 4).

Based on this pragmatic point of view, the biblical methods of doing church ministry should be discarded and replaced with more effective approaches. Here's how MacArthur describes this approach:

Plainly declaring the truth of God's Word is regarded as unsophisticated, offensive, and utterly ineffective. Preaching the Word and boldly confronting sin are seen as archaic, ineffectual means of winning the world. We are now told we can get better results by first amusing people or giving them success tips in business, thus wooing them into the fold. Once they feel comfortable, they'll be ready to receive biblical truth in small, diluted doses... The whole point is to make the church a place where non-Christians can enjoy themselves. The strategy is to tantalize non-Christians rather than confront their unbelief.

For an approach to ministry that discourages public prayer and the use of the name of Jesus both inside and outside the church, treats evangelism merely as an attempt to help people become better, and incorporates many other compromises, the New Paradigm fits the aforementioned description of pragmatism.

It sought the approval of man, instead of God, and exchanged the Gospel message for business stratagems. It betrayed a lack of trust in the Holy Spirit's ability to use the gospel to transform people. It denied the Bible's teaching regarding man's total depravity and God's sovereignty in man's salvation. It was yet another form of a false gospel and the kind that brings many to damnation.

Because of this radical departure from biblical ministry, Pastor Jurem and the members of the former Bread of Life Davao separated from the BOL denomination, a course of action which was in no way impulsively taken. Other ministers then of BOL, who are now members of CCM, exerted every effort to convince the elders of BOL and its leader of the error they have fallen into and to help them return to Biblical ministry but to no avail.

One of the elders of the Bread of Life Central Church in Quezon City came to Davao City to explain and clarify what BOL leaders thought to be some misunderstanding on the part of the leaders of the Davao church. However, their explanations only served to confirm how unbiblical the so-called "New Paradigm" approach was.

Thus warned the leaders of CCM:

We must discern that there is a subtle but dangerous and deluding spirit that is making inroads in the church of Jesus Christ to lead her away from the *ancient paths* (Jer 6:16). And we fear that we may be entering into the same dire circumstances that Amos prophesied for Israel: "*Behold, days are coming,*" declares the Lord God, "*when I am sending famine on the land, not a famine for bread or a thirst for water, but rather for hearing the words of the Lord. And people will stagger from sea to sea, and from the north even to the east; they will go to and fro to seek the word of the Lord but they will not find it.*" (Amos 8:11, 12)

C. That We May Not Forget

The Soli Deo Gloria Christian Church was born out of a schism that could be compared to the separation of a minority of Christians from the Roman Catholic Church during the wave of the Reformation movement in the 16th century. Led by figures such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, John Knox, and Ulrich Zwingli, among others, the Protestants, as they were soon named, sought to reform the body of Christ and cleanse it from the prevalence of false doctrine, much of it being used for the benefit of the clergy and the Roman Catholic hierarchy.

Likewise, the real reason for the separation from Bread of Life Ministries was primarily doctrinal in nature. The motive in separating is well represented by Dr. Lloyd-Jones when he said, "We are contending for a matter which is absolutely essential for the preservation of the gospel."

Having carefully listened to recorded teachings of BOL's senior figure on the New Paradigm, studied the transcript of his controversial message in 1995, heard him preach on that subject personally, discussed with him this issue, and observed the effect of this teaching on others, Pastor Jurem came to the conclusion that what he taught was an approach to ministry which was detrimental to the gospel. In the 16th century, the sale of indulgences, as an easy way to heaven not just for the living but for the dead in purgatory, and the clerical offices of the Roman Church becoming seats of power that could be sold and bought were two grave issues that led many to question the faithfulness of the Roman Catholic Church to God's Word. In 1995, it was the New Paradigm that led Pastor Jurem and other ministers of the Word to leave the Bread of Life Ministries, a step of faith in the midst of persecution and the unknown.

A Critique of the New Paradigm

Before the statement released by the CCM in 1997, it was earlier, in 1996, when Pastor Jurem composed a lengthier and more comprehensive statement on the New Paradigm that defended the movement to leave the BOL mother church from unfair accusations that the separation was "because of relational issues." He showed the grave error that the senior leader of BOL and the proponent of the New Paradigm had sadly fell into, thus putting thousands of souls in danger. In this statement, he exposes the claims and strategies of the New Paradigm that supposedly fulfills the need of the church to "change the way it sees the world and . . . employ new approaches in ministry that this world can accept, . . . a world that abhors Christianity and is allergic to Christians."

First, exert all effort to conceal your Christian identity. Don't do or say anything conspicuous that will betray the fact that you are a disciple of Christ. For example, when in public, don't pray, don't play Christian music, and never, never say, "Thank you Lord, Praise You, and the like. If you are a pastor, keep those rules more strictly. Tell your members never to address you "Pastor" in public. Even in Sunday worship gatherings don't talk about Christ and His gospel. There are unbelievers present and you would not want to offend them. Talk about Christ and discipleship only when the gatherings are strictly for believers.

Second, as you live or work in the secular field, impress your unbelieving loved ones, neighbors or officemates with your wealth, your knowledge of business and current affairs, your high tech gadgets, your worldly suave. Make them envious of your success. Make them feel discontented and want to have what you have.

Third, don't fail to emphasize that the secret for your success is because you are disciplined, dedicated to your work, diligent, excellent, moral, and a man of integrity. Don't tell them yet that it is Christ who does all those things in you because of His grace (unmerited favor). Don't do that at this early stage lest they might suspect that your real intention is to proselyte them to your church. Tell them only about the values that lie under all of your success.

Fourth, show them how those values have worked in the lives of celebrities and other successful people they can identify with. Don't be afraid to share with them the non-Christian philosophies that these people openly admit to have given them success as long as they are morally upright principles and have some semblance to Christianity. Once in a while couch your terms with Biblical terminology so that they will see that those practices are Christian too. But use that approach sparingly and expeditiously.

Fifth, as they learn and apply these values, expect their lives and their relationship with others to improve. They too will become successful just like you. There is no need for the Holy Spirit and regeneration. If those principles worked for those celebrities, they will work for them. Success will whet their appetite for more and they will want to be in your company always since you have gained their trust. Eventually this relationship will soften their hearts and make them open to the gospel.

Finally, hope and pray that at some point, before problems and setbacks arise, or before they die, they will ask about the gospel and that's the time to share it with them. It won't be long and you'll find them saved and attending your church.

It is obvious that the New Paradigm distorts the gospel. It is one of the departures Paul talks about in 2 Timothy 4:3-4 (ESV): *"For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths."*

In its early stages, the New Paradigm sought to counter problems that pertain to Christianity in the Filipino context at the time. The Philippines was lagging behind the rest of Asia in terms of its economy because of rampant immorality, materialism, and corruption. In the Christian community, ministers of the Gospel have been falling into disrepute and integrity crises, and revivals were being regarded as a thing of the past and dead especially in our country. In contrast, businessmen, with their ethical standards producing good work and good pay, have become the new preachers luring both Christians and unbelievers alike into following them and their message.

In his critique, Pastor Jurem gleaned three main motives of the New Paradigm: to lift the economy of the Philippines, to moralize the people, and to make Christianity more acceptable. And for these goals to be met, a drastic change in the approach to

ministry was required of pastors and their churches. A few of these are indicated in the following, as the pastor paraphrased:

³⁵₁₇ If pastors are to catch the fish, then they will have to know something about business, or better, to be involved in business to identify with their target group.

³⁵₁₇ They should not look like the traditional ministers of the gospel; they should look more like businessmen and introduce themselves as Human Resource Consultants (HRC).

³⁵₁₇ They should not introduce religion or bring their Bibles and pray in public. They should only teach values to help their listeners become better workers in the office. In case they quote from the Bible, they should avoid coming across as doing a "Bible study."

³⁵₁₇ They should also be careful not to make the Bible sound superior to other religious literature lest offend those who are of other religions.

These strategies would then produce results like:

³⁵₁₇ More likely doors will continue to be open until their listeners become interested in true Christianity. Hopefully, they will begin to ask about salvation or visit the church and meet members there who practice the values that the pastor has been talking about.

³⁵₁₇ In case the above process of entering the "net" fails, at least they will know about the ethical principles which, if they follow will surely lead to God blessing them even if they are not Christians. Presumptuously it is claimed that God will still bless them because there is an inviolable law that says, "Whatever a man sows, he will also reap."

Every aspect of the New Paradigm was unbiblical—its *diagnosis* of the problem (a failing economy instead of man's separation from God through sin and his sure damnation in hell apart from Christ), its *motives* (producing morally upright and thus prosperous Filipinos instead of Filipinos reconciled to God through Christ), and its *strategies* (the use of the Bible as merely a source of illustrations, the absence of the Gospel, and the concealment of the pastors of their identity as ministers of the gospel).

Moreover, it employed approaches that were far removed from the Bible. It betrayed a lack of trust in the Holy Spirit's ability to use the Gospel and His word to transform people. It is Pelagianism to think that befriending an unbeliever and impressing him with our wealth and good values will make him ready to respond to the gospel in order to become a new creature. Pelagianism is the belief that the will of man is so free that he can turn and become a new creature at any time. The Bible teaches that God must take action first, opening a person's heart in order for the sinner to respond to the gospel (Act 16:14). And so, in effect, the New Paradigm denied God's sovereignty in man's salvation (Jn 6:44) and rejected the Biblical teaching of man's total depravity (1Co 2:14; Eph 2:1-3).

In the early years of its introduction, many have commented that the New Paradigm was only an approach and that it was one of the many ways to minister to

unbelievers. It was also regarded as the most effective approach in doing ministry in Asia in the so-called Pacific century. Contrary to that opinion, biblical principles and church history prove that new approaches similar to the New Paradigm are detrimental to the believers and to the people they intend to minister to.

Unbelievers exposed to the New Paradigm will get the impression that the Bible is only one of the sources of ethical principles equivalent to, say, the teachings of Confucius. Listeners of the pragmatic message will not think that the Bible is not God's special revelation to mankind teaching the only means to be salvation. They will get the idea that all religions lead to one God. What is most tragic is that because of the New Paradigm, sinners will never come to the point where they realize they are exposed to God's wrath and thus need Jesus Christ in order to be saved.

As for the Christians in the church, exposure to the New Paradigm would cause them to be deceived, thinking that they are doing great service for the propagation of the gospel. They will have an excuse for being ashamed of the gospel and of Jesus Christ Himself. As a result, they will bring great dishonor to Christ's glorious name and cause.

The Schism

Having seen the pitfalls and dangers of this false doctrine, Pastor Jurem and the other leaders of BOL who later formed CCM had to take the painful step of severing ties with BOL in order to protect the flock and the next generation from the tragic consequences.

D. Soli Deo Gloria

"Soli Deo Gloria!" was one of the five Latin battle cries of the Protestants during the 16th century Reformation: *Sola Scriptura, sola fide, sola gratia, solus Christus, and soli Deo gloria.*

After the separation from BOL, Pastor Jurem felt that the Lord wanted a church name that would always remind us of our struggle against false teaching and practice reminiscent of the Protestant struggle. Thus he was led to the "mottos" of the Protestant believers who stood firm against the whole system of the Church of Rome.

The name Soli Deo Gloria also reminds us that the reason why we came to know these things and had the boldness to stand for the truth was because of God. All good things that we ever receive and experience in our Christian life comes from God and so all glory must be returned to Him alone.

It could be said that the SDGCC is a separatist church; its withdrawal was a deliberate act. Former BOL members set themselves apart and they established new churches and a new organization. What we celebrate to this day is the remarkable blessing of God upon that decision and that action. If we are to show our gratitude to

God for what has happened and what has been done, we are to do so by making certain that we know of what God did, starting in that year of 1996.

E. Conclusion: How Do We Keep From the Errors of the Past

In Spurgeon's address to the Pastor's College Evangelical Association, 17 April 1988, he called the preachers to the following (*R.J. Sheehan, C. H. Spurgeon and the Modern Church, p. 70*). For him, this was the way we can curb the downgrade that was happening within the churches. This is also what we need to do today to protect ourselves from the dangerous effects of the New Paradigm and other "modern" approaches that corrupt God's ministry and the gospel.

1. Have as their chief end the glorifying of God.
2. Have an intense desire to build up the church.
3. Be better men.
4. Get clearer views of what we believe.
5. Have more faith.
6. Have more love for souls.
7. Have a more thorough spirit of self- sacrifice.
8. Go over the fundamental truths with their hearers more carefully.
9. Labor distinctly for the immediate salvation of their hearers.
10. Inculcate with all their might the practice of holiness.
11. Be careful about the admission of members into the church.
12. Separate entirely from those likely to cause spiritual injury.
13. Bind themselves together more closely.
14. Remember that past bad times have been followed by good times.
15. Make the most of prayer.

However, one of the best and most crucial ways to guard ourselves from falling into such pit of danger is really to remember our history, to remember the events around which this church was born. May those who were with this church during the turbulent months of the first half of year 1996 not forget how God delivered us from a danger that could have led to a massive spiritual downfall. Nor may we forget how God has sustained and blessed this church, the Soli Deo Gloria Christian Church, along with the churches of the Communion of Christian Ministries, throughout the years. And along with those who may not have been there, with every new generation of members who step into the doors of this church, year after year, may always take heed of our church's past that we may be steadfast in our present faith. For the New Paradigm is but one form of a false doctrine that may resurrect any time and threaten our faithfulness to the Word of God.

Chapter 2: Definition and Purpose of this Manual

This written document is a declaration of our beliefs and understanding of the Holy Scriptures as to our doctrinal beliefs, form of church government, organizational structure, and purposes as a body. It is vitally important for a church, if it is to glorify God and accomplish His purposes,

that its people be in agreement with regard to doctrine, organizational structure and goals (1Co 1:10; Eph 4:3, 13).

This is thus designed to be a statement of these things that it might promote oneness of mind within our own ranks, and that those interested in becoming a part of this ministry might have a clear concept of our beliefs and objectives.

This document is not a higher authority than the Word of God. Neither is it a higher authority than the authority that God Himself has invested in those believers He has appointed to lead in this local church (Heb 13:17). It must be remembered that the local church itself is a living, growing, and flexible body subject ultimately to the authority of Jesus Christ alone as it is declared in the Word of God (Eph 1:22; 4:12-16). As we grow in the Word, this document is therefore subject to amendment according to the provisions of Chapter 23. This document is, however, to be followed in all its parts as a protection for all until necessary amendments arise in accordance to its provisions.

Chapter 3: Name

The name of this religious corporation is Soli Deo Gloria Christian Ministries, Inc. or may also be referred to as Soli Deo Gloria Christian Church (hereinafter referred to as SDGCC). It is a non-stock, non-profit religious corporation formed in accordance with Sec. 116 of the Corporation Code of the Philippines and located in 800 Loreto Street, Juna Subdivision, Matina, 8021 Davao City.

Chapter 4: Purpose

The incorporation of SDGCC is for the administration of its affairs, properties and temporalities in pursuit of the following objectives:

- A. To exalt God by promoting His worship and doing His ministry according to His Word, relying on His Spirit, and for His glory.
- B. To propagate among all peoples, whether Christians or non-Christians, the Gospel of Jesus Christ.
- C. To preserve and defend the faith that God has entrusted once for all time to His holy people.
- D. To win unbelievers of every tongue, tribe, and culture to Jesus Christ.
- E. To assimilate believers into the local church.
- F. To deepen God's people in the knowledge of, devotion and submission to Christ through teaching of the Word, prayer, pastoral care, administration of the ordinances, ministry opportunities, and corrective discipline when necessary.
- G. To equip all members to do the work of the ministry in all its aspects.
- H. To multiply churches that will fulfill the previous statements.

Chapter 5: Explanation of Our Logo

Our logo captures our desire to glorify God through lives rooted in Christ and His Word.

The **five golden rays** in the background represent the five solas of the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century: Scripture alone, Christ alone, faith alone, grace alone, God's glory alone. These terse slogans help illuminate what it means to be a Biblical Christian and remind us of our call to restore the gospel and the church to their biblical and apostolic integrity.

The images of the **Bible** and the **Cross** further remind us of two vital truths that the Reformers focused on to purge the Church of its corruptions and reform it according to God's Word. The *Bible* represents *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture only), which is the *formal principle* of the Reformation. This principle is "formal" in the sense that it forms, shapes and determines what we believe as Christians. *Sola Scriptura* meant that the written Scriptures are to be our guide for message and method, and the final authority in all matters pertaining to faith and conduct. Practically speaking this principle means that the church could not preach, teach, command or practice anything contrary to Scriptures.

The *Cross* represents the gospel which was embodied in the Latin phrase "sola fide" (faith alone). This was the *material principle* of the Reformation. The Reformers insisted only on what Scriptures taught—to be justified or to be made right with God, a sinner must trust Christ alone, through grace alone. Christ's doing and dying are alone the basis of a sinner's acceptance with God. This was the "material" issue, the core theological "matter" over which theologians of the 16th century disagreed. This was what Luther described as "the article by which the church stands or falls." It was his conviction that, "This article is the head and cornerstone of the Church, which alone begets, nourishes, builds, preserves and protects the Church; without it the Church of God cannot subsist one hour."

In summary, our logo reflects the church's calling "to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3). May we and those who follow after us remain faithful to the conviction that the Bible is final authority and the gospel is central in all aspects of our lives, and may we continue to glorify God in the midst of a culture that is steeply antiGod, antiChrist, and antiBible, until Christ returns!

Chapter 6: Doctrinal Statement

Part 1: The Holy Scripture

We believe in the verbal, plenary, infallible, inerrant, unlimited inspiration of Scripture in the original autographs (2Ti 3:16,17).

We believe Scripture (composed of all 66 books in the Old and New Testaments) to be entirely unique and distinct from all other religious writings and the only book that truly deserves to be called God's written word (2Pe 1:20,21; 1Th 2:13).

We distinguish between these holy books and the apocryphal ones, which are called Deuterocanonical books by the Roman Catholics. The Church may certainly read these books and learn from them as far as they agree with the canonical books. However, they do not have such power and virtue that one could confirm from their testimony any point of faith or practice of the Christian religion (Rev 22:18,19).

Similarly, we do not consider human writings—no matter how holy their authors may have been—equal to the divine writings; nor do we put custom, nor the majority, nor the passage of time, nor persons, nor councils, decrees or official decisions, nor subjective impressions, dreams, visions or prophecies, above the truth of God, for truth is above everything else (Ps 119:97-104; Isa 8:20).

Being wholly and verbally God-given, we believe Scripture to be supreme and sole authority in all matters of faith and conduct; that it contains the will of God and that everything one must believe to be saved and to live a life pleasing to God is sufficiently taught in them (2Ti 3:14-17).

We also believe that Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching whether that teaching has to do with doctrine, history, future events, science, geology, geography or other disciplines of knowledge (Ps 19:7-11).

Part 2: The Trinity

1. God Is One

(Adapted from *The Genevan Confession* [1536]). We believe that there is only one God, Whom we are both to worship and serve, and in Whom we are to put all our confidence and hope: having this assurance that in Him alone is contained all wisdom, power, justice, goodness and mercy. And since He is invisible, incorporeal, immense, eternal and Creator of all things both visible and invisible, He is to be served in spirit and in truth.

Therefore we think it an abomination to put our confidence and hope in any created thing to worship anything else than Him, whether angels or any other creatures, and to recognise any other Savior of our souls than Him alone, whether saints or men living upon earth. Likewise, we think it an abomination to offer the service, which ought to be rendered to Him, in mere external ceremonies or empty religious observance, as if He took pleasure in such things (Heb 11:6); or to make an image to represent His divinity or any other image for adoration (Ex 20:1-6; Isa 43:11; 44:6-8; 45:5, 18,21; 46:9; Zec 14:9; Mal 2: 10; Mt

23:9; Mk 12:32; Jn 4:24; Ro 1:18-23; 1Co 8:4-6; Eph 4:5-6; 1Ti 2:5; Jas 2:19; Rev 22:8,9).

2. ***God Is Three***

Nevertheless, we believe that this one and indivisible God eternally and necessarily exists as three persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and each person is fully God. There are three distinct persons in the Trinity, and the being of each person is equal to the whole being of God (Jn 1:1-2; 14:26).

There are no differences in deity, attributes, or essential nature between Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. The only distinctions between the members of the Trinity are in the ways they have and will always relate to each other and in the ways they relate to creation. Eternal quality in being but subordination in role has been essential to the church's understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity.

In John 14:28, Jesus says that His Father is "greater" than He is. This means that the Father is greater in authority or leadership than the Son. However, this does not mean that Jesus is inferior in His being and essence to the Father, as John 1:1, 18; 10:30; 20:28; Philippians 2:6; Colossians 1:15,19; 2:9; and Hebrews 1:3 clearly show. (This explanation applies also to 1 Corinthians 15:28).

In short, we receive the Apostles, the Nicene, and the Athanasian Creeds because they deliver to us the true faith. We also reject denials of the doctrine of the Trinity such as Monotheism (as understood in Judaism and Islam), Tritheism (belief in Three Gods), Modalism (the belief that "Father," "Son," and "Spirit" refer only to three offices, roles, or relationships to humanity played by one person), Arianism (the belief that the Son of God did not always exist, but was created by God the Father), and Subordinationism (the belief that the Son and the Holy Spirit are subordinate to God the Father in nature and in being).

Note: Though the term "Trinity" is not found in the Bible, the concept is partially revealed in the OT (e.g., Ps 45:6-7; 110:1), and more completely revealed in the NT (Mt 3:16-17; 28:19; Jn 5:31,36,37; 8:13-18; 10:30; 15:26; 1Co 12:4-6; 2Co 13:14; Heb 1:1-3).

a. *God the Father*

We believe that God the Father, the first person of the Trinity, orders and disposes all things to His own purpose and grace (Ps 145:8-9; 1Co 8:6). He is the creator of all things (Ge 1:1-31; Eph 3:9). As the only absolute and omnipotent ruler in the universe, He is sovereign in creation, providence, and redemption (Ps 103:19; Ro 11:36). As Creator He is Father to all men (Eph 4:6), but He is Spiritual Father only to believers (Ro 8:14, 2Co 6:18). He has decreed for His own glory all things that come to pass (Eph 1:11). He continually upholds, directs, and governs all creatures and events (1Ch 29:11). In His sovereignty He is neither author nor approver of sin (Hab 1:13; Jn 8:38-47), nor does He bypass the

accountability of moral, intelligent creatures (1Pe 1:17). He has graciously chosen from eternity past those whom He would have as His own (Eph 1:4-6); He saves from sin all those who would come to Him; and He becomes, upon adoption, Father to His own (Jn 1:12; Ro 8:15; Gal 4:5; Heb 12:5-9).

b. *God the Son*

We believe that Jesus Christ, the second person of the Trinity, is God's Son, who fully possesses all the divine excellencies, and in these He is co-equal, consubstantial, and coeternal with the Father (Jn 1:1-3, 14, 18; 10:30; 14:9; Col 1:15-17,19; 2:9). We believe that when He became man, He surrendered only the prerogatives of deity but nothing of the divine essence, either in degree or kind. When the eternal Son became flesh, He took on all the essential characteristics of humanity so became the God-man having two whole, perfect, and distinct natures, inseparably joined together in one Person, without confusion or mixture (Phil 2:5-8; Col 2:9; Heb 1:3). Thus the Person, Jesus Christ, was and is truly God and truly man, yet one Christ and the only Mediator between God and man.

We believe that He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and was born of a virgin (Isa 7:14; Mt 1:23,25; Lk 1:26-35), lived without sin, preached and taught with absolute truth and authority, and worked miracles, demonstrating His divine right and power over all creation.

We believe that He accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross and that His death was voluntary, vicarious, substitutionary, propitiatory, and redemptive (Jn 10:15; Ro 3:24-25; 5:8; 1Pe 2:24). We believe that after His death, He was buried, and on the third day literally rose again, showing God's acceptance of His sacrifice for sinners and making our justification sure.

We believe that He ascended to heaven, and is now exalted at the right hand of God as King and High Priest—as King to reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet (1Co 15:24-28), and as High Priest fulfilling the ministry of Representative, Intercessor, and Advocate for the believers (Ac 1:9-11; 2:33; Heb 1:3; 7:25; 9:24; Ro 8:34; 1Jn 2:1,2).

We believe in the personal and physical return of the Lord Jesus Christ in glory and power, and that He will return to receive the church to Himself and that one day, God will judge mankind through Him (Ac 1:9-11; 17:31; 1Th 4:13-18; Rev 20). He will set up an earthly kingdom, followed by an eternal kingdom where He will rule and reign forever (2Pe 1:10-11; Rev 21-22).

c. *God the Holy Spirit*

We believe that the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity, possesses

all the attributes of personality and deity, and is co-equal and co-existent with the Father and the Son (Mt 28:19; Ac 5:3-4; 1Co 12:11,18; 2Co 3:18). The Holy Spirit assisted in creation (Ge 1:2), was the agent of the virgin birth (Lk 1:35), and is the divine agent of the inspired revelation of God (Zec 7:12; 2Pe 1:20-21). The Holy Spirit is active in convicting the world of sin and judgment (Jn 16:8), and regenerating and empowering those who are saved (Eze 36:27; Jn 3:5-8; 2Co 12:1-7; Gal 5:16; Tit 3:5). The Holy Spirit enables men, through His illuminating work, to understand the written revelation of God (1Co 2:10-16; 1Jn 2:20; 27). By His baptism which occurs at conversion, He unites all believers to Christ in one body. He permanently indwells, and enables believers in the process of sanctification (1Co 12:13; Ro 8:13-14; Eph 1:15-18; 3:14-21; 2Th 2:13). He bestows on them spiritual gifts and conforms them to the image of Christ in body and spirit. He is the source of all power and all acceptable worship and service. He is the pledge and guarantee of the believers' future inheritance (2Co 1:22; Eph 1:13; 4:30).

Part 3: The Miraculous and the Supernatural

We believe in the literal truth and historicity of miracles and the extraordinary manifestations of the supernatural in the Old and New Testaments (e.g. the creation, the fall of man, the flood, the dispersion of nations, the miracles wrought by the prophets, by Jesus and the apostles, the existence of the Devil, demons, and angels, the spiritual conflict in the supernatural realm, the gifts and wonderful works of the Holy Spirit).

We believe that angels are a higher order of creation than man but not to be worshiped for they too are created to serve and worship God (Lk 2:9-14; Heb 1:6,7,14; 2:6,7; Rev 5:11-14) and to minister to believers (Rev 7:11-12). We believe also that Satan is a created angel and the author of sin. He incurred the judgment of God when he rebelled against Him (Isa 14:12-17) and took numerous angels with him in his fall (Lk 10:18; Mt 25:41; Rev 12:1-4) and by introducing sin into the human race (Ge 3:1-15; Jn 8:44). We believe that he is the open and declared enemy of God and man (Mt 4:1-11; Rev 12:9-10) and he shall be eternally punished in the lake of fire together with the fallen angels (Eze 28:11-19; Rev 20:10).

We believe in God-sent revivals where the Holy Spirit miraculously and sovereignly kindles the interest, quickens the conscience or generates intense spiritual hunger and fervor of His people (2Ch 7:14).

Part 4: Mankind

We believe that mankind was created by God directly and immediately and was not in any sense the product of evolution. Mankind was created perfect and without sin on the sixth day of creation. Adam was created first from the dust of the ground and Eve from his side. We believe that Adam and Eve were the historical parents of the entire human race, that they were created male and female equally in the image of God to

rule over the earth and all living creatures (Ge 1:24-31; Ecc 7:29; 1Co 15:39), and were appointed complementary roles in marriage. They were created to glorify and enjoy God (Isa 43:7; Col 1:16-18). Shortly after man was created Eve was deceived by Satan into eating the forbidden fruit (2Co 11:3; 1Ti 2:14) and Adam ate the forbidden fruit willingly (Ge 3:17; Hos 6:7). As a result of their sin both died spiritually (Eph 2:1-2; Col 2:13) and later physically because the wages of sin is death (Ge 5:5; Ro 6:23; Heb 9:27).

Adam was the representative head of the human race and when he sinned the entire human race fell in him. Adam's sin is imputed to all of his descendants (Ro 5:12-14; 1Co 15:22), hence all men are totally corrupt being conceived in sin (Ps 51:5), born sinners (Ge 8:21; Ps 58:3), and sin because they are sinners (Jer 17:9; Mk 7:21-23; Ro 3:10-18, 23; Eph 2:1-3). All men suppress the truth in unrighteousness and are sinners by nature and choice (Ge 6:5; Ro 1:18-25; Tit 1:15). The consequences of sin have made man unable to understand the things of God (1Co 2:14), unable to please God (Ro 8:5-8), and unwilling to seek Him (Jn 3:19-21; 2Th 2:10-12). All persons are thus exposed to God's condemnation, and, of themselves, unable to remedy their lost condition except by the saving work of God (Eph 1:4-7; 2:1-5).

Part 5: Salvation

1. *The Need of Salvation*

We believe that unrepentant sinners have God's wrath abiding on them and hence all men are in need of salvation from sin and its consequences (Jn 3:36; Ro 3:23-24; 6:23; Eph 2:3). The ultimate consequence of sin is to suffer the holy wrath of God's justice for eternity in the lake of fire (Na 1:3; Rev 20:14-15).

2. *Provision of Salvation*

We believe that God's only provision for salvation is Jesus Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and no one can come to the Father but through Him, and there is no other name under heaven by which men must be saved (Mt 11:27; Jn 14:6; Ac 4:12). Jesus is the promised Savior (Mt 1:21-23) of all those who believe in Him for eternal life (Jn 3:16).

We believe that God has bound His saving work to the gospel of Christ because it is His aim to glorify the Christ of the Gospel. This is why the gospel is the power of God unto salvation (Ro 1:16). Therefore we do not believe that there is salvation through any other means than through hearing and obeying the gospel by the power of the Holy Spirit (Col 1:5-7; Ro 10:13-15). Perhaps the only exceptions to this are infants and severely retarded persons with minds physically incapable of comprehending the gospel (Ro 1:19-20).

3. *Appropriation of Salvation*

We believe that salvation is not a result of works but it is an undeserved,

unearned gift, received by God's grace and mercy through repentance and faith (Ac 20:21; 26:20; Gal 2:16; Eph 2:8-9; 2Ti 1:9; Tit 3:5). Repentance, which is a gift from God (Ac 11:18), is more than just to have a change of mind. It includes a deep remorse for having offended God, an acknowledgement of one's sin, a full confession of sin with no attempt to excuse it or justify it, a willingness to make restitution whenever possible, and a resolve to turn away from sin (Isa 55:6-7; Joel 2:12-13; Lk 3:8-14; 2Co 7:10-11). The other side of repentance is faith, which is also a gift from God (Phil 1:29). Faith is not only an intellectual assent to the facts of the gospel (Jas 2:19) but a volitional heart commitment to trust in the gospel (Lk 9:23; Lk 14:26) and a willingness to submit and obey the Lord of the gospel who is Jesus Christ (Jn 3:36; 1Jn 2:3-5).

4. ***Results of Salvation***

We believe that salvation includes total forgiveness of sins (Eph 1:7; Col 2:13-14), adoption into the family of God (Ro 8:15; Gal 4:5-6), reconciliation with God (Ro 5:10-11; 11:15), justification (Ro 3:28; Gal 2:16); propitiation before God (1Jn 2:2; Heb 2:17-18); eternal life (Jn 3:16, 36; 10:27-28); redemption from the curse of the law and slavery to sin and Satan (Gal 3:13; Eph 2:1-9; Tit 2:14); sanctification (1Co 6:11; 1Pe 1:14-16; 1Jn 3:2-3); a place in heaven (Jn 14:1-3; Lk 23:43); deliverance from the lake of fire (Jn 5:24; Ro 5:9); glorification (1Jn 3:2; Ro 8:29-30); and permanent residence in the new heavens and the new earth (2Pe 3:13).

5. ***The Manifestation of Salvation***

We believe that salvation is the supernatural work of God in a person that manifests itself in a transformed life (2Co 5:17; Eph 4:24). All true believers will bring forth fruit in keeping with repentance and will be known by their fruit (Mt 3:8-10; 7:16-23; 12:33-35; Lk 6:43-45). The kinds of fruit which salvation produces in the life of every believer is the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:16-25), a hunger for God's Word (1Pe 2:2), a pursuit of righteousness (Pr 4:18), increased godliness and Christ likeness (Phil 1:6; 2Co 3:18), a desire to be with the saints (Heb 10:24-27; 1Jn 2:19), and a desire to obey God in everything (Eph 2:10; Tit 2:11-14; Heb 5:9; 1Pe 2:12).

6. ***Assurance of Salvation***

We believe that we can know we are saved by the internal witness of the Holy Spirit (Ro 8:16-17; 1Jn 3:24; 4:12-13) and by the righteousness which true saving faith produces in the life of every believer who receives the truth of the gospel (Jn 17:17; Col 1:3-6; 1Th 2:13; 1Jn 2:3-4). A person who practices sin and rebellion against God has no assurance of salvation (Jas 2:14-26; 1Jn 2:29; 3:4-10; 5:2). Everyone should regularly examine themselves to see whether they be in the faith (Ps 139:23-24; Lam 3:40; 1Co 11:28, 31; 2Co 13:5).

Part 6: The Church

1. *The Purpose of the Church*

We believe that the ultimate purpose of the church is to give glory to God (Eph 1:6, 12, 14). The Church can only give glory to God by submitting to the Lord Jesus Christ out of love and by obeying His Word (Jn 14:15, 23-24; 1Jn 5:3). The Church gives glory to God by exalting God (1Co 10:31; Ro 11:36), by preserving and defending the truth (1Ti 6:20; Jude 3), by winning the lost (Mt 28:19-20; Ac 26:18), by assimilating the converts into the local church (Ac 9:26-27), by equipping the saints for work of service (Eph 4:11-12), and by multiplying churches (Mt 28:19; Ac 14:23; 2Ti 2:2).

2. *The Universal Church*

We believe that all who put their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual body, the universal church (1Co 12:12-13), the bride of Christ (2Co 11:2, Eph 5:23-32, Rev 19:7-8), of which Christ is the Head (Eph 1:22, Col 1:18). Thus, the church is a unique organism designed by Jesus Christ (Mt 16:18), made up of all those who in all ages have been or are, in vital relationship with our Lord Jesus Christ as a result of the 'new birth' (Jn 3:3-5).

3. *The Local Church*

We believe that the establishment and continuity of local churches is clearly taught and defined in the New Testament (Ac 14:23, 27; 20:17; 20:28-32; 1Ti 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-11).

The local church is the God's temple wherein the Spirit dwells (1Co 3:16). It is also the household of the living God, a pillar and buttress of God's truth (1Ti 3:15).

We believe Scripture teaches that believers must commit to membership to a local church for the purpose of glorifying God by worshipping Him, fellowshiping with one another for mutual edification, growing together through the preaching and teaching of the word and prayers, and fulfilling the Great Commission (Eph 3:21; Ac 2:42, 46-47a; Eph 4:13-16; Mt 28:18-20). Since no local church is perfect, we may find there those who profess to be believers but are not (Mt 7:21-22; Tit 1:15-16; Jude 4).

4. *The Church's Head, and Leaders*

We believe that Jesus Christ is the Head, King, and Lord of the Church (Ac 2:36; Eph 4:15-16; 5:23; Col 1:18) and believers are members of His spiritual body (1Co 12:12-13). We believe that Jesus guides the body through the Bible and under-shepherds who submit to the Bible. God's undershepherds are the elders,

pastors, or overseers who must possess certain spiritual qualifications (Ac 20:28; 1Ti 3:1-7; Tit 1:5-9; 1Pe 5:1-3). Leaders must be examples to the flock as those who will give an account (2Ti 2:24; Heb 13:17), showing others how to live as humble servants of the King (1Pe 5:3). We believe that the church must also have faithful men who meet the qualification of deacon (1Ti 3:8-10, 12-13). Deacons are appointed to help meet the physical needs of the church and to assist the elders so the elders can focus on prayer and the ministry of the Word (Ac 6:4; 1Ti 4:6, 10-13, 15-16).

5. *The Ordinances of the Church*

We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ committed two ordinances to be observed by the church in commemoration of His person and work: water baptism (Mt 28:19-20; Ac 8:38) and communion, or the Lord's Supper (1Co 11:20-26; Mt 26:26-29).

Water baptism is for believers who have placed their faith in Christ. It is not a means of salvation but is an act of obedience whereby a believer makes a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ (Ac 2:38, 41). Baptism is to be by immersion (Mk 1:10; Jn 3:23; Ac 8:39) in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Baptism is an external symbol representing the believer's identification with Christ. It symbolizes a believer's death and burial to the old life on the one hand and the resurrection to the new life in Christ on the other hand (Ro 6:4). Baptism also signifies the invisible reality of being united to the Church through the work of the Holy Spirit (1Co 12:13).

The Lord's Supper or Communion is an act of obedience whereby a Christian remembers the sacrifice of Christ, proclaims the death of Christ, and anticipates the glories of Christ's kingdom to come (Lk 22:19; 1Co 11:24). Communion is only for believers who are not living in unrepentant sin (1Co 11:17-34).

6. *Church Discipline*

We believe that the Local Church is responsible to look after the spiritual welfare of any member and discipline those who continue in unrepentant sin according to Scripture (Mt 18:15-20; Ac 5:1-11; Ro 16:17-18; 1Co 5; Gal 6:1; 1Th 5:14-15; 2Th 3:6-15; 1Ti 5:20; Tit 1:13; 3:10-11; Rev 2:2, 14-15, 20).

Part 7: Last Things

We believe in the literal, physical, and personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ to establish the Messianic Kingdom on earth (Isa 11:1-6; 32:1-20; 65:17-25; Ps 2:6-12; Dan 7:13-14; Zec 14:9-11; Mt 19:28). We believe God will eventually bring about the new heavens and the new earth in which righteousness dwells (2Pe 3:10-13).

We believe in the bodily resurrection of all men, the saved to eternal life and the unsaved to everlasting punishment (Mt 25:46; Jn 5:28-29; 11:25-26; Rev 20:6,13). We

believe believers will be rewarded according to their works and enter into a state of eternal glory in the presence of God in heaven, and He will reign with them forever (Jn 17:3; 1Co 3:12-15; Rev 21, 22).

We believe that all unbelievers as well as Satan and all fallen angels will be judged and will be committed to an eternal conscious punishment in the lake of fire (Mt 25:41; Rev 20:11-15).

Chapter 7: Distinctives

Our distinctives are what make us, the Soli Deo Gloria Christian Church, distinct from other Christian churches or fellowships. But while we differ in these things, it is important to remember that in the essentials, that is, the “non-negotiables” that must be both believed by and taught in every true Christian church, there must be no disagreement, but rather unity among true believers in Christ. On the other hand, in the non-essentials we exercise respect toward those who may differ from us (Ro 14:1).

Part 1: Doctrinal Distinctives

1. *We are Evangelical.*

Essentially, an evangelical is one who believes in two central truths: (1) the Bible is the sole, sufficient, and absolute authoritative rule of faith and practice; and (2) the gospel alone saves—the message that to be made right with God, a sinner must trust Christ alone, through grace alone.

At the time of the Reformation in the 16th century, Luther and the Protestant evangelicals believed in two truths that stood at the very center of their reforming effort. (1) First was called the formal principle of the Reformation—*sola Scriptura* (Scripture alone). This meant that the Bible alone forms, shapes and determines what Christians should believe and practice. (2) The other was what was called the material principle of the Reformation—*sola fide* (faith alone). This meant God saves sinners solely on basis of the person and work of Christ and the means to receive salvation is through trust in the merits of Christ alone.

As Evangelicals, we affirm the great central truths set forth in the historic creeds of the Christian church, i.e., the Apostles, Nicene, and Athanasian creeds. We also affirm the five “solas” of the 16th century Protestant Reformation. We are committed to see those truths embodied in our doctrine, worship, and life and to “contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints” (Jude 3).

We reproduce here the affirmations found in the *Cambridge Declaration of the Alliance of Confessing Evangelicals* in connection with the five “solas” of the Reformation.

Sola Scriptura. We reaffirm the inerrant Scripture to be the sole source of written divine revelation, which alone can bind the conscience. The Bible alone teaches all that is necessary for our salvation from sin and is the standard by which all Christian behavior must be measured. We deny that any creed, council or individual may bind a Christian's conscience, that the Holy Spirit speaks independently of or contrary to what is set forth in the Bible, or that personal spiritual experience can ever be a vehicle of revelation.

Solus Christus. We reaffirm that our salvation is accomplished by the mediatorial work of the historical Christ alone. His sinless life and substitutionary atonement alone are sufficient for our justification and reconciliation to the Father. We deny that the gospel is preached if Christ's substitutionary work is not declared and faith in Christ and his work is not solicited.

Sola Gratia. We reaffirm that in salvation we are rescued from God's wrath by his grace alone. It is the supernatural work of the Holy Spirit that brings us to Christ by releasing us from our bondage to sin and raising us from spiritual death to spiritual life. We deny that salvation is in any sense a human work. Human methods, techniques or strategies by themselves cannot accomplish this transformation.

Sola Fide. We reaffirm that justification is by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone. In justification Christ's righteousness is imputed to us as the only possible satisfaction of God's perfect justice. We deny that justification rests on any merit to be found in us, or upon the grounds of an infusion of Christ's righteousness in us, or that an institution claiming to be a church that denies or condemns sola fide can be recognized as a legitimate church.

Soli Deo Gloria. We reaffirm that because salvation is of God, and has indeed been accomplished by God, it is for God's glory and that we must glorify him always. We must live our entire lives before the face of God, under the authority of God and for his glory alone. We deny that we can properly glorify God if our worship is confused with entertainment, if we neglect either Law or Gospel in our preaching, or if self-improvement, self-esteem or self-fulfillment are allowed to become alternatives to the gospel.

2. *We are non-ecumenical.*

We do not subscribe to the belief that all faiths are acceptable to God and that each has his own way to God and salvation (Jn 14:6; Ac 4:12). The result of such a belief is an open acceptance to work especially in spiritual matters with others whose faith may be quite contrary to Scripture. Therefore, we do not support the modern ecumenical movement, especially in instances where they call people of

different faiths to pray together for some concern for the world at large (2Co 6:14-16).

We do not believe in unity just for unity's sake but rather in biblical unity (Eph 4:13) and in biblical separation (2Co 6:17-18). Therefore, we also believe that those who are not of the true Christian faith are objects of evangelism.

3. We hold to a "Reformed" view of Soteriology.

We believe the five points of Calvinism, also known as TULIP or the Doctrines of Grace. This doctrine is distinguished from Arminianism or hyper-Calvinism. This doctrine teaches the following:

1.a. Total Depravity. The Bible declares that all are under sin and that none is righteous (Ro 3:9-18). There is nothing good enough in man to merit salvation for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Ro 3:23). This does not mean that people are as bad as they can be, but rather, that the effects of the Fall have completely ruined the total being of man. This means that man cannot fundamentally do anything to please God. Man, left to his own, will not seek after God to be his Lord and Savior (Ro 3:11) because all are dead in trespasses and sins (Eph 2:1-3); they do not accept the things of the Spirit of God (1Co 2:14); they are hostile to God and unable to submit to God or please Him (Ro 8:7-8). This depravity begins at conception. It does not begin when we do something bad. We are not sinners because we sin but, rather, we sin because we are sinners (Psalm 51:5).

1.b. Unconditional Election. Election is the act of God by which, before the foundation of the world, He chose in Christ those whom He graciously regenerates, saves, and sanctifies (Jn 6:37; Ro 8:28-30; Eph 1:4-11; 2Th 2:13; 2Ti 2:10; 1Pe 1:1-2). The unmerited favor that God grants to totally depraved sinners is not related to any initiative of their own part nor to God's anticipation of what they might do by their own will, but is solely of His sovereign grace and mercy (Eph 1:4-7; Tit 3:4-7; 1Pe 1:2). Sovereign election also does not contradict or negate the responsibility of man to repent and trust Christ as Savior and Lord (Eze 18:23,32; 33:11; Jn 3:18,19,36; 5:40; 2Th 2:10-12; Rev 22:17).

1.c. Limited Atonement. The doctrine of limited atonement (aka "definite atonement" or "particular redemption") states that, though the death of Christ is more than sufficient to atone for the sins of the whole world, God intended it to apply and to be effective only to the elect (also called Christ's *sheep*, *flock*, or *church* in Jn 10:14-16, 26-29; 17:9,19,20; and Eph 5:25). Christ's death actually secures the salvation of the elect (Is 53:10-12; Rev 5:9), and not just makes salvation possible for all men. The doctrine of limited atonement is in contrast to what is called "universal atonement"—the belief that the death of Christ has the potential to save every sinner in the world but is effective only to those

who receive Christ. (For a good description of this doctrine see www.gotquestions.org/limited-atonement.html)

1.d. Irresistible Grace. Apart from the effectual work of the Spirit, no one can come to Jesus for salvation (Jn 6:44, 65) because of the reasons already described above in the section of the total depravity of man. Thus, for God's elect, the Spirit triumphs over all resistance by convicting them of sin (Jn 16:8), opening a person's heart to pay attention to the gospel (Ac 16:14), and revealing Christ in such a compelling way through the Gospel that He becomes irresistibly attractive (2Co 4:6). This is referred to elsewhere in Scripture as being "called" (1Co 1:24; Ro 8:30). This calling of God of the elect is so effective that they will inevitably respond in repentance and faith (Jn 10:16; Ac 2:37; 13:48). This is why the Bible says that both repentance (Ac 11:18) and faith (Phil 1:29) are gifts of God because both are results of this irresistible grace of God at work in a person's heart.

1.e. Perseverance of the Saints. Perseverance of the Saints does not mean, "Once saved always saved, no matter what kind of life you live." The idea in this wrong teaching is that since you are eternally secure then you can live whatever licentious lifestyle you wish and still be saved. It is true that Scripture teaches that all the redeemed once saved are kept by God's power and care, thus, secure in Christ forever. (Jn 6:37-40; 10:27-30; Ro 5:9,10; 8:1,31-39; 1Co 1:4-9; Eph 4:30; Phil 2:13; 1Th 5:23-24; Heb 7:25; 13:5; 1Pe 1:4,5; Jude 24). But it is equally true that the Bible teaches that genuine believers will produce fruit that is in keeping with repentance (2Pet. 1:5-11) and will persevere in the faith (Jn 5:24; 2Co 5:15; 1Jn 2:19) because He who began a good work in them will bring it to completion at the day of Jesus Christ (Phil 1:6). This is the true meaning of Perseverance of the Saints.

4. We believe in the biblical doctrine of "lordship salvation."

Lordship salvation is the belief that salvation involves both trusting in Jesus and repenting from all known sin and submitting to the Lordship of Christ over our lives. This doctrine is opposed to the wrong teaching called "easy believism" (aka "decisionism," "Sandemanianism," or "free grace") which shows that salvation only involves a mere intellectual assent to the truths of the gospel. Repentance is not a requirement to salvation and one can receive Jesus without submitting to Him as Lord. As a result of this erroneous teaching, the unbiblical category of "Carnal Christian" was invented.

We believe that repentance is a foundational part of the Gospel (Lk 24:47; Ac 2:38; 26:19-20). Repentance is more than just to have a change of mind. It includes a deep remorse for having offended God, an acknowledgement of one's sin, a full confession of sin with no attempt to excuse it or justify it, a willingness to make restitution whenever possible, and a resolve to turn away from sin (Isa 55:6-7; Joel 2:12-13; Lk 3:8-14; 2Co 7:10-11). "Repentance that leads to life" is

not a work of self. Like faith, it is a work which God does in the heart thus enabling man to acknowledge his sinfulness, seek forgiveness, and turn from sin to God (Ac 11:18).

5. We hold to a “soft” cessationist view with regards to the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit.

We believe that God can and still does perform miracles today because He can do whatever He wants whenever He wants (Ps 115:3). Thus believers can pray for a miracle or healing, and if it is God’s will, God can grant such requests.

What we deny is that there are still certain individuals today who are endowed by the Spirit with special miracle-working abilities that they can use more or less at will. As most cessationists put it, “Our view is not that healing has ceased, it is that faith healers have ceased.”

The Lord Jesus healed and did miracles at will because He had the measureless anointing from the Spirit (Jn 3:34; Lk 4:18-19). To a lesser extent, apostles had this ability as well (Mt 10:8; Ac 3:6) and so did certain members of the body of Christ who received the gifts of healing and the working of miracles (1Co 12:9,10).

Although for some reason, Paul left a fellow believer sick at Miletus (2Ti 4:20), we observe that this happened during the latter part of his life. Perhaps it was an early indication that the age of spectacular gifts was beginning to cease because the New Testament canon was about to be completed and the apostolic age was about to close.

While God may sometimes grant signs and wonders today to authenticate His message especially in places where the gospel is forbidden or where people are bound by occultism or when the church is in a time of great declension, but this is not something God does with regularity. The New Testament time was a unique period. In Acts 5:12 we read, “Now *many* signs and wonders were *regularly* done among the people by the hands of the apostles.” Verses 15 and 16 add “that they even carried out the sick into the streets and laid them on cots and mats, that as Peter came by at least his shadow might fall on some of them. The people also gathered from the towns around Jerusalem, bringing the sick and those afflicted with unclean spirits, and they were *all* healed.” Notice that many signs and wonders happened regularly and that all those who were sick and afflicted that were brought to the apostles were *all* healed. These occurrences were normative then but not anymore today.

We believe that the gift of “various kinds tongues” (1Co 12:10) refers to actual languages, either of angels or of men (1Co 13:1). It is sovereignly given by the Spirit to some believers (1Co 12:30) and is not learned nor understood by the speaker (1Co 14:2). It is not gibberish and, like any other language, contains syntax and morphology (Ac 2:4-11; 1Co 14:10-13) and thus, can be translated with the gift of interpretation (1Co 13:10; 14:5,13). We believe that this gift of

tongues and its translations could be verified during NT times because of the presence of the apostles and the prophets during that period. Unfortunately, today, there is no way to verify whether the gift of tongues or its translations is genuine or not because no apostles or prophets exist to verify them (see next paragraph). 1Co 13:8 says that “tongues... will cease.” It seems like this gift will end by itself and will not need the coming of the “perfect” (1Co 13:9). [For a more detailed discussion of the gift of tongues and its temporary nature, see the comments on 1Co 13:8-10 in the *MacArthur Study Bible*.] And so we conclude that there is no gift of various kinds of tongues today.

We also deny that the offices of apostle and prophet exist today. The NT gives three criteria for apostles: they had to be physical eyewitnesses of the resurrected Christ (1Co 9:1; Ac 1:22), (2) personally appointed by Him (Ac 1:2), and (3) able to perform sign and wonders (2Co 12:12). Prophets were regarded as genuine only if all their prophecies came to pass. One mistake disqualified them. Dt 18:21-22 says, “*And if you say in your heart, ‘How may we know the word that the Lord has not spoken?’—when a prophet speaks in the name of the Lord, if the word does not come to pass or come true, that is a word that the Lord has not spoken; the prophet has spoken it presumptuously. You need not be afraid of him.*” Apostles and NT prophets were for the foundation of the church only (Eph 2:19-20; 3:5). After the apostolic age when the church was already established, there was no need for apostles or prophets anymore. God will however raise at least two prophets again during the Tribulation period (Rev 11:1-13).

6. *We are premillennial in our view of Eschatology but give latitude to the time of the Rapture.*

We believe in a premillennial view of the kingdom which teaches that Jesus Christ will come back bodily to earth to set up a literal thousand-year kingdom where He will rule from Jerusalem (Isa 2:2-4; Zec 14:3-4; Ac 1:9-12; Rev 19:11-16; 20:1-7). We also believe that the Lord will return for His church in what is known as the Rapture which is the believer’s blessed hope (1Th 4:13-18; 1Co 15:51-55). But as to when this will occur, whether before, during or after the 7-year Tribulation Period (1Th 5:9; Ro 5:9), the Bible is not clear.

Part 2: Practical Distinctives

1. *We are autonomous.*

We believe that churches should function together, not as a hierarchy of denominations but as self-governing independent churches. The local church is autonomous, free from any external authority and control, with the right of self-government and freedom from the interference of any hierarchy of individuals or organization (Tit 1:5). Moreover, it is also Scriptural for true local churches to cooperate with each other for the presentation and propagation of the faith. Local churches, however, through their appointed leaders and their interpretation of the Scripture should be the sole judges of the measure and

method of their cooperation (Ac 15:19-31, 20:28, 1Co 5:4-7, 13, 1Pe 5:1-4).

7. We are dedicated to biblical truth and ministry and holy living, and the propagation of the same.

We uphold the importance of expository preaching and the building up of the church in doctrinal truths, although we also see the usefulness of topical and textual treatment to aid in the exposition and in the treatment of specific subject matters (Ac 20:27; 2Ti 4:2; Ro 15:20). We also espouse biblical counseling and are against the integration of psychology with Scripture in counseling. We are against present-day movements, practices and approaches to ministry which are not in accordance with sound biblical doctrines and examples such as, "Decisionism," "Easy Believism," the "seeker-friendly approach to ministry," the "Hyperfaith" movement, the "prosperity gospel," the "self-esteem" gospel, the "Purpose-driven" ministry philosophy, the "Emerging Church" movement, the Hypergrace gospel, to name a few.

The NT clearly predicted departures from the faith to occur in church history.

1 Timothy 4:1 — *Now the Spirit expressly says that in later times some will depart from the faith by devoting themselves to deceitful spirits and teachings of demons,*

2 Timothy 4:3-4 — *For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths.*

We are, therefore, to be diligent to "not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God" (1Jn 4:1) and to guard against the "preaching... [of] a gospel contrary to what [we] received" from Scripture (Gal 1:8-9). We are to "contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints" (Jude 3).

8. We believe in the plurality of elders as the main governing body in the church and that this body is an all-male eldership.

We believe that the authority to oversee and shepherd the flock of God resides in a plurality of elders, as a survey of relevant Scriptural passages will show (Ac 14:23, 20:17; Tit 1:5; 1Ti 4:14; Jas 5:14; 1Pe 5:1-2).

Each of these elders must meet the qualifications established in Scripture (1Ti 3:1-7, Tit 1:5-9). They are to be "examples to the flock" and "models of good deeds" (1Ti 4:12; Tit 2:7), being tasked with the sacred and demanding responsibility of leading the local church, under the authority of Christ the Chief Shepherd. On account of 1Timothy 2:12-14, we also believe that the eldership must consist of all male believers.

9. *We have cell groups.*

We at SDGCC recognize the seriousness of heeding the command of God to make disciples of all nations, teaching them to observe all that Christ commanded in His Word (Mt 28:18-20).

We are committed to a discipleship that aims to equip every child of God for every good work, through the use of Scripture to teach, reprove, correct and train in righteousness. Laboring and striving according to His power at work within us, we proclaim Christ, teaching and admonishing our members in order to present each of them complete in Christ (Col 1:28-29).

At SDGCC, discipleship and shepherding are undertaken primarily through small groups or “cell” groups. Every member of SDGCC must commit to a cell group. These groups meet at least twice a month and provide an environment of submission to the Word and mutual accountability and ministry that facilitate the spiritual growth and equipping of their members.

Cell groups are formed with the approval of the eldership and their appointment of qualified discipler-teachers called cell servants. Cell servants, in full dependence on the power and leading of the Holy Spirit, use the Word of God and their God-given influence with the cell members to accomplish God’s will for their lives. To this end, cell servants are given sufficient latitude to use whatever programs, activities and methods they see fit so long as these are consistent with the Word of God and with the SDGCC Philosophy of Ministry and Doctrinal Distinctives. The elders oversee the cell servants and hold them accountable for their teaching and conduct of ministry in the cells and for the spiritual well-being of individual members.

10. *We believe in the importance of a formal membership process in the local church (aka “closed membership”).*

In SDGCC, believers are encouraged to formally commit themselves to church membership.

While Scripture does not expressly command all believers’ membership in a local church, it is clear from Scripture that it is the primary context in which God promotes and accomplishes mutual edification, accountability, and fellowship among His children.

The following are the reasons and the biblical basis why we believe in the importance of formal membership:

- a. There is a founder – Jesus Christ (Mt 16:18; Eph 2:19-20).
- b. It had a foundation day here on earth; the day of Pentecost (Ac 2).
- c. There was a way to identify those who would belong to the church (1Th 1:6; Heb 10:34; Ac 2:40-42; Mt 28:19; Ro 6:3-5; 1Co 12:13).

- d. Their number could be determined (Ac 2:41).
- e. The group could be identified (Ac 5:13; 9:2; 14:23; Gal 6:10; 1Co 5:12-13; Ro 16).
- f. There was church discipline (1Co 5:12-13; Mt 18:15-17).
- g. Recognized church leaders implied that there were identifiable believers to be overseen (Ac 11:30; 14:23; Phil 1:1; 1Th 5:12-13; 1Ti 5:17; Tit 1:5; Heb 13:24; 1Pe 5:2-3).
- h. There are elders to keep watch over God's flock to shepherd them (Ac 20:28).
- i. A list of beneficiaries of special support and privileges implies clear membership (1Ti 5:9).
- j. There were authorized messengers to represent churches (2Co 8:23).
- k. There was a process: letter of commendation, recommendation during transfer and relocation of believers (Ro 16:1-2; Col 4:10; 2Co 3:1).
- l. Letters were addressed to churches or their leaders.
- m. It had many of the ingredients of a formal organization (Ac 15:1-34).

We see formal membership for the greater good of the congregation and for the support and facilitation of the pastoral ministry. Believers who have chosen to join SDGCC go through a formal membership process. This process involves attending a membership class, submitting to a membership interview, being baptized by immersion and public commitment and acceptance as a member during one Sunday service.

11. Role of women in ministry

At SDGCC, we believe that the Bible teaches that only men should be pastors and elders — that is, they should bear primary responsibility for Christlike leadership and teaching in the church (cf 1Ti 2:11-15, 1Co 14:34-36 and 11:2-16). "Primary responsibility" for leadership means that there are kinds of leadership for which women may and often should take responsibility — for example, certain kinds of teaching, administration, influence and initiative. Male headship does not prescribe the details of who does what activity but places on the men the responsibility of the overall pattern of life in the church. Women, in turn, are to engage in a complementary and supportive ministry, a ministry that fosters and preserves male leadership in the church.

However, we affirm that 1 Timothy 2:12 is not an absolute prohibition of all teaching by women (see Tit 2:3-4 — training of younger women; 2Ti 1:5, 3:14 — training of children; Pr 31:26 — ideal wife known for wisdom and instruction; 1Co 11:5 — women prophesying in church, 14:31 — all learning from prophesying; Col 3:16 — believers teaching and admonishing one another; Ac 18:26 — Priscilla at Aquila's side correcting Apollos). The teaching inappropriate for a woman is the teaching of men in settings or ways that dishonor the calling of men to bear the primary responsibility for teaching and leadership in the church. (This does not prohibit women from teaching mixed groups in

evangelistic contexts.)

Thus, reserving for men the primary teaching leadership in a fellowship of men and women does not rule out women teaching and shepherding other women (under the supervision of men pastors and elders) and women giving unofficial, informal guidance to men in the manner of Priscilla and Aquila to Apollos in Acts 18:26. (Piper and Grudem, "Overview" in *Recovering*, p. 85)

SDGCC likewise affirms that spiritual gifts are given by the Holy Spirit and regulated by Holy Scripture. Having a spiritual gift is not a warrant to use it however we please. If women have the gifts of teaching or administration or evangelism, God wants those gifts to be used and He will honor the commitment to use them within the guidelines given in Scripture. (Piper and Grudem, "Overview" in *Recovering*, p. 77).

12. *We permit but do not encourage divorce and remarriage.*

SDGCC upholds the permanence of the marriage bond and recognizes that God hates divorce, because it always involves unfaithfulness to the solemn covenant of marriage that two partners have entered into before God, and because it brings harmful consequences to those partners and their children (Mal 2:14-16). However, it is clear that the Bible permits divorce for particular circumstances because of man's fallenness or hardness of heart (Mt 19:3-9) and to mitigate its consequences.

The only New Testament grounds for divorce are sexual immorality (which we take to mean unrepentant adulterous relationship, homosexuality, etc.) and desertion by an unbelieving spouse (see Mt 5:32, 19:9; 1Co 7:12-15), yet even for these two circumstances, it should be pursued with reluctance and only as a last resort, after exhausting all possible efforts to reconcile, in much prayer, and under the supervision of the eldership.

Remarriage is permitted for the faithful or abandoned spouse only when the divorce was on biblical grounds and was obtained legally; and only "in the Lord" (Ro 7:1-3; 1Co 7:39). SDGCC recognizes however that each case to be brought before the Board of Elders will require much prayer, divine wisdom, and humble seeking of the Lord's will to resolve.

13. *We are a member of the Communion of Christian Ministries (CCM). We also support fellowshiping with church organizations/associations that agree with our doctrinal statement.*

CCM was formed as a result of our departure from the previous church, initially for the purpose of mutual accountability even as autonomous independent churches. In time we realized the biblical mandate to pursue and practice biblical ministry and thus have helped each member church in this area for ministry.

We recognize the fact that we are part of the larger Body of Christ in the locality

to which we belong. Therefore, supporting the fellowshiping with other church organizations and associations is an expression of this recognition. This also provides us with the opportunity to promote biblical ministry to other churches and denominations as well.

14. Practices in our Corporate Worship

- We baptize only believers (Mt 28:18-20). We do not baptize babies.
- We do not have altar call. Erwin Lutzer said, "God's part in salvation is to convict the sinner, draw him, and grant him the gift of repentance. All man can do is respond to what God is doing and cast himself upon God's mercy that he might be saved. To associate that step closely with the act of coming forward in a meeting is to dilute the purity of the gospel and to focus on the wrong issue."
- We allow any type of songs and beats provided they are doctrinally sound (contemporary, hymns, choruses, etc.) and appropriate. We allow the use of drums and other instruments for accompaniment in our worship services as long as they really aid in the singing of the congregation and not overwhelm or dominate it. The instruments should contribute to a sense of reverence and joy, not undermine it.
- We allow the use of multimedia and modern equipment to aid in preaching, teaching and presentation.
- We allow the expression of godly emotions in ways such as clapping, kneeling, raising of hands, dancing and weeping (Ps 6:8; 28:2, 47:1; 63:4; 95:6; Ex 17:11-12; 1Ti 2:8) as long as they are not self-centered, distracting, and attention-getting.
- We allow the use of various Bible translations (not KJV only) provided they are closest to the original manuscript and when appropriate.
- We practice grace giving and not tithing. We believe that the New Testament does not teach tithing in the church but instead "grace giving" (2Co 8:7 NIV—But just as you excel in everything—in faith, in speech... see to that you also excel in this grace of giving.)

It is important to note that the entire Mosaic Law system was only for Israel. One had to become a part of Israel through a system of ritual which began with circumcision for the male. Only after being accepted into the community of Israel were the Mosaic Laws binding.

How then should the church give? The general principles we find in the NT are the following: The *primary* place where giving should take place is the local church; should not neglect the workers of the Lord (Gal 6:6; 1Ti 5:17-18 – 17; 1 Co 9:6-12—6; Phil 4:15-16,18 –15); should be regular (1Co 16:2-*On the first day of every week.*); should involve every individual believer (1Co 16:2—*Each one of you*); should be planned (1Co 16:2- *set aside a sum of money*); should be proportionate (1Co 16:2-*in keeping with his income*); should involve our best (Nu 18:29); should be done voluntarily, cheerfully (2Co 8:3; 9:7), and even sacrificially (Mk 12:41-44).

We do not pass an offering basket but rather let the individual pick up and use the collection envelopes voluntarily and drop them in assigned

collection boxes.

15. Rites of passage

The Rites of Passage apply primarily to members and his/her immediate family, if applicable. These rites may be granted to non-members in special cases as determined and agreed upon by leadership. These rites of passage include:

- *Dedication of persons.* Because the Bible holds that only regenerated believers ought to be baptized, SDGCC practices dedication of infants and children, and not infant baptism. But the dedications we practice include not only of the children but also of the parents and godparents of the child. We also do not encourage godparents to be bound in a lifetime giving of gifts to their godchildren.
- *Dedication of properties.* We dedicate buildings, houses, cars, etc. but we give importance to the owners but not in superstitious manner, e.g. the use of holy water, candles, animal blood-shedding ceremony, etc. We do not collect fees for this.
- *Weddings.* SDGCC solemnizes weddings only between believers of the opposite sex and, as a rule, only for its members. From time to time, certain exceptions may be made—e.g., at the request of a fellow CCM pastor who is taken ill and cannot perform the ceremony for members of his church. We require that the groom and bride apply at least four months before the wedding and go through at least five sessions of premarital counseling with assigned facilitators. Pre-marital sex, pregnancy before marriage, marriage to an unbeliever or to someone with questionable marital status may constitute a ground to delay or disapprove the solemnization.
- *Necrological services.* We do not offer prayers for the dead but we minister to the living. We believe in giving a decent funeral to babies and fetus. We also allow cremation.

16. Miscellaneous (Romans 14:15)

- We allow wearing various dress-styles and wearing of pants for women as long as it is decent and not sexually provocative. We allow differing hairstyles and use of cosmetics, jewelry, perfume, in keeping with propriety.
- We allow the eating of all kinds of food, including “dinuguan,” and going to movie houses to watch films that are wholesome.
- We distinguish drinking from getting drunk. We don’t condemn nor do we encourage drinking wine or any alcoholic drinks but we emphasize discretion, moderation and above all acting in love and avoiding becoming a stumbling block.
- We strongly oppose smoking, gambling, going to night clubs, pot sessions, participating in occult practices (e.g. horoscope, palm reading, tarot card, Ouija Board, etc.) and other activities that are harmful to the body, binding to the will, and damaging to Christian witness.
- We strongly oppose the publishing, production, reading and distributing

of pornographic or sexually provocative materials and those that promote violence.

- We stand against abortion, homosexuality, euthanasia, suicide, and other practices that run contrary to God's moral and ethical standards.
- We discourage dating and marrying unbelievers.
- We discourage participation in public protests, demonstrations and other forms of aggression and non-peaceful expressions of grievances.
- We discourage solicitations from unbelievers in ministry-related activities.
- We discourage ministers from running for public office. We don't endorse political parties.
- We emphasize the use of discretion in the use of our spiritual freedom in Christ.

Part 3: A Clarification

SDGCC embraces the essentials of Biblical, evangelical Christianity (see Statement of Faith). These are the doctrinal truths we hold sacred and we are willing to stand and contend for their purity.

However, SDGCC also celebrates the liberty we have through Christ in non-essential doctrines. We maintain that unity in the Body of Christ "does not require identity of thought and practice. Our God is an amazing Creator. He has uniquely made each of us and gifted us in ways that complement each other. Together, we show the world a more complete picture of who Christ is."

As we share our experiences, interests and ideas with other believers and churches who may hold differing doctrinal positions in these minor teachings, others may be challenged and inspired to grow in new areas in their church and personal lives. (Adapted from the Constitution of the Fellowship of Independent, Reformed Evangelicals at <http://www.firefellowship.org/constitution.htm>.)

Therefore we will not label as unbelievers or apostates those who uphold the essentials of the faith yet differ with us in the areas of women pastors, Arminianism, diverse stands on eschatology, modes of baptism, certain "charismatic" practices, etc. Instead, we will relate to them as brethren with an attitude of humility, respect, understanding, and love (1Co 4:1-5, 3:5-15; 2Co 5:10).

We stand with Augustine in his declaration: "In essentials, unity; in non-essentials, liberty; in all things, charity."

Chapter 8: Philosophy Of Ministry

A philosophy of ministry is a set of unalterable principles that determines how you will function in your ministry. Simply stated, a philosophy of ministry defines *why* you do what you do. Sadly, many churches today find themselves in directionless ministry, managing to survive only by

way of gimmicks and/or mimicking the successful-looking activities of other ministries and churches. That is why it is so important for us to develop a biblical philosophy of ministry that will set the very parameters and directions for the ministries God had entrusted to us.

In pursuit of our mission, we thus recognize the following basic principles, practices, and parameters:

Part 1: The Exaltation of God

The Westminster Shorter Catechism has rightly stated that the chief end of man is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. This is also the ultimate call of the church (Eph 3:21). The Scriptures also enjoin us to offer our bodies to Him daily as living sacrifices (Ro 12:1; 2Co 6:20; 1Co 10:31).

1. The Pillar

When we gather for mutual ministry, our ultimate purpose is to set the Lord continually before us. We should, therefore, establish the regular practice of corporate worship and promote an atmosphere of unreserved adoration of the God we serve. As a church, our manner of assembling together should reflect the truth that God holds the place of supreme lordship over us.

17. The Practice

Corporate worship shall be held on the Lord's Day. The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated on the first Sunday of each month or at such other times as the Board of Elders may determine. Other religious services may be appointed as the advancement of the work of the church may require.

Our corporate worship may be expressed in the following ways:

- a. The public reading and teaching of Scripture (1Ti 4:13; Ac 2:42)
- b. Singing songs that are Scriptural, God-exalting and Christ-centered (Col 3:16; Heb 13:15; Eph 5:19-20)
- c. Congregational prayer (Ac 1:14, 2:42)
- d. Public testimony of one's identification with Christ at baptism (Ac 2:41, 8:36-39) and
- e. Corporate remembrance and proclamation of Christ's death and return at the Lord's Supper (1Co 11:23-29).

18. The Parameters

In our worship of God, it is our goal to express our love, adoration, thanksgiving, reverence, and awe to our glorious God, and to maintain a high and lofty view of Him (Heb 12:28-29; Jn 4:24; Mk 12:30). Hence, only activities and music that contribute toward this goal will be encouraged.

We shall strive to maintain order and sacredness in corporate worship (1Co 14:26-33). We shall not allow our worship services to degenerate into venues for excessive emotionalism or distracting, attention-seeking behavior or for various commercial enterprises.

Part 2: The Proclamation of God's Word

We believe that God's Word is the authoritative, plenary, infallible, inspired revelation of God to man and "profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness" (2Ti 3:16-17). God has given us everything we need for life and godliness in the Scripture (2Pe 1:3).

1. The Pillar

The church is "*the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.*" (1Ti 3:15). Therefore, Scripture must be and is the very foundation upon which the church is built and comprises not only the content of the message that the church proclaims but also the methods by which the church operates. Every decision and aspect of ministry must be submitted to the scrutiny of relevant biblical data.

The accurate exposition and systematic teaching of the Scriptures are imperative for the renewing of our minds, and the sanctification of our lives (Ps 19:7-9; Ac 20:32; Ro 12:1-2; Eph 5:26). Therefore, the teaching of Scripture to our members is the highest priority in the life of the church.

The preaching or teaching of God's Word shall be central during corporate worship on Sundays and in other discipleship activities of the church (Ac 2:42; 5:42; 6:4). We shall endeavor to call the church to guard, suffer for, continue in and proclaim the pure gospel (2Ti 3:2-9; Jude 3; cf. 2Ti 1:13; Tit 1:9).

19. The Practice

The Word of God shall be brought to bear upon the lives of the people, by gifted men and women sovereignly given by God to the church and duly-recognized by the Board of Elders, so that they can clearly understand it, apply its principles to their daily walk and thereby grow into the likeness of Christ (2Ti 4:2; Col 3:16; Ne 8:7-8; 1Th 2:13; 1Pe 2:2).

We strive to teach God's Word using correct principles of hermeneutics and exegesis. Needless to say, each minister of the word, therefore, must "*Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.*" (2Ti 2:15).

The leadership of the church shall provide the necessary training for all her teachers and ministers, so that they can teach the Scriptures systematically and

in an expository manner, and thereby promote Biblical literacy, a ministry of wholeness and integrity, and a transformed congregation.

However, within other contexts of church life, the Scriptures may also be taught using other formats, such as the topical method, which explains verses on a particular Scriptural theme; the textual format, in which a short text or passage is expanded into a particular subject (this is differentiated from the misguided proof-text method); the group discussion method; and various presentations using mass media and the arts. (Tit 1:9; 2Ti 1:13-14, 3:14-17)

20. The Parameters

The church must refrain from softening the impact of God's Word, or watering down its message for the purpose of gaining acceptance in the minds of the unregenerate (Gal 1:6-9; 2Co 11:4). We must continually guard the treasure that has been entrusted to us (2Ti 1:13-14) and contend earnestly for the faith whenever necessary (Jude 3).

The church is not against using secular knowledge and methods to facilitate ministry work and further the cause of Christ as long as they are consistent with biblical truth and do not contradict nor undermine it in any way.

Moreover, all ministry functions, especially during Sunday services, must not be used to promote partisan politics, worldly philosophies, principles of psychology and other secular views, business enterprises, and other self-serving objectives.

Part 3: The Indispensability of Prayer

Prayer is not man reaching out to God. Rather, prayer begins at God's initiative. God, in His loving condescension to sinful and depraved mankind, graciously and persistently invites and encourages us, His children, to come to Him in prayer (Jer 33:3; Lk 11:9, 18:1; Mt 6:9-15; Ro 12:12; Eph 6:18; Col 4:2; 1Ti 2:1-2). He does this not merely to shower us with His bountiful blessings but more importantly, to enable us to know Him more, He who is our greatest need and good.

God's adoption of us into His family, through His Son Jesus Christ, has given us the access and the privilege of coming boldly to the Great and Living God to enjoy His presence and to bring our petitions (Ro 5:1; Eph 2:13, 18; Heb 4:14, 16). Through His death and resurrection, our Lord Jesus Christ has atoned for our sins, by which we now have perfect standing with God. In prayer, we do not come on our own merits, through our own worthiness and good works; neither are we hindered by our failures and inadequacies; rather, we come only through the merits of Jesus Christ.

1. The Pillar

Prayer is communing with God. As such, it is a two-way communication with God.

It involves not only talking but also listening to God (Jn 10:27). Talking to God may be with or without words and may express adoration, praise, thanksgiving, confession, petition, supplication and intercession (1Sa 1:13; Heb 13:15; 1Jn 1:9; Eph 1:16; 1Ti 2:5). Listening to God involves reading, studying, hearing, memorizing and meditating upon His Word and letting it “*richly dwell within us.*” It enables us to know God in a deeper way and allows us to express and affirm His ownership of us. It is done with a heart of seeking the Giver more than the gifts.

Prayer is a means of nurturing our relationship with God. Prayer places us on the road to spiritual nourishment, i.e. we are opening the possibility of being fed with things that have spiritual value. Through the use of Scripture, we look past the temporal and earthly and focus on the eternal and heavenly realities. And as a result, we experience growth in the faith (1Pe 2:2; cf. 2Th 1:3; 2Pe 3:18). We experience revival from soul-heaviness (Ps 119:25, 28, 107, 154). We experience release from worldliness (Ps 119:37, 40; cf. 73:28). Our relationship with God is, thus, strengthened, our knowledge of Him deepened through the communion of prayer.

Prayer is dependence on God. Prayer for God's help is one way that God preserves and manifests the dependence of His people on His grace and power. The necessity of prayer is a constant reminder and display of our dependence on God for everything, so that He gets the glory when we get the help. Prayer, therefore, is an expression of our nothingness before God (Jn 15:5). It expresses our acknowledgement that God alone is the source of every good and perfect gift (Jas 1:17). It declares that He alone is able to accomplish His perfect will for us (Eph 1:11). It is not, therefore, God's will that believers rely on their own strength, wisdom and resources. They are to rely on God through prayer for every decision they make, for every plan they consider, for every work they do, for every need they face, and in every situation they encounter. God honors this dependence by moving in their situations and accomplishes things they are unable to do on their own (Jn 14:12-14; 15:7; 16:23-24). The church, therefore, must commit to continually depend on God through unceasing prayer (1Th 5:17; Eph 6:18; Col 4:2).

Prayer is conforming and submitting to the will of God. All this asking in prayer ultimately must be for the will of God, not ours, to be done (Mt 6:10; 26:39; 1Jn 5:14). We will not be able to ask for God's will to be done if we are not willing to submit to it. True prayer, therefore, is designed to conform us and to enable us to submit to the will of God. It helps us develop a love for God's will.

Prayer is a means of being transformed in the image of Christ. When a believer prays in conformity and submission to the will of God in a consistent way, he inevitably will be transformed in the image and likeness of Christ. His perspective and desires change; his heart and affections are transformed. This happened in David's life (2Sa 12:16-23) and in Paul's experience (2Co 12:7-10).

Prayer is spiritual warfare. In Ephesians 6:10-12, Paul informs us of the reality of

spiritual warfare in the daily life of the believer. A believer is, therefore, commanded to put on the full armor of God in v. 13. In describing this full armor which a faithful believer is to don at all times Paul said in vv. 17-18, "... take ... the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication." Prayer is the power that wields the weapon of the word. The magnificence of prayer is this: God has put His word into the hand of prayer. He Himself remains the source and goal of all things, but He has chosen to make prayer the power that wields the weapon of His word. He Himself remains the source of that power, but He grants to us the privilege and joy of being the instruments of His power in prayer.

Prayer glorifies God. The obedience and service of God's people will glorify Him most when they consciously and manifestly depend on Him for the grace and power to do what they do (Jn 14:13; 15:5-8). When God's will is done in answer to prayer, God is glorified. When the relationship of a believer with God is deepened through prayer, God is glorified. When we express our dependence on God through prayer, God is glorified. When God's people are conformed to His will in prayer, God is glorified. When we are transformed in the image of Christ through prayer, God is glorified. When we do spiritual battle not in our own strength but through dependence on God in prayer, God is glorified.

21. The Practice

The Bible enjoins us to "pray without ceasing" (1Th 5:17) and to pray on all occasions with all kinds of prayers (Eph 6: 18). Prayer is the natural, spontaneous, moment-by-moment activity or occupation of true believers. Scripture encourages us to pray not only for our personal, material and spiritual needs (Mt 6:11-13) but more so, for the concerns of God's kingdom (2Th 3:1; Heb 13:18), for the salvation of the lost (Ro 10:1), for fellow believers (Jas 5:16), for church leaders (Ro 15:30-31), for the universal Church (Eph 6:18), for all those in authority (1Ti 2:1-2), for missionaries and workers in the field (2Co 1:11). The church encourages not only private prayer but also corporate prayer. Corporate prayer draws the church body into a singleness of heart and mind in worship, consecration, vision and goals. It also helps brethren grow in prayer and in love for one another.

Prayer in the Church may be expressed in the following ways:

- a. Private devotions
- b. Praying as a body and/or for one another during Sunday services, cell meetings, prayer meetings and retreats (Ac 2:42; 4:24-30; Jas 5:16)
- c. Praying for the sick (Jas 5:13-16)
- d. Laying on of hands in ordination to ministry (1Ti 5:22)
- e. Fasting (Mt 6:16; Est 4:16; Ps 35:13; Mt 4:2)
- f. Prayer retreats (both private and corporate)

22. The Parameters

In prayer, we should only seek the attention or approval of God and not of men. To use prayer as an opportunity to parade one's spirituality before men is evil because it stems from pride (Mt 6:5). Promoting one's self through prayer is the ultimate perversion of prayer because prayer is intended to glorify God (Jn 14:13).

Prayers that do not come from the hearts of men are offensive to God. We must avoid long and repetitious prayers, offered under the misconception that mere length and emotional intensity will make prayers efficacious. We must also avoid meaningless, thoughtless and routine prayers—prayers that have little or no thought of God or of what we are saying. An example of this is the overuse of the Lord's name in our prayers. Some believers repeat the various names of the Lord several times even in a single sentence, e.g., "O Lord, O God, O Father, O Jesus!" Some do this merely out of habit while others use the name of the Lord as a filler when they cannot think of anything else to say.

Regarding this practice, C.H. Spurgeon said: "The words, 'O Lord! O Lord! O Lord!' grieve us when we hear them so perpetually repeated. 'Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain' is a great commandment and although the law may be broken unwittingly, yet its breach is still a sin and a very solemn one. God's name is not to be a stop-gap to make up for our own want of words. Take care to use most reverently the name of the infinite Jehovah."

Prayer and faith have no power by themselves to secure desired results. We must beware of formulaic prayers that see God as some genie at our beck and call. The words "in Jesus' name" are not magic words that get our prayers granted if we say them. To pray "in Jesus' name" means to come to God in the merits of the One who paid for our sins and represents us in the courts of heaven and to pray in consonance with His character and will.

We must not allow ourselves to be carried away by man-centered prayer concepts and activities that claim to guarantee "deliverance," healing, wealth, national prosperity, and numerical church growth. Believers must be warned against taking principles and examples in Scripture and misapplying them to create unbiblical forms and practices of prayer, e.g., engaging "territorial spirits," "Jericho marches," "Jabez praying," "prayer walk," prayer chain, the use of Matthew 18:19—a passage on church discipline—as a guarantee of answered prayers, etc. God answers prayers because He desires to reveal Himself to His children and to glorify His name in the world.

Part 4: The Worship of God

God deserves the highest worship from His people. We were made to worship Him. It is our central and most essential duty to Him. God is infinitely holy, all wise, the Almighty, all perfect One, and our rightful attitude toward Him is that of bowing before Him, or prostrating ourselves before Him, in adoring contemplation of His infinite loveliness and glory, of His attributes, of Himself.

Not to worship God is sin. We are robbing Him of His honor and glory that belongs to Him alone. We are commanded in the Scripture to, “Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name; worship the Lord in the splendor of holiness” (Ps 29:2). It is not enough that we obey Him, that we pray to Him, that we seek to serve Him and do His will, that we worship Him. Our lives must be a form and expression of worship to Him (Ro 12:1).

1. The Pillar

Our worship of God must spring forth from our true knowledge of and a saving relationship with Christ. Jesus said in John 4:24 that God is seeking worshippers who will “*worship Him in spirit and truth.*” God saved us that we may worship Him from our hearts. True worship then is the adoration of a redeemed people, occupied with God Himself. “Worship” is the new nature in the believer stirred into activity, turning to its Divine and heavenly Source. It is that which is “spirit” (Jn 3:6) turning to Him who is “Spirit”. It is that which is the “workmanship” of Christ (Eph 2:10) turning to Him who re-created us. It is the children spontaneously and gratefully turning in love to their Father. It is the new heart crying out, “Thanks be to unto God for His unspeakable gift” (2Co 9:15). It is sinners, cleansed by blood, exclaiming, “*Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places*” (Eph 1:3). The whole work of redemption finds its culmination and completion in a body of men and women being found and fitted to worship God (Eph 1:9-14; 1Pe 2:9).

We are exhorted by Paul in Colossians 3:16-17 with regard to our conduct as a church by:

a. Letting the Word dwell in us richly.

We are instructed to let the word of Christ dwell in us “*richly,*” that is, “*abundantly.*” This means that the Bible must penetrate deeply into our minds and hearts, which it can only do if we read, study, memorize, teach, hear, and obey it. For God’s Word to have its proper effect, we must receive it with faith and love, lay it up in our hearts, and practice it in our lives. In other words, we must allow God’s Word to have its way with us. This is true both corporately and individually. As we read and study the Bible, we invite the Holy Spirit to instruct our minds and transform our hearts. God wants His Word to have a living presence throughout the church, especially in our worship.

b. Glorifying God in our hearts.

Twice in chapter 3, Paul reminded the Colossians to glorify God in their worship, first in verse 16 (“with thankfulness in your hearts to God”), and then again in verse 17 (“*giving thanks to God the Father through him*”). His point is so obvious that it hardly needs to be explained: The whole purpose of worship – and, indeed, of human existence – is to give glory to

God. In fact, this is what the word “worship” means. It comes from the old Anglo-Saxon term “worth-ship.” This is exactly what worship is: giving honor to God for His supremacy, and thereby acknowledging His genuine worth.

c. Doing all in Jesus’ Name.

Paul told the Colossians: *“And whatever you do, in word or deed, do everything in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through him”* (Col 3:17; cf. Eph 5:20). God’s name is never simply a title, but it always represents the full majesty of His being and attributes. The name of Jesus refers specifically to His person and work as the Savior of sinners. It is the name of salvation.

What does it mean to give thanks to God in and through “the name of the Lord Jesus”? To worship in Jesus’ name means to worship God on the basis of Christ’s sufferings and death. In this connection it is worth noting that the phrase *“giving thanks”* can also be translated *“in the grace,”* meaning the grace that God has given through Jesus Christ. It is only on the basis of Christ’s atoning work that anyone can ever approach God. Before we can approach God in worship, we must be reconciled to Him through Christ and His cross.

23. The Practice

God instituted worship and must be the object of true worship. Worship is an opportunity for God’s people to come before the presence of God. It is therefore necessary that they are to consecrate themselves in order to offer up to Him an acceptable worship. The Bible provides several ways of expressing our worship of God (through music, verbal declarations, testimonies of His work in our lives, meditating on His truths, the proclamation of His Word, etc.). We particularly recognize the role of the worship and the choir ministries of the church in leading the rest of the congregation to a meaningful, vital and Christ-exalting praise and worship experience. We, therefore, as a church seek to observe the following:

- a. Praising and adoring God based on His nature and work as revealed in His Word. We believe in the importance of reading of and exhortation from Scripture. We are to base spiritual worship on Scripture. When using music, we are to encourage one another with biblical truth (Eph 5:18-19).
- b. Offering thanksgiving to God for His work in our lives (Ps 111:1-4).
- c. Declaring His praises as we meditate on His attributes (Ps 107:1; 108:3-5).
- d. Praising through singing and instrumental music (Ps 33:2-3; 27:6c; 150:3-4).
- e. Ministering to others about Jesus Christ through songs during special musical/ evangelistic events which can be an outreach to the unsaved (Ps

40:3; 105:1-4).

- f. Encouraging involvement among members who have been gifted by God and willing to be involved in the music and choir ministries (1Pe 4:10-11).

24. The Parameters

The Word of God should furnish the criteria for the content of the hymns and songs to be used for our worship services:

a. Must be doctrinally sound.

Worship must have a theological basis. The people of God must know whom they are worshipping and why. Because God is beyond our comprehension, we cannot know Him by speculating on His essence. Instead, we are to know Him by meditating on what He reveals to us in His creation and in His Word. Calvin cautions that

The pious mind does not dream up for itself any god it pleases, but contemplates the one and only true God. And it does not attach to him whatever it pleases, but is content to hold him as he manifests himself; furthermore, the mind always exercises the utmost diligence and care not to wander astray, or rashly and boldly go beyond his will. (Institutes 1.2.2) (Quoted in Kim Riddlebarger, "The Worshiping Community", *Modern Reformation*, Nov-Dec. 1993. Downloaded from <http://www.net.modernreformation.org/mr93/novdec/mr9306worship.html>.)

True worship is faithful to the doctrine of God as revealed in Scripture. Even the most well-intentioned believer may unwittingly end up in idolatry—worshipping a god he has fashioned in his own image.

Riddlebarger argues:

"This is not to say that worship is not to be emotional or that one is not to experience God during worship, but worship must be based on a correct knowledge of God, not an ecstatic experience of God. Worship has a doctrinal, and not an experiential, context. This intellectual priority in worship is also seen in the prohibitions against idolatry. ... Take John 4:24 as another example. Here we are told, 'God is spirit and his worshipers must worship him in spirit and in truth.' The mention of God as spirit is linked to correct worship." (Ibid.)

b. Must be God-centered or Christ-centered, not man-centered.

The purpose of music in worship is to assist the congregation in worshipping God, not to encourage or make it easier for believers to

focus on themselves. Songs must be centered on God, must exalt Christ; instead of being full of what is happening or not happening in the lives of those who are singing, according to *their* point of view.

- c. **Must deal with the whole counsel of God as it pertains to worship**—i.e., teach, admonish and allow worshipers to “sing with thankfulness” in their hearts to God.

The songs of the church cannot focus exclusively on “singing with thankfulness” to God. They must also teach and admonish (Col 3:16). God has also given us a model for what we are to sing about in the Book of Psalms. It contains a rich variety of songs that we can and should offer to God—joyful praise and thanksgiving (146-150); recounting the saving work of God in Christ (2, 22, 24 and 110); extolling the perfections of God’s revealed Word (119); and even lamentation and repentance (32, 51, 137). As Calvin observed: “There is not an emotion of which any one can be conscious that is not here presented as in a mirror.” [Robert Godfrey, *Pleasing God in our Worship* (Wheaton: Crossway Books, 1999), 39.]

- d. **Must “accurately handle the word of truth”—i.e., be Biblically accurate or faithful to Scripture.**

While we recognize a certain latitude of expression owed to poetic license, we maintain that worship music functions as an integral part of the teaching ministry of the church. In fact, we agree with Payton: “Pulpit preaching has greater power to explain the text logically, but music has greater power to inculcate the text, to take the text more profoundly into other parts of the hearer’s being.” [Leonard Payton, “How Shall We Sing to God?” in John H. Armstrong (ed.), *The Coming Evangelical Crisis* (Chicago, Moody, 1996), 192.]

Shoddy exposition will not be tolerated in our preaching nor in our songs. We will be careful to choose music texts with as much theological clarity and linguistic skill as possible.

The kind of music and instruments to be used for accompaniment in our worship services must likewise be appropriate to the content of the songs and must complement the Godward direction of our worship, not detract from it. The accompaniment must aid the singing of the congregation, not overwhelm or dominate it. It should contribute to a sense of reverence and joy, not undermine it.

The decision as to the appropriateness of the music must also pass through another sieve: does it “make provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts”? Does the melody truly exalt God or does it appeal primarily to the carnal tastes of man and his desire to be entertained? Does the melody serve to focus the believer’s attention on God as He reveals

Himself in Scripture or does it cause him to focus more on the things of the world and its carnal way of life or on himself and his enjoyment?

Music is a vital element in the worship life of God's people. And because it is so powerful in its effects, we will consider it carefully. If we are worshipping the true and living God who has revealed Himself in Scripture then we must be certain that our worship is always pleasing to Him and not simply to ourselves. (Paraphrased from Godfrey, 11 and 40.)

Part 5: The Evangelization of Unbelievers

Every believer bears the responsibility of learning, understanding and proclaiming the gospel to the world (Mt 28:18-20). We therefore endorse a lifestyle of evangelism among our members. We, of course, recognize that it is essentially the Holy Spirit who convicts and regenerates the sinner, yet we also acknowledge His use of means, including human agents, to accomplish this work (Ro 10:14-17).

1. The Pillar

The Scriptures tell us that we are to unashamedly proclaim the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ to the lost (Ro 1:16). This involves compassion for the lost, a sense of urgency in bringing the Gospel to sinners, and even the heart to persuade and plead with all to accept the Lord's offer of salvation. The presentation of the Gospel must contain these basic ingredients:

a. The Truth about God and His Divine Character.

God is the Lord of all creation, the only God who made man in His own image to whom we shall all give an account of our lives (Ge 1:1, 27; Ac 17:24-28; Isa 45:5-6; 1Pe 1:15-16). Since He made us for His glory and honor, we should live to worship, love, serve and obey God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength. God gave the Law to reveal His holy and righteous character. Since God is utterly holy, He demands perfect holiness (Lev 11:44-45; Heb 12:14; Ex 20:5; Ps 1:5) and will therefore judge that which falls short of this standard (Ex 34:7b).

b. The Truth about Man's Sin and its Consequences.

Whenever we sin, we offend the holy and righteous character of God (Ps 51:4; 1Jn 3:4). The results of sin are broken relationship with God and spiritual death (Ge 3; Ro 6:23a; Eph 2:1; Jas 2:10). Consequently, man continues to rebel and to live according to his own ways and will. He does not only fail to follow God's moral standards, he also continues to ignore God's clear revelation of Himself in nature and in his conscience. He doesn't acknowledge his Maker nor give Him due reverence (Ro 1:18-27). Man has truly lost his way; his knowledge of God is marred by sin and he

is unable to remedy his fallen condition (Jer 13:23; Isa 64:6). The Law of God makes him aware of his sinfulness and helplessness (1Jn 3:4; Ro 7:7; Ro 3:23). He is unable to fulfill the righteous requirements of the law of God (Jas 2:10). As a result, he is placed under God's wrath and judgment (Eph 2:3; Ac 17:30; 2Pe 3:9). He cannot come to God in his own way. There is no amount of man's works or religion that could ever satisfy God's holy and righteous requirements (Eph 2:8).

c. The Truth about Jesus Christ and His Work.

What makes the gospel truly good news is not just that heaven is free, but that sin has been conquered by God's Son (1Jn 3:5). That's why any presentation of the gospel must contain the truth about the Person (Jn 1:1, 14; Phil 2:5-8; Jn 14:6, 9; cf. Ro 1:1-4; Col 1:6; 15-20), sinless life (Heb 4:15; 1Pe 2:22-23), sacrificial suffering (1Pe 4:1; Heb 9:26, 28), substitutionary death (1Pe 2:24), and resurrection (1Co 15:3-4; cf. Ac 17:18; Ro 4:25; 1Pe 1:3) of Jesus Christ. His perfect life of obedience and death on the cross satisfied both God's love and justice which became the basis of forgiveness and acceptance before God for those who would acknowledge Him as the resurrected Lord and Savior.

d. The Call to Respond in Repentance and Faith.

Repentance. True godly repentance has intellectual, emotional and volitional ramifications. The intellectual element is the change of view. It is recognition of sin as involving personal guilt, defilement and helplessness. The emotional element is a change of feeling, manifesting itself in sorrow for sin, committed against a holy God. The volitional element is a change of purpose. It is an inward turning away from sin, and a disposition to seek pardon and cleansing (Mk 1:15; Ac 3:19; 14:15; 20:21; 26:20; 1Th 1:9; cf. Lk 24:45-47). Repentance, therefore, is not easy-believism, not decisionism and not just a change of mind. It includes change of actions too.

Faith. Systematic theology recognizes three elements of faith: knowledge (Lat. *notitia*), assent (Lat. *assensus*), and trust (Lat. *fiducia*). Knowledge refers to the intellectual element of faith. The mind recognizes and understands the truth that Christ alone saves (Ro 10:1-3; Ac 26:26-27; Jas 2:19). Assent refers to the emotional element of faith. The heart gives assent, or the settled confidence and affirmation that Christ's salvation is applicable to one's soul (Mt 13:20-21; Jn 2:23-25). Trust refers to the volitional element of faith. The will responds with trust. The personal commitment to and appropriation of Christ as the only hope for eternal salvation (Jn 6:68-69; Lk 23:42). Those who will respond to faith and repentance will also follow Jesus no matter what the cost is (Lk 9:23; 14:26-33; Mt 10:34-38; Mk 8:35-37; Jn 12:24-25;).

e. The Truth about Assurance as well as Threat.

The proclamation of the gospel must contain God's message about the assurance of regeneration (Jn 3:3; Eze 36:26, 27; 2Co 5:17), eternal life (Jn 3:16), acceptance (1Jn 5:11-13; Ro 10:11-13), justification and forgiveness (Ro 4:4-8), and adoption (Jn 1:12) to anyone who would believe. Furthermore, it should also include God's threat to those who will reject the offer of God (Jn 3:18, 36; 3:23; 13:40-41; 28:24-28; Heb 2:2-3; 2Th 1:8,9; 1Pe 2:7,8; Rev 21:8).

25. The Practice

Evangelism in our particular context usually occurs through a one-on-one sharing of the Gospel (Ac 8:26-39) and planned corporate activities of our members like camps, visitation of hospitals, orphanages, and outreaches to other needy sectors in society, sports events, symposiums, seminars, skits, concerts, films, and the like. We also recognize that the fields are ripe for harvest and that the church may engage in mission-sending work—e.g. establishing outreaches or daughter churches, engaging in short-term missions and other ministry opportunities. Evangelistic efforts require discernment and wisdom for each particular situation and full dependence upon the Holy Spirit (Jn 16:8-11).

For a person to become a true believer, he must, with the aid of the Holy Spirit, understand the Gospel and respond in genuine saving faith. Therefore, the sharer must clearly present the Gospel and urge his hearer to repent and believe it.

We likewise see the need for a person to examine himself to determine if he is in the faith according to Scripture (2Co 13:5). However, we recognize that only the Holy Spirit can give true assurance of salvation. We therefore refrain from assuring an individual of his standing in Christ, lest we bring him to a false sense of security and to spiritual ruin.

26. The Parameters

All the evangelistic tools that we use and expose our members to must conform to the essential elements of the gospel as taught in Scripture and identified in this manual (see *Pillar* of this section). Although we emphasize the need to be sensitive to cultural differences and to adapt the message to the receiving culture, we do not in any way adjust the content of the Gospel in order to accommodate people from different cultures.

We do not practice the manipulation of emotions in evangelism, whether it is done one-on-one or in mass evangelism because salvation is essentially the work of the Spirit (Tit 3:5). For the same reason we also do not practice the altar call, which others consider to be the climax of a gospel message and a vital part of an evangelistic service. The altar call is the practice of inviting those who wish to receive Christ to come down the aisle at the close of a sermon and

repeat aloud a sinner's prayer to accept Christ into the hearers' heart as Lord and Savior. These persons are immediately assured that they are saved no matter how they felt. The altar call has no biblical basis and it encourages people to think that their act of going forward somehow saves them. Many have observed that this system has brought a rapid multiplication of false converts and brought discredit upon Christianity.

We do not outrightly give the assurance of salvation particularly after the person prays to receive Christ. Instead, we encourage the person to look for the fruit of the work of the Spirit in his life as proof of his regeneration. We also do not include the collection of money or any form of material remuneration from those being ministered to in any of our evangelistic activities (Mt 10:8; 1Co 9:18; 2Co 11:7-9).

Part 6: The Centrality of the Local Church

At the time of personal faith in Jesus Christ, the believer is called into the fellowship of God's Son, Jesus Christ our Lord (1Co 1:2, 9; 1Jn 1:3), and joined into union with the universal body of Christ, the church, by the baptizing work of the Holy Spirit (1Co 12:12-13, 20; Col 1:18).

God has called and placed all the redeemed into His church, which He has defined in New Testament metaphors as:

- ³⁵₁₇ a holy and royal priesthood offering spiritual sacrifices to God (1Pe 2:9);
- ³⁵₁₇ a chosen race belonging to God (1Pe 2:9);
- ³⁵₁₇ a separate nation whose King is the eternal God (1Pe 2:9);
- ³⁵₁₇ a temple indwelt by the Spirit of God (1Co 3:16-17);
- ³⁵₁₇ a set of branches connected to Jesus Christ as the Vine (Jn 15:1-19);
- ³⁵₁₇ a flock led by the Good Shepherd (Jn 10:1-8);
- ³⁵₁₇ a household or family sharing the common life of the eternal Father (Eph 2:19; 1Ti 3:15);
- ³⁵₁₇ a body of which the Lord Jesus is Head (Eph 5:23, Col 1:18).

All these metaphors feature the common characteristics of unity and shared life and fellowship. Believers compose one priesthood, one nation, one race, one temple, one plant, one flock, one family, and one body.

Besides this fellowship with the Son of God and His universal body, there is another aspect of this fellowship into which the believer is joined. He is brought into the fellowship with fellow members of that body, into what is called the local church. Everyone who claims to be of Christ must be committed to a local church, which is the visible manifestation of the universal church that meets in a particular location for worship, fellowship, and discipleship.

1. The Pillar

The New Testament assumes that all Christians will share in the life of a local church, meeting with it for worship (Heb 10:25), accepting its nurture and discipline (Mt 18:15-20; Gal 6:1), and sharing in its work of witness. Christians disobey God and impoverish themselves by refusing to join with other believers when there is a local congregation that they can belong to.

Yet there are Christians who believe that it is possible to have a vibrant spiritual life and successfully nurture our relationship with God apart from a local church. For many, there are “lots of alternatives” to the church when it comes to our spiritual growth.

We maintain, however, that the church is the primary means through which God accomplishes His plan in the world, far from only being one of many options for the Christian. It is His ordained instrument for calling the lost to Himself and the context in which He sanctifies those who are born into His family. Therefore God expects (and even demands) a commitment to the church from everyone who claims to know Him. And this commitment to the church of Jesus Christ is manifest in a visible commitment to a local church.

Even a cursory reading of the New Testament makes clear the centrality of the church in the biblical record. Jesus Christ proclaimed that He would build His church (Mt 16:18), invested in it the authority to act with the imprimatur of heaven (Mt 18:17-20), and ultimately revealed that His plan was to fill the world with local bodies of believers (Mt 28:18-20). Most of the epistles are written to local churches, and three of the others written to individuals (1 and 2 Timothy and Titus) discuss how the local church should function. The wonders of Revelation were expressly intended for seven local churches in Asia Minor and sent to them by the apostle John at the command of the risen Christ (Rev 1:4, 11). No single verse proclaims the importance of the local church more powerfully than First Timothy 3:15: *“if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.”*

The local church is also God’s instrument for bringing Christians to maturity (Eph 4:11-13). For this reason, the Christian should neither despise (1Co 11:22) nor neglect the local church (Heb 10:25). Rather, must strive to excel in building it up (1Co 14:12). He should not be confined to watching things happen on Sunday for that would cause him to deteriorate spiritually and become less useful organizationally. Instead, he should come to encourage others to do good (Heb 10:24-25).

The local church is a loving community that thrives in an atmosphere that allows personal interaction, which God can use to address physical, emotional and spiritual needs. By close association with one another, Christian love is able to find the positive and practical expression it needs (Jn 13:35).

27. The Practice

a. Proclaiming the Word

The proclamation of the word should be central in all the gatherings of the church. Preaching and teaching of the word of God, primarily in the major gatherings of the church (Sunday preaching, conferences, etc.), should be officially done by the acknowledged pastors and teachers of the church (Eph 4:11-12), who do it *carefully*, i.e., interpreting the Scriptures *accurately* and presenting its truth *systematically* (2Ti 2:15), *reverently* (1Pe 4:11), *fearlessly* (2Ti 4:2), *passionately* (Col 1:28-29) and *purposefully*, i.e., they should seek to fill the mind of believers with the will of God (Ro 12:1-2), guide them in living lives that are worthy of the Lord (Col 1:9-10), prepare them for works of service, and cause them to mature in the faith (Eph 4:12-13).

Due to the primacy of the proclamation of the word, every individual member of the church has the solemn responsibility to hear and heed these biblical truths (cf. Mt 13:9; Mk 4:24; Lk 8:18; 10:16). Anyone willing to be used by God in the teaching of the Word must be willing to be trained to handle the Word.

(See also Chapter 8, Part 2)

b. Praying in the Church

Prayer is expected to be a lifestyle of the church (1Th 5:17). It is the means for the church to glorify God by seeking His will in all its affairs. Prayer must be led by the Holy Spirit who aids us to pray biblically (Jude 20; Ro 8:26-27). The church is encouraged to practice prayer in two ways: private prayer (through personal daily fellowship with God) and corporate prayer (through group gatherings, Sunday services, prayer nights, intercessory activities, fellowships, meetings, camps and retreats). Corporate prayer draws the body into a singleness of heart and mind in worship, consecration, vision, and goals. It also helps brethren grow in prayer and in love for one another. The members support the church greatly by praying for its concerns (Eph 6:18; Col 4:12; 2Th 3:1), for all men, including government and rulers (1Ti 2:1-2), and for missionaries or workers ministering in the field (Ro 15:30-31; 2Co 1:11).

(See also Chapter 8, Part 3)

c. The Worship of God

The worship of God is an essential part of church gatherings because believers were called to declare praises to God (1Pe 2:9) who alone deserves the highest worship (Ps 29:2). The raising up and the training of believers in the ministry of worship is a priority in the work of the local church.

(See also Chapter 8, Part 4)

d. Studying the Scriptures

The Scriptures mandate believers to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2Pe 3:18). The means for this to happen is through the study, meditation, and application of Scripture. That is why the believer is commanded to delight in it, to meditate on it day and night (Ps 1:2; Jos 1:8), to desire it with all his heart (1Pe 2:2), as well as to abide in it (Jn 15:7). The church, therefore, must be diligent in exhorting her members in studying the Word of God both on a personal level and with other believers through Bible studies, discipleship groups, listening to preaching and other similar activities. She must see to it that there are sufficient venues and opportunities that will encourage and facilitate this.

e. Guarding the Truth

According to 1 Timothy 3:15, “the church of the living God [is] a pillar and buttress of the truth.” As such, it is the duty of the local church to be both a preserver and protector of the truth. “To contend for the faith” (Jude 3) is a continuing call to the church and, therefore, must be her deliberate and constant endeavor. Moreover, she must also see to it that she “entrust [the truth] to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2Ti 2:2). Biblically sound proclamation—not proclamation that merely cites Scripture and then is stuffed with stories and anecdotes that eclipse the faithful exposition of Scripture—must, therefore, be the top priority in the ministry of the church.

f. Fellowshiping with Believers

One of the main concepts of the church in Scripture is as a body, with Christ as its Head (Col 1:18). All believers become part of the body of Christ at the moment of salvation, and therefore, become part of one another, participating in a common life characterized by devotion to the work of the Gospel, sacrificial service to one another and a love for holiness.

The fellowship of the body is the mutual care and concern its members have for each other. That care and concern is expressed in the “*one another*” passages of the New Testament. We are to *confess* our sins one to another (Jas 5:16); *build up* one another (1Th 5:11); *bear* one another's burdens (Gal 6:2); *pray* for one another (Jas 5:16a); *be kind* to one another (Eph 4:32); *submit* to one another (Eph 5:21); *show hospitality* to one another (1Pe 4:9); *serve* one another (Gal 5:13); *comfort* one another (1Th 4:18); *restore* one another (Gal 6:1); *forgive* one another (Col 3:13); *admonish* one another (Ro 15:14); *teach* one another (Col 3:16); *encourage* one another (Heb 3:13); and above all, *love* one another (1Pe 1:22; 1Jn 4:7, 11). True fellowship takes place when

Christians come together to minister to one another in the power of the Holy Spirit. The church, therefore, must actively encourage and facilitate biblical fellowship in obedience to the mandate in Hebrews 10:24-25.

g. Preserving Unity

Unity is one of God's purposes for the church. Throughout redemptive history we find that God is in the process of "bringing together in one all things in Christ" (Eph 1:10). This unity has its foundation in the work of Christ who "reconciled us to Himself..." (2Co 5:18) and included us to be members of His body – the church. In Christ, we belong to the one family of God (Eph 2:14, 19). It is for this reason that we have been called into a marvelous fellowship of unity.

The manner by which every believer in the local church are to manifest obedience to this call is by "preserving the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph 4:1), having love for one another "which is the perfect bond of unity" (Col 3:14). This same love must also be based on humility which leads the church in faithful service to one another. They are to be "of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose not from selfishness or empty conceit but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than himself" (Phil 2:2-5). In this regard, the members, for example, are to relate with each other in mutual submission, having a sense of belonging, accepting each other regardless of status, learning to submit to discipline, growing in the faith, being involved in the activities of the church, taking the initiative to care, avoiding sinful and divisive behavior such as gossiping, slander, etc., the willingness to extend forgiveness whenever necessary.

Unity must continue to be pursued even in cases where the member is planning or has decided to leave the church. This will be manifested by the person's willingness to take up his questions and concerns with the eldership and to proceed Biblically in a fitting and orderly manner.

These are to become requisites to an acceptable worship of the Lord "*in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in the Lord; in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of God in the Spirit*" (Eph 2:21-22).

h. Evangelism

Every believer is mandated to learn, understand, and proclaim the Gospel to the lost (Mt 28:19-20; Ro 1:14-16; Ac 1:8). Concurrent with the fulfilling of this mandate are a consistent Christian life and conduct (Tit 2:10), and an ability to lead others to a saving knowledge of Christ.

The church provides evangelism training (Ro 10:10-15, 17) and creates programs, within and outside the church, by which members can be

involved, through both one-on-one and public sharing of the Gospel. The church also emphasizes the faithful sharing of the pure gospel of Jesus Christ, through means that will in no way alter or dilute the full implications of this gospel (Ac 20:20, 27; 2Co 2:17; Gal 1:8).

(See also Chapter 8, Part 5)

i. Discipleship

Christian discipleship at its core is following Christ. It involves the ongoing transformation of an individual's becoming like Jesus in character and purpose as he grows in intimacy with Him. Christ calls believers to discipleship (Mt 4:19; 10:38; 16:24; Lk 9:23; Jn 12:26). Christian discipleship is centered in the life of a local church, where the fellowship of other disciples encourages, teaches, and safeguards the believer's discipleship process (Col 1:28). The church, therefore, should uphold her duty to make disciples of those who have come to the saving knowledge of Christ. They are to be taught to observe all that Christ has commanded (Mt 28:20) and to know "*the whole counsel of God. 28*" (Ac 20:27), so that they may be brought to full maturity as members of Christ's body (Eph 4:12-13). Furthermore, the church shall endeavor to biblically train and equip her members to disciple others (2Ti 2:2; 3:16-17).

j. Exercising Spiritual Gifts

The New Testament describes the church as a spiritual body whose members are expected to function using their various gifts and talents for the welfare of the entire body and for the glory of the Lord (1Co 12:14-27). Since each member has received a spiritual gift from God, he must use it in a way that will strengthen and build up the church (1Pe 4:10-11).

The church must assist each member in discerning God's will for their lives (Ro 12:2) and in discovering, affirming, honing and exercising their spiritual gifts — i.e., speaking and serving gifts (1Pe 4:11; Ro 12:3-8). It is also the work of the church to continue to equip its members (Eph 4:11-13) in order to perform the good works that God has prepared for them to do (Eph 2:10). The church's or each member's failure to do so may eventually hurt the Body of Christ (1Co 12).

k. Giving to the Church

Giving is an act of worship and has been designed by God to be an element of the corporate worship of the body. It is a worshipful response to the goodness and grace of God to the church and to each member of the body. When we give of the resources entrusted to us by God, we exercise proper stewardship of the same. Moreover, our giving is a service

to the church as God's means of supplying the church's needs. Giving then is both a solemn duty and a wonderful privilege: It is a duty because it has been commanded by God (1Co 16:2; 2Co 9:7) and because He has warned that those who do not will face His severe chastening (Mal 3:8-9); it is a wonderful privilege because, although God does not need anything, He chooses to use what we give for His kingdom work (Ro 11:35-36; Ps 50:9-10). God's pleasure and blessing rest upon those who give generously to Him (Ac 20:35; 2Co 9:6-8; Heb 13:16).

We should support the Church and its work with our finances as the Word of God teaches. God promises that if we will honor Him with our giving, He will prove Himself faithful to provide for our needs (Mal 3:10). Every local church depends on God to supply funds to meet its needs. God supplies through people who love Him and support His ministry through their giving. This is one area of the Christian life where the believer must seek to excel (2Co 8:7).

We are to teach and encourage our members to give:

- ³⁵₁₇ Willingly and cheerfully, not grudgingly or as a result of pressure (2Co 8:12; 9:7)
- ³⁵₁₇ Joyfully (2Co 8:1-2)
- ³⁵₁₇ Thoughtfully (2Co 9:7)
- ³⁵₁₇ With a perfect or pure heart (1Ch 29:17)
- ³⁵₁₇ Mercifully (Ps 37:21)
- ³⁵₁₇ Unselfishly (2Co 8:13-24)
- ³⁵₁₇ Generously (Ro 12:8; 2Co 9:6,12)
- ³⁵₁₇ Sacrificially (2Co 8:2-3; Lk 21:1-4)
- ³⁵₁₇ Secretly—not necessarily anonymously, but not to flaunt the act of giving to others (Mt 6:1, 3-4)
- ³⁵₁₇ Systematically (2Co 9:5,7)
- ³⁵₁₇ Proportionately (2Co 8:12)
- ³⁵₁₇ Regularly (1Co 16:2)

Because the New Testament teaches grace giving, it is up to each individual member to prayerfully apportion what he gives among the duly-recognized vocational pastors and ministers and the general fund and other funds of the church.

I. Relating to Church Leaders

The flock of God gathers together under the leadership of the undershepherds whom the Chief Shepherd (Heb 13:20; 1Pe 2:25), Jesus Christ, has appointed (1Co 12:28; Eph 4:11-12). In the New Testament, we note that wherever Christians were to be found, there were usually ordained elders (Ac 14:22-23). In fact, the Bible reports that a local situation was defective where elders have not been appointed (Tit 1:5).

God designed the church with positions of leadership that are to be filled by Biblically qualified men and women who are called to establish order, and tasked to steer the church in the direction that God has called her to take (1Ti 3; Tit 1:6-9). Our members must thus recognize the leaders God has raised up, and accord them the proper respect, love, submission, and support (Heb 13:7, 17; 1Th 5:12-13; 1Ti 5:17).

m. Confronting One Another in Love

Indeed, it is a common misconception that Christlike love never confronts nor admonishes an individual of his sin and error. The Bible tells us that confronting someone with the truth is actually one of the fullest ways we express our love for the brethren (Pr 27:5-6).

The importance of loving confrontation, as outlined in Matthew 18:15-17, for the life of the church cannot be overstated. The primary concerns that Jesus Christ has for His body are its purity (Eph 5:25-27) and its unity (Eph 4:3), and neither of those can exist where the process in Matthew 18 is not practiced. That is because the obstacles to purity and unity are sin and conflict, and those maladies cannot be cured without the medicine of loving, biblical confrontation.

However, in the context of church discipline, not all cases of sin are brought automatically to the level of church discipline that involves a higher level of authority and accountability since not all cases require that level of confrontation and dealing. There are sin situations that can be adequately addressed on a one-on-one level between two believers. Granted that those confronted will be open and humble to accept correction when necessary, confronting someone with the truth is actually one of the fullest ways we express our love for the brethren (Pr 27:5-6; Lk 17:3; Gal 6:1). In view of this, the church shall endeavor to establish an atmosphere conducive to biblical confrontation that exalts Christ and mirrors His heart for sinners.

n. Submitting to Church Discipline

The Lord Jesus Christ calls the church to a life of holiness (1Pe 1:15-16; Heb 12:14). However, as the church is still in the process of sanctification, there will be occasions when members may fall into sin and serious error. It is for this reason that church discipline is mandated by Scripture to be taught and seriously enforced in church according to biblical procedure (Mt 18:15-17; 1Co 5; Ro 16:17-18; 1Ti 1: 20, 5:19-20; Tit 3:10-11).

The church exercises discipline in order to bring the person to genuine repentance and full restoration as a member of the church; to safeguard the purity of the church's faith, life, and testimony; to warn the members to avoid evil; to keep the demarcation line between the world and the church wide and unmistakable; and ultimately to honor the Lord's name

among its members and in the community at large (Ro 2:23-24). Being an expression of biblical love (Heb 12:5-11), discipline is not intended to punish the offender (2Co 2:7-8). The church shall therefore undertake the discipline of her members out of a heart of love and concern (Gal 6:1).

o. Observing to the Ordinances

The church in the New Testament recognized two important ordinances which the Lord instituted and commanded them to observe – the Lord’s Supper and Water Baptism. Believers are mandated by Christ to do this in celebration and commemoration of the His death and bodily resurrection.

These ordinances are in no way the means of salvation but are practiced in view of the merits of Christ on the cross on behalf of all believers. They simply signify and symbolize the internal meaning and implication of the redeemed life. We believe that salvation is solely on the basis of grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The concept of baptismal regeneration must be rejected on the grounds that it conflicts with the Scriptures (Eph 2:8-9).

1) Baptism

Water baptism is a response of obedience, as a result of faith in Christ (Ac 2:38; 1Pe 3:21). It is an identification with the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ (Ro 6:3-6; Gal 3:27; Col 2:12). Through water baptism we publicly declare our conversion to and identification with Christ, and that we have been transferred from the kingdom of Satan and his evil works into the glorious kingdom of God’s Son (Ac 2:41; 10:47-48; Col 1:13) in order to walk in newness of life (Ro 6:1-11; Gal 3:27).

We administer baptism by immersion because we believe that it is what the New Testament teaches. The word "baptize" (Gk. *baptizo*) means to “submerge” or “immerse” (Mk 1:5-10; Ac 8:36-39).

We also administer baptism in the authority of the name of Jesus Christ (Ac 2:38) with a recognition of the triune Godhead (Mt 28:19) and only to those who give a believable profession of faith in Jesus Christ. This is why we require all candidates for water baptism to undergo a Water Baptism Class where the significance of water baptism and the attendant responsibilities to the baptized believer are explained, and where their profession of faith in Jesus Christ is ascertained. Likewise, we also do not baptize infants and toddlers; instead we dedicate them to the Lord in the hope that someday, by the grace of God, they may grow up to be believers.

2) **The Lord's Supper**

The Lord's Supper can be traced back in the Passover meal of Christ and His followers (Mk 14:22–25; Mt 26:26–29; Lk 22:17–20). It became a significant celebration by the early church whenever they would come together (Ac 2:42). The apostle Paul passed it on to all believers as a perpetual ordinance in 1Co 11:23-26.

The purpose in celebrating the Lord's Supper is not to literally partake of the body and blood of the Lord for the impartation of God's grace, as some are teaching. Rather, it is to remember the sacrificial death of Christ (1Co 11:24-25), proclaim His death and anticipate His return (1Co 11:26). It also provides an opportunity to those who are already saved to confront their sin and renew their fellowship with Christ.

The sacred and comprehensive nature of Lord's Supper requires every communicant to treat it with the dignity it deserves (1Co 11:27-28).

p. Performing Other Church Rites

1) **Child Dedication**

Since we reserve the administration of water baptism only to those who have already understood the gospel and have come by faith savingly in the Lord Jesus Christ (Ro 6:1-11), we therefore dedicate children (infants and toddlers) to the Lord (Lk 10:13-16).

Parents who desire to have their children dedicated to the Lord will present their child before God and the Church acknowledging that children are gifts from the Lord (Ps 127:3), asking for grace and wisdom in carrying out their parental responsibilities, and trusting that their child might one day trust the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation.

During this joyful moment, the officiating pastor will give an exhortation on the rationale behind the dedication ceremony, convey the charge to the parents, godparents, and all witnesses present, and then lead the prayer of dedication.

2) **Marriage**

Marriage is the only relationship, designed and instituted by God, to reflect the covenant relationship that exists between Christ and the church (Eph 5:31-32; cf. Pr 18:22). It is intended by God to be

a lifelong, fruitful, and loving covenant relationship between a man and a woman (Ge 2:24; 1Co 7:10-11; Mt 5:31-32). Therefore, the man and woman entering marriage should vow to God and to each other, in the presence of their families and church, to leave their parents, cleave to each other, and live out their one-flesh covenant relationship (Ge 2:24; Mk 10:6-9). They embark in a lifetime commitment to unconditionally and faithfully love one another, striving to grow in their marriage relationship (Heb 13:4; Eph 5:29).

SDGCC solemnizes marriage only between believers of the opposite sex and, as a rule, only for its members who have complied with all legal requirements.

Before the marriage ceremony the prospective couple will be required to undergo a pre-marital counseling program with the solemnizing minister or any of his associates. During the course of the counseling, the solemnizing minister shall have the right to decline officiating the wedding should he strongly feel that the couple is not ready for it.

Remarriage is permitted for the faithful or abandoned spouse only when the divorce was on biblical grounds and was obtained legally; and only "in the Lord" (Ro 7:1-3; 1Co 7:39). SDGCC recognizes however that each case to be brought before the Board of Elders will require much prayer, divine wisdom and humble seeking of the Lord's will to resolve.

3) Funeral Services

In obedience to the biblical command to "*weep with those who weep.*" (Ro 12:15b), as well as the Lord Jesus' example of sympathizing with the grieving family of Lazarus (Jn 11:33-35), the church also expresses sympathy and compassion to families bereaved by the loss of a loved one by offering to conduct funeral services during the wake and at the burial.

Funeral services will be granted upon the request of the bereaved family. The church will appoint a minister to officiate and seek the help of the other ministries of the church to help facilitate the service.

During the wake, the program of the service commonly includes exhortation and encouragement from the Word of God, gospel sharing, song offering and prayer for the bereaved family. If the bereaved family is a Christian family, worship may be included as part of the program.

The final service before funeral procession to the gravesite is more formal. The program may include opening worship song/s, the reading of Scriptures, a special song offering, the exhortation from the Word, the eulogy, a prayer of comfort for the bereaved family, and a word of gratitude from any of the members of the bereaved family.

The graveside program would include an opening prayer, a short exhortation from the Word, closing prayer, final viewing and the burial.

4) Dedication of Properties

Upon request, the church may also perform simple dedication of properties, such as homes, buildings, vehicles, etc.

q. Relating to the Greater Body

In the universal sense, the church consists of all those who, in this age, have been born of the Spirit of God (Jn 3:3,5) and have by that same Spirit been baptized into the body of Christ (1Co 12:13). At least 23 of the 115 times where the word "church" was used in the Bible, it refers to the overall fellowship of redeemed persons who belong to the family of God (Eph 3:15) and are in the kingdom of God (Jn 3:3,5). These instances refer to persons regardless of where located or at what time they existed (Ac 8:1, 3; 12:1; 1Co 15:9, Gal 1:13; Phil 3:6).

In relation to this, a doctrine clearly taught in the New Testament that helps in understanding the nature of the church is the doctrine of the unity of the church. The ideal of unity is emphasized in Jesus' high-priestly prayer (Jn 17:20-23) as well as in Paul's discussion of the church in Ephesians 4:1-16. It is also reflected in a reference to the local church at Jerusalem (Ac 4:32) and in an appeal to believers to be of one accord and one mind (Phil 2:2).

Therefore, precisely because the church consists of more than just our local church, we must take care against having an exclusivist perspective with regard to relating to and serving the Lord together with believers who do not belong to our local church. Our church must be willing to extend the hand of cooperation and ministry to other churches and believers, as long as such cooperation will not compromise our testimony and our doctrinal positions, especially with regard to the fundamentals of the faith and our particular distinctives as Soli Deo Gloria Christian Church.

(See also Chapter 22)

r. Awaiting Christ's Return

The return of Christ is the blessed hope and glorious moment of every saint (1Th 4:13-17). It is when He will present the church as His bride, glorious before Him at last – spotless, holy, and blameless (2Co 11:2; Rev 21:2; Eph 5:25-27, Jude 24). It will also be the fulfillment of the promise of Jesus to His disciples to bring every believer home to His Father (Jn 14:3). It is a glorious event that ushers believers into the fullness of joy in entering the presence of Christ (Rev 21:23) and in receiving the rewards of the saints according to their works (1Co 3:14; 1Co 4:5c; Rev 22:12). The prospect of the Lord's return thus serves as the believers' ultimate hope in the midst of any difficult and desperate situation they may face in this earthly life, and also, therefore, serves as their motivation for perseverance, holiness, and faithfulness to Christ (1Jn 3:2-3; 2Pe 3:10-14; Rev 22:7).

28. The Parameters

Leadership in the church must be expressive of the heart of our Great Shepherd – a heart that is, on the one hand, compassionate and gracious, and on the other hand, unyieldingly righteous (Ac 20:28). The leaders in the Church must, therefore, guard against both lax leadership and authoritarianism (1Pe 5:2-4).

Duly-recognized leaders must affirm the exercise of spiritual gifts and all ministerial functions. Every member desiring to serve must have met the Biblical requirements set by the church before embarking on any official ministry.

While we encourage the members to exercise their spiritual gifts for the edification of the body, the duly-recognized leadership of the church maintains the right and responsibility to suspend any of her workers from active ministry duty when the situation warrants it. This procedure will be carried out in accordance with principles taught in Scripture (e.g., Mt 18:15-17; 1Ti 5:19-20).

Confronting brethren in love must not be based on perceived attitudes or motives but on actual observable conduct and/or speech explicitly forbidden in Scripture. Believers must not confront on the basis of mere preference or even a principle inferred from Scripture. Believers must likewise refrain from judging the contents of another's heart (Ro 14:4; 1Co 4:5).

As we strive for unity, we must be careful not to confuse this with uniformity. We recognize our unity with the universal body of believers in Christ, and we do not stand as separatists or isolationists by design. Yet we shall endeavor not to obscure or compromise our critical doctrinal views for the sake of organizational unity (Jude 3-4; 2Ti 1:13-15; Tit 1:9).

Part 7: Commitment to Holiness

God has called His people to be set apart for His glory and purpose. Believers are taught to be holy as He is holy (1Pe 1:15-16). A life of holiness will distinguish us from the world (2Co 6:14-16). We affirm, of course, that the call to live holy lives necessitates the work of regeneration and sanctification effected by the Holy Spirit (Ro 15:16; 1Co 6:11). However, we also recognize that this entails the believer's yielding to and cooperation with the Spirit (Gal 5:16-18).

1. *The Pillar*

The Church is committed to nurturing and encouraging holiness in the lives of her members through the communication of clear Biblical teachings, the promotion of constant self-examination against Biblical standards (2Co 13:5), the continuous encouragement to persevere in the spiritual disciplines—e.g., devotional time, study of the Word, fellowship, etc. (1Co 9:27), the periodic call to repentance, and when necessary, the loving application of church discipline to confront and restore fallen brethren (Gal 6:1; Mt 18:15-17). We dare not lower these standards to that of the world. We remind ourselves that the church cannot expect God's work to be accomplished, nor Christ's name to be glorified, if Christians commit moral compromise (2Co 6:14-7:1). We bear within our hearts the promise of our Lord's return. In this light, we strive to be ready to give an account of every detail of our lives (1 John 3:3; Ro 14:12; 1Pe 4:5).

29. *The Practice*

As members of the local church, we are called to manifest the life of holiness and integrity in the following ways:

- a. To pursue personal holiness by abstaining from all forms of ungodliness in conduct, words, and thoughts; and to devote oneself to godliness, reverent fear and devotion to God, to manifest the fruit of the Spirit, discipline and faithfulness in every aspect of life (Ro 12:1-2; 1Co 6:19-20; Gal 5:22-23; 1Ti 4:7-8).
- b. To guard and uphold the doctrinal purity of the church, exercise discernment in matters that are contrary to sound doctrine and practice (2Ti 1:13-14; Jude 3; 1Co 11:2, 16).
- c. To relate biblically with other members of the church, avoiding gossips, quarrels, piques and divisions that are not in keeping with our unity in Christ and also to live at peace with others (Eph 4:1; Ro 12:14-21; 16:17-18).
- d. To promote biblical confrontation, reconciliation and restoration of fallen brethren in the church (Mt 18:15-18; Gal 6:1-2).
- e. To maintain integrity in the area of stewardship in time, abilities, finances and resources, work and business ethic and practice (Eph 5:15-17; 2Th 3:6-13).
- f. To obey and submit to God-ordained leadership both within the church as well as to civil authorities (Ro 13:1-2; Tit 3:1; Heb 13:17; 1Th 5:12-13).
- g. To uphold sexual and moral purity in thoughts, words and deeds

(1Co 5:9-13; 1Th 4:2-8).

h. To uphold the sanctity of marriage and to build up the family (Eph 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Heb 13:4-5).

i. To refuse to give in to any undue advantage or sordid financial gain, rejecting to participate in gambling, bribery, fraudulent financial practices and the like (2Co 12:17-18; 1Co 5:11).

j. To abstain from the compromise of being bound together with unbelievers in marriage (including dating and courtship with an unbeliever) or to enter into any enterprise or relationship that would be detrimental to the Christian's witness (2Co 14-7:1).

30. The Parameters

We need to realize that in promoting holiness in the church, we are not advocating any distortions to biblical holiness such as Pharisaism, legalism, perfectionism, asceticism, mysticism and antinomianism. We maintain that holiness is always the work of God's grace in Christ as we continue to yield to the Holy Spirit's control in the exercise of godly disciplines.

Part 8: The Discipleship of Every Member

Our Lord mandated the Church to make disciples of all believers (Mt 28:18-20). We take this as our ultimate goal as a church, desiring to "present every man complete in Christ" (Col 1:28). With this as our objective, the involvement of every member in the church's program of discipleship is indispensable.

1. The Pillar

We maintain that the test of a congregation, apart from the personal holiness of its members, is based on how effectively those same members are penetrating the world with the Gospel. In many churches, members are not well trained and are ignorant of what Christ has commanded believers to do. As a result their professed beliefs and behavior are not congruent.

Most churches today grow in number only by transfer and not by multiplication. Many modern Christians have no qualms about playing "musical chairs" when it comes to their church involvement. They crowd to local churches that entertain them, cater to their felt needs, and demand very little from their already cluttered or tight schedules. They effectively see themselves as mere spectators at a performance.

The Great Commission in Matthew 28:18-20 calls for three vital actions—going, baptizing and teaching. "Going" is a circumstantial participle that could be understood to mean, "as you are going." This command simply underscores the point that reaching the world is not for the sedentary. Therefore, as the believer goes through life, whether he travels from place to place or lives a localized life, he maximizes opportunities to share the Gospel to the lost (Ac

8:4).

The important actions of “baptizing” and “teaching” qualify the main commanded action of the text. Baptizing converts requires that new believers make a public profession of faith (Ac 2:38). Teaching others to obey covers a broad spectrum of the Christian experience. Its essential thrust is to bring people Scriptural truths that will guide them in their beliefs and practice (Ac 2:42).

The imperative command of the Great Commission is “make disciples.” This is the formula for evangelizing the world and the methodology required to bring reproduction and multiplication to world missions. By specifically commanding the making of disciples, Jesus specified the work of the Church.

It must be emphasized that Christ did not merely say, “Make converts”. Being a convert or a Christian does not necessarily lead to reproduction. Sadly, many believers are spiritually sterile. They do not bring the Gospel cause forward, and they fail to reproduce themselves in the life of others. But a true disciple is healthy and godly and endeavors to reproduce himself. Therefore, disciples and the Biblical disciple-making process solve the crisis at the heart of the church. This is God’s plan for His Body.

At minimum, a disciple publicly affirms his conversion through baptism, and submits to the authority of the leaders of the local church by being taught. He makes himself available for training; he understands the virtue of accountability; he devotes himself to a lifetime of learning.

31. The Practice

Disciple-making in the church happens in three primary settings: the large group, the small group and the one-on-one. The Scripturally-ordained tool of the large group is the preaching of the Word particularly during the Lord’s Day. (The large group may also be ministered unto by doctrinally-sound film, music, and drama. We must stress however that these methods can never replace the primacy of preaching.) The large group method is utilized in worship services, prayer meetings, retreats, activities of special fellowships and demographically-defined groups and short-term training classes.

The small group trains people by instructing them, showing them how and doing it with them. This method of discipling is undertaken primarily in the discipleship cells. It is supplemented with short-term training classes, participation in ministry-related and demographically-defined groups. Believers need basic skills in studying Scripture to obey it and to allow it to renew their minds, Biblical prayer, sharing one’s life with others in the church, and communicating the message of Christ. The controlled environment of the small group can teach and measure the development of these skills. (This form of discipleship also includes one-on-one dynamics or Biblical counseling with every group member—for specific instruction, correction, reproof and training.)

The one-on-one method provides a great deal of precise discipling, particularly when supplemented by homework arising out of the disciple's life situations and problems and the reading of good, Scriptural books. This method has helped countless people in growing spiritually, and in motivating them to church involvement and ministry in ways no sermon or exhortation can. The keys to the effectiveness of this method are: the Christlike love and shepherding skill of the discipler and the openness, faithfulness and willingness to submit of the disciple. Hence, only individuals who have been properly trained by the Church, are recognized as possessing the necessary gifts, and have been given permission by the leadership will be allowed to undertake this ministry.

Serving in the church is a natural outcome of the discipleship process. Scripture tells us that Jesus taught the disciples to be servants (Mt 20:25-28). Both by precept and example the Scriptures call on all believers who would be disciples of the Lord to be His servants. The dynamics of discipleship are therefore realized as members commit themselves to various avenues of service in the church.

Effective discipleship can only be undertaken by the church in a context of accountability. It actually provides the individual and the church with the essential discipline and support to reach godly goals. Accountability is necessary because Christians are self-willed. When a system and culture of accountability are properly established in the church, they will facilitate spiritual growth, maintain godliness among the members of the body, and rid the church of people who would pollute, destroy, and bring shame to the name of Christ (Tit 3:10; 1Ti 5:15,19).

32. The Parameters

The discipler must recognize that he is merely an instrument of God's grace and that it is God alone who can sovereignly transform the disciple's life.

The discipler must use his God-given influence in ways consistent with the Word of God for the purpose of accomplishing God's will in the disciple's life. The discipling relationship should not be used to give the discipler undue control over the disciple. Neither should it result in idolatrous emotional dependence, nor be used for sordid gain.

On the other hand, the disciple must recognize that the discipler is God's appointed undershepherd in his life.

To uphold blamelessness, we underscore the importance of limiting accountability relationships to people of the same gender. In exceptional cases where the discipler is constrained to minister to a person of the opposite sex, he or she must involve a third party of the same gender as the disciple and must work to disengage from the accountability relationship as quickly as the Lord will allow.

Part 9: The Oversight of the Flock by the Elders

The Head of the church is the Lord Jesus Christ (Eph 4:15-16). Although we are to do everything we can in the church, it is the power of Christ that makes everything work (Jn 15:5). Before He ascended into heaven, however, it seems that the Lord in speaking to Peter in John 21:15-19 was also entrusting to him to care for and to feed His flock, and to carry on here on earth His task as Shepherd of His church.

In Acts 20:28 Paul emphasized the responsibility of elders “to care for the church of God.” Elders were to shepherd God’s flock under the Great Shepherd, upon whom they will be accountable (See 1Pe 5:1-6; Ac 20:28; Heb 13:17). In the New Testament, the office of elder, therefore, is the highest level of local church leadership and carries a tremendous amount of responsibility.

The apostolic churches had a plurality of elders. Elders were appointed in every church (Ac 14:23) and in every town (Tit 1:5). Paul’s letter to the Philippians was addressed to one church (Phil 4:15) but it did not have only one pastor but many overseers (Phil 1:1).

Thus we begin with an assertion that will ground and guide this portion of our philosophy of ministry: New Testament leadership, particularly eldership, was not singular but plural (Ac 15:2-6; 22-23; 1Ti 4:14; 1Pe 5:1-3).

1. The Pillar

Church government is a theologically significant, extremely practical, and crucial issue to the proper functioning of the body of Christ. Church history will prove that some of the worst troubles wrought in the Christian church have been the result of deviating from Scriptural principles and models of church government. These in turn produced some of the worst God-dishonoring leaders both in the church specifically and in the world generally. That is why it is imperative that church polity must be based on nothing less than the Scriptural standard and teaching. Elders are to be raised up and appointed to shepherd and lead the church of Christ. And these elders are given clear qualifications and functions in Scripture. The strength or weakness of a local church can be almost always traced to the strength or weakness of its church leadership.

33. The Practice

Biblical eldership has the following characteristics:

a. It is a plurality.

The Biblical data indicates that the oversight of the Church is a team

effort. The norm in the New Testament church was a plurality of elders. We note that every place in the New Testament where the term *presbuteros* is used, it is plural, except where the Apostle Peter uses it of himself in 1Pe 5:1.

This concept of shared leadership in the Church provided for accountability, balance, sharing burdens, mutual encouragement and mutual submission among the members of the Board of Elders. This prevented the rise of the one-pastor church as well as lessened the chance for pride and tyranny in the office. It also helped the leadership team to focus on Christ as the true Head of the church (1Ti 5:19-20; Gal 2:11ff; Pr 11:14; 1Co 3:4).

b. It has specific qualifications.

(Please refer to Chapter 12, Part 2)

c. It has clear functions.

(Please refer to Chapter 12, Part 8)

d. It shall be assisted by Deacons.

(Please refer to Chapter 13, Parts 1 and 6)

e. It requires the submission of the congregation

The elders are Christ's undershepherds and stewards, thus the congregation is to obey and submit to their guidance, protection and care (Heb 13:17). In addition to that, Paul says to the congregation to "respect those who labor among you and are over you in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work" (1Th 5:12-13).

34. The Parameters

Elders must never wield their authority in a heavy-handed way, use manipulative tactics, or be arrogant, or aloof. They must not enslave others or create a repressive atmosphere. They must never use their office for the purpose of material gain or prominence. They must always bear the marks of humble servanthood and be accountable to the church for their behavior or conduct (1Pe 5:1-4).

In disciplining or disqualifying an elder, it is absolutely essential that the grounds for disqualification be Biblical—not merely because of prejudice, resentment, or sinful majority vote. (For a more detailed discussion on the discipline of elders, please see Chapter 12, Part 12.)

Part 10: The Service of Deacons in the Church

The Deaconate assists the *Board of Elders* in the care and nurture of the local church body. Their unique purpose is to carry out the kind of work described in the Book of Acts to cater to those in need in order that the pastors, elders, and leaders may have adequate time and opportunity to “*devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.*”(Ac 6:4). They are ready to do any work that is a logical and practical extension of the work of Christ through the local body of believers. It is clear that elders and deacons complemented each other in the first century (see Phil 1:1).

1. The Pillar

The biblical pattern for church deacons can be traced in the church’s early days (Ac 6:1-6). The experience of the early church was that the growing needs of the members must be met. The apostles, in view of their priority for prayer and the ministry of the word, asked the congregation to choose seven men – men of good reputation and sound character – to perform this task of serving tables.

The meaning of *diakonos* is “generally one who is busy with something in a manner that is of assistance to someone” (BDAG); a person who renders helpful service (*Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*); or one who renders service to another (*Mounce’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words*).

35. The Practice

Biblical deaconship has the following characteristics:

a. It is composed of men only.

The Scripture is not clear as to whether or not women are to be appointed to the office of deacon. In 1 Timothy 3:11, the Greek word *gunaikas* can either be translated “women” or “wives.” This ambiguity results in at least three interpretations. The text could refer to (1) the wives of deacons (cf. ESV, NET, NIV [1978], NLT, KJV, HCSB), (2) women deacons, or (3) women (NASB, NRSV, NJB) who assist the deacons but who are distinct from the deacons.

While each of these interpretations has merit, we take the wives of deacons as the best interpretation of 1Ti 3:11 (See Alexander Strauch, *The New Testament Deacon*; William Mounce, *Pastoral Epistles in Word Biblical Commentary*). In other words, we believe that deacons should be composed of men only.

The arguments in support of this view are the following:

- 1) The term *gunē* (singular of *gunaikas*) clearly refers to a deacon's wife in the next verse (1Ti 3:12; cf. 1Ti 3:2).
- 2) Deacons are discussed in 1Ti 3:8-10 and in 1Ti 3:12-13, so a shift in topic without a textual clue in verse 12 is awkward.
- 3) It is logical to see that verses 11 and 12 are dealing with the same topic and belong together. In these two verses Paul is developing the common theme of the deacon's family: his wife must be blameless; he must be faithful in marriage; his children must be well-managed.
- 4) "Since both offices, eldership and deaconship, demand the exercise of authority that extends over the entire local church, an argument can be made that both offices are restricted to males. The idea of women deacons, then, conflicts with the entire context, particularly 1 Timothy 2:12, which states '*But I do not allow a woman to... exercise authority over a man...*' Paul's restrictions on women having authority over men in the local church (1Ti 2:12) raises doubts about 1 Timothy 3:11 referring to women being deacons. One answer is to say that women deacons serve only women and that male deacons serve only men. But this is pure conjecture and contrary to the example of Acts 6. In Acts 6, seven men were appointed to provide for and protect the Jerusalem church's helpless widows." (Strauch)
- 5) Paul shows a readiness, both in the Pastoral Epistles and elsewhere, to create words to meet his needs. It would have been very easy for him to have written *tas diakonous* (women deacons) instead of the ambiguous and general word *gynaikas* (which may be translated as *women* or *wives*) and prevent what would be otherwise confusing if in fact he had changed topics.
- 6) If 1 Timothy 3:11 refers to the deacon's wife, then some say there should be a qualifier such as "their" before wives. However, Paul may not have felt the same need to qualify the Greek word as do some modern editors. It could, on the other hand, be argued that if Paul switched topics, some qualifier such as "women who serve as deacons" or at least a specifier at the beginning of v 12 would be expected. Verses 11 and 12 also deal with the same topic and belong together. Both of them talk about the deacon's family: his wife must be blameless; he must be faithful in marriage; his children must be well-managed.
- 7) Supporters of the view that the women mentioned in 1 Timothy 3:11 are deacon officials point to the conjunction "likewise" as introducing a new category of officials like deacons or overseers. "But this is pressing the word 'likewise' too far. The use of 'likewise' introduces a fresh category of people and compares them with the preceding group. It doesn't necessarily imply that women are official deacons. It

could equally imply that these women assist deacons or are wives who assist their deacon husbands. The use of 'likewise' actually works for all three views..." (Strauch)

- 8) It is often argued that if wife of deacons is intended in 1 Timothy 3:11 then one would also expect some word about the wife of the overseer. The answer to this is "that only the wives of deacons could assist their husbands in actually carrying out their ministry while the elders' wives could not. Indeed the wife of an elder would be strictly prohibited (1Ti 2:12) from those teaching and ruling functions which he performs in the church. Concerning the deacon's wife, however, no such prohibitions exist. On the contrary, as a deacon carried out his service and visitation duties, certain situations would arise which only a woman could perform [as in cases involving the care of single mothers, children, and sick or elderly women]. Such functions a deacon would quite naturally turn over to his wife whose character was complementary to his own. She therefore became his assistant in the outworking of his office." (Robert Lewis, *The "Women" of 1 Timothy 3:11*)
- 9) When Paul wrote about overseers (1Ti 3:1-7; Tit 1:6-9) and deacons (1Ti 3:8-13), he gave so many details about their moral and domestic qualifications. Paul did because his letters addressed actual problems in the churches at the time of the writing of his letters. If 1 Timothy 3:11 refers to deaconesses, one would expect more details, especially since women were so involved in heresy or domestic problems as may be gleaned from 1 Timothy 2:9-13; 5:11-15; 2 Timothy 3:6-7; and Titus 2:3-5.
- 10) "... since *diakonos* [deacon] can be either masculine or feminine, shouldn't we expect *diakonoi* [deacons] in verse 8 to cover both male and female deacons? Therefore it would be unnecessary for Paul to add verse 11, which says the same thing as verses 8 and 9. Let us look at this problem more closely. In English, for example, we speak of the 'minister' or 'pastor' of a church, but today that person may be either male or female. We don't call a woman minister or pastor a 'ministeress' or 'pastoress.' We say minister or pastor. The same thing is true of the word *nurse*. A nurse may be either male or female. We have no special form to distinguish male or female nurses. The same situation exists with the Greek word *diakonos*. Why, after listing five qualifications for 'deacons' that could include males or females does Paul in verse 11 repeat nearly the same qualification for women deacons? That would be like saying that all nurses must attend four years of college and then singling out male nurses and repeating that female nurses must attend four years of college with a slightly different terminology. The required four years of college applies to all nurses, male or female. If Paul is indeed singling out female deacons in verse 11, we then should expect him to add some uniquely

important qualifications for women deacons. That is not the case. Instead, as all commentators agree, Paul lists nearly the same qualification as those listed in verse 8-9. So, to understand *gynaikas* as referring to women deacons leaves us with formidable unanswered questions.” (Strauch)

11) As to whether Phoebe was a deacon or not, the text in Romans 16:1 is ambiguous. There are not enough clear indicators from the text to determine if *diakonos* simply means a caring servant in the general sense or a deacon in the official sense.

12) “Although the office of deaconess is found very early in church history, this tells us nothing necessarily about this verse” (WBC). “One must not confuse church history with Bible exegesis regardless of the practice followed in the church of the third and fourth centuries. This in no way ends the discussion. The issue lies not in what the early church did so much as it does in what Paul means” (Lewis).

b. It has specific qualifications.

(Please refer to Chapter 13, Part 2)

c. It has clear responsibilities.

(Please refer to Chapter 13, Parts 1 and 6)

d. It requires the submission of the congregation

Paul says that the congregation should subject themselves to those who devote themselves to the service of the saints (1Co 16:16). As in the case of the Elders, they too are to be esteemed very highly in love because of their work” (1Th 5:13).

36. The Parameters

One Bible teacher said, “In many churches, deacons misunderstand their role. They think that they comprise a second group of overseer-elders or that they are to provide checks and balances for the shepherds. If deacons control the finances, they often think they control the church. This should not be. It is plain from everything we have studied that deacons are subordinate to overseers. We must also understand that shepherds can perform all functions of deacons, but deacons cannot perform all the functions of shepherds. Unlike deacons, shepherds are responsible for the overall leadership, supervision, and teaching of the congregation. This includes handling and overseeing the church’s funds (Ac 11:30; 1Pe 5:2). In the sense that shepherds oversee the entire church, they also oversee the deacons. Therefore, deacons are not independent of the leadership oversight of the shepherds.”

Chapter 9: Church Membership

Part 1: Scriptural Rationale For Membership

Although the Scriptures contain neither an explicit mandate for nor a command against an official membership roll, we believe that to properly and effectively fulfill the expected functions of a local body of believers, formal commitment by every member is assumed (cf. 1Th 5:12-13; Heb 13:17). Commitment to a local church is not only the assumed responsibility of everyone claiming to be part of the universal church, but it is also the only appropriate response to the truths about the importance of the church. If the church is the household of God, a pillar and buttress of the truth, the body for whom Christ died, and the current form of His kingdom and His people, then every person who claims to belong to Him must belong to the local church (1Ti 3:15). Church membership unquestionably makes it easier for the leaders of the church to shepherd the flock and fulfill their biblical roles and responsibilities.

The believers in the book of Acts were devoting themselves to a local assembly and its leadership for teaching, leadership, fellowship and worship (Ac 2:42). There were also letters of commendation or acceptance written on behalf of both men and women to be welcomed and accepted into the fellowship or various assemblies (Ro 16:1-2; 1Co 16:10; Col 4:10; 2Co 3:1; 8:16-24).

The emphasis of these Scriptures is that every believer become identified and committed to a specific local assembly of believers following the leading and direction of God. This commitment is revealed by their attitude, faith, attendance, involvement, giving, and submission to that assembly.

Part 2: Eligibility for Membership

The following are eligible for membership:

1. Those who have a basic knowledge of the central aspects of the Gospel (i.e., salvation is by grace alone, in Christ alone, through faith alone), who have truly repented of their sin, trusted in Christ and confess Him as their Lord and Savior, and who give Biblical evidence of their regeneration and conversion by a life consistent with their profession, and with the doctrines and practices of the Church of Jesus Christ.
2. Those who have undergone believer's baptism by immersion (For applicants for membership who come from a different Christian baptismal tradition, see Note at the end of this Section.)
3. Those who are willing to accept the teachings embodied in the SDGCC Statement of Faith, Mission Statement, Philosophy of Ministry, Covenant of Membership, and this Manual as may be amended from time to time.
4. Those who are willing to submit to the leadership and government of the SDGCC.
5. Those who are willing to contribute regularly to the financial support of SDGCC.
6. Those who are willing to submit to the procedure of membership laid down by

the leadership of the Church, which includes attending the membership classes, submitting to a membership interview, and fulfilling all other specific requirements. However, applicants from other churches may be granted exemptions from this requirement on the discretion of the Board of Elders.

7. Those who are at least 15 years of age. (However, only those of legal age are required to sign the Legal Membership covenant form.)
8. Those who have been attending SDGCC Sunday Worship Gatherings for at least six (6) months prior to application.
9. Those who have been attending a duly recognized discipleship or accountability group/partner for at least six months and from its leader or representative get a recommendation for membership.

Note:

We recognize that there will be those who want to apply for membership with SDGCC who may not agree in all points with our teaching positions and church operating procedures. Any prospective member who has a concern with any belief, position, value or priority, is encouraged to bring his concern to the Board of Elders for consideration. The Board of Elders may exercise the prerogative to waive some requirements upon special deliberation and evaluation in some cases. The decision of the Elders on this matter will be final.

Part 3: General Procedures for Membership

The Board of Elders has formed a Membership Committee responsible for the implementation of the membership process. This Committee consists of selected members of the Board of Elders, Ministry Heads, and a Secretariat.

a.i.1. The applicant is to first go to the Secretariat to find out if he is eligible for membership (see Section 2 above) and then fill out a membership application and submit to the Secretariat.

a.i.2. The applicant will then be scheduled for an interview with the Membership Committee to determine the genuineness of his conversion.

a.i.3. The applicant who passes the interview is required to attend a membership class where he is given a membership kit which includes, among other things, a membership class manual and the covenant of membership, and where a host of specific requirements are enumerated and explained to him. In the membership class, the SDGCC is introduced to him through the elaboration of our church history, Statement of Faith, Mission Statement, Philosophy of Ministry, Covenant of Membership and Church Distinctives. (Those who cannot attend some of the classes will be required to read some material related to the topic they have missed and they are to submit a written report to the Secretariat.)

a.i.4. His name is then announced as a prospective member for at least two Sundays in church to give existing members the opportunity to comment on his

application. Any serious objections that may arise with regard to an application will be thoroughly evaluated by the Membership Committee as to their validity. The results of this evaluation will be forwarded to the Eldership for final decision. If no serious objections or reservations are brought forth and all requirements are fulfilled, he will then be ready to be affirmed as member.

Applicants who have not yet submitted to believer's baptism (or even if they had but did so out of ignorance and so want to be rebaptized), will be baptized, as well as testify publicly with the other membership candidates of his faith in Christ and their support of the church. SDGCC holds that baptism is not necessary for salvation (1Co 1:16-17), but is an important step of obedience in every believer's life and walk with Christ. For this reason, it is a requirement for church membership at SDGCC.)

a.i.5. The applicant who is approved by the Elders will be notified of his acceptance and asked to participate in a Sunday service where he will sign a Membership Covenant and be formally introduced by the Elders to the Congregation. The new member shall have the status of member in good standing and have his name added to the church membership roll.

[See also *Appendix A: Specific Requirements for Membership*]

Part 4: Membership Privileges

1. They will be included in the SDGCC's official roster of members.
2. They have the right to participate in special meetings for members.
3. They have voting privileges. Members in good standing may vote on those matters that the Board of Elders chooses to submit to the Church members.
4. They are eligible for ministry positions especially in teaching and worship-oriented ministries.
5. They are eligible for ministry or Church leadership (elder or deacon) positions.
6. They have the benefit of being prayed for regularly by the Church's leaders and, on special occasions, by brethren through the prayer chain system.
7. They can avail of the free services offered by the church upon request: visitation, counseling, Bible study, dedications, premarital counseling and wedding, funeral, etc.
8. They are given priority to avail of church resources such as counseling, visitation, discipleship, dedication, wedding, etc.
9. They may use for free church facilities such as chairs, tables and rooms not requiring electricity; fifty (50) percent off on church facilities rental like rooms and equipment requiring use of electricity (personal use for occasions like weddings, dedications, funeral, or other meetings that do not violate the church's beliefs and practices.)
10. They can avail of the fifty (50) percent off on the one-time library membership fee.
11. They will receive benevolence support (upon recommendation by church leaders, or the member's request with the approval by church leadership) for

- sickness, injuries, or death (sustained by the member of his/her immediate family).
12. They may avail of Scholarship grants and discounts for SDGCA and IBI students.
 13. They will have the benefit of participating in and being held accountable to the process of church discipline.
 14. Other benefits as announced in the church's official bulletins, publications, or pulpit announcements.

Part 5: Duties and Responsibilities of Members

The duties listed below are expected of all members. They are not comprehensive but representative.

1. To grow in one's relationship with God and Christ—loving, worshiping and serving Him—in dependence upon the Holy Spirit through the study of and obedience to Scriptures, prayer, and other spiritual disciplines.
2. To faithfully attend and participate in Sunday worship services through singing, giving, serving, praying, and being instructed by the preaching of the Word of God.
3. To undergo water baptism and participate regularly in the Lord's Supper.
4. To discover their spiritual gifts and talents and faithfully use them to serve others.
5. To guard the doctrinal purity of the church as defined in its Doctrinal Statement. (These are the seven doctrinal points in the SDGCC's Doctrinal Statement.)
6. To uphold the SDGCC Bylaws, Church Manual, and Member's Covenant in every respect.
7. To refrain from teaching anything contrary to the Statement of Faith and Distinctives of SDGCC.
8. To preserve the church's organizational and spiritual unity.
9. To respect and submit to the church's duly constituted leadership.
10. To hold themselves accountable to members of SDGCC.
11. To submit to the standard of New Testament discipline.
12. To submit to the Biblical standard for godly marriages and families.
13. To participate in the church's evangelistic, educational, and edification programs through faithful attendance and financial support. This includes attending the Worship Services (e.g., Sunday services, prayer gatherings, Thanksgiving services, etc.), being part of a Cell group, Sunday School, participating in the various Fellowship Ministries (Youth, Young Adults, Women, Men, etc.), being part of a discipleship relationship (one-on-one or small group), and other church-sponsored activities and projects.
14. To attend all required special meetings of the church called upon by church leadership.
15. To abstain from habits and activities which are not glorifying to God, whether in private or in public.
16. To share Christ and His Gospel in every possible opportunity.
17. To support the church's mission of making disciples of all nations through prayer, active involvement or material support.

Part 6: Membership Roll

The Membership Committee will review the membership roll annually. Members may be removed from the roll by the member's choice, by church discipline, or by noninvolvement with the body. If an individual appears to no longer be involved with the church, i.e., he no longer attends Sunday services and any church activity but not due to physical incapacity, he will be contacted by the Membership Committee to verify his membership status. If he has chosen to leave the church, he will be asked to personally meet the Lead Pastor (or any Elder) along with the ministry head assigned to that member for an exit interview. Unless there are yet unresolved issues that need to be settled, the parting member is then formally released from his covenant by means of an official letter of release. An individual may be removed from the roll only after exhausting all reasonable means of contacting him and after being informed formally by the Membership Committee.

Part 7: Members-on-Leave

The eldership shall recognize, on a case-to-case basis, special or abnormal circumstances that may hinder the fulfillment of a member's duties and responsibilities towards the Church. In such cases and with an expressed request, a person may be granted member-on-leave status up to a period of one year, renewable upon the discretion of the Elders.

Members, who transfer residence away from the area of SDGCC and cannot in conscience unite with another church in their new location, may request to be granted this status. If the request is approved, such persons must update the Church on the status of their spiritual walk, at least once every six months in person, by letter, email, or online facility established by the Church. Failure to do so shall subject them to exclusion from the Church membership roster after appropriate efforts have been made to contact them.

Another special circumstance relates to members who may not be able to fulfill their responsibilities to the Church for a limited, clearly-defined period due to work assignment or studies.

At the discretion of the Elders, member-on-leave status may also be granted to Christian workers on short-term missions, those who are unable to attend the Church's activities and meetings due to illness or physical problems; and other people under like circumstances.

All members-on-leave shall not be allowed to exercise their voting privileges.

A member-on-leave may request reinstatement to regular member status after he has resumed regular attendance, subject to the discretion and approval of the Board of Elders.

Part 8: Associate Members

The Board of Elders, at any regular or special meeting, may approve associate members by a unanimous vote. Eligibility for associate membership is available to any person who is a member in good standing of another Evangelical church in another community recognized by CCM, and who is in this community on a temporary basis and intends to return to his or her home church.

Associate members shall be entitled to all the privileges of regular members subject to the rules and limitations that apply to regular members in good standing.

Part 9: Voting and Congregational Meetings

The purpose of voting is not to simply obtain a "majority-rules" consensus. Rather, all voting in this church is designed to show God's leading within the flock on an issue.

Unless specifically indicated differently within the Manual, a two-thirds majority vote in favor of an issue shall signify to the church leadership that the flock agrees that God is leading favorably in the decision being voted on. If the two-thirds majority vote in favor is not achieved, the leadership will reevaluate the situation. No steps will be taken on any issue that requires a vote without the two-thirds majority.

Any member of the church in good standing may vote. The person may vote in person or they may vote absentee. An absentee vote is valid if the person writes down on any piece of paper the issue being voted on, their vote, and their signature. Absentee votes must be turned in to an Elder no later than the date of the meeting.

The means of voting will normally be by written ballot. This may vary, however, if the leadership makes known the manner of voting to be used when the scheduled voting is announced. The flock will be advised of the date and time of a meeting for a vote at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

At least 50-percent-plus-one of the church membership must participate to make the results of the vote binding.

Part 10: Removal from Membership

1. Member Initiated Removal

- a. *Member in good standing.* Any member in good standing can freely remove themselves from membership by contacting the church office and asking to be removed.
- b. *Member under church discipline.* Members under the process of church discipline cannot remove themselves from membership. If they refuse to repent, they will be removed at the recommendation of the elders.

2. Elder Initiated Removal

- a. Members who shall without good cause absent themselves from the services of the assembly for a period of 6 consecutive months may be considered inactive members and have their names listed in an Inactive Membership List. Inactive members will be reviewed by the Elders who will determine if they should be removed from membership. Those who are on the inactive membership list will not enjoy the rights and privileges of being a member (except the privilege of accountability and church discipline). If an inactive member wishes to be reinstated to regular membership status, they must contact and get approval from the Elders.
- b. Unrepentant members who have been disciplined by the church and put outside of the body will be removed from membership at the recommendation of the elders.
- c. All cases of terminated membership shall be announced to official members of the Church in a special meeting called for by the elders. Their names shall automatically be stricken out or expunged from the official membership register as well. All requests for reinstatement to regular membership status are subject to the discretion and approval of the Board of Elders.

3. *By Death*

When a member dies, his name is taken off from the official membership register.

Chapter 10: Church Discipline

Part 1: Definition of Church Discipline

Church discipline is the process of trying to restore a professing believer, caught in a state of continuous unrepentant sin, to a state of obedience to God.

Part 2: The Pattern and Basis for Discipline

The discipline of the church is first patterned after the fact that the Lord Himself disciplines the one He loves, and chastises every son whom he receives (Heb 12:6). Discipline is further based on the holy character of God (1Pe 1:16; Heb 12:11). The pattern of God's holiness, His desire for the church to be holy, set apart unto Him, is an important reason for the necessity of church discipline. The church is therefore to clean out the leaven of malice and wickedness from its ranks (1Co 5:6-8). A failure to discipline in a church today evidences a lack of awareness of the holiness of God.

Church discipline must be patterned after and based on the divine commands of Scripture. We have numerous passages which both command and give us biblical directives on the how, when and where of church discipline. Again, a failure to exercise this responsibility demonstrates a lack of obedience and belief in the

authority of the Bible (1Co 5:1-13; Mt 18:17-18; Tit 3:10; 2Th 3:6-15; 1Ti 5:20; Gal 6:1).

Part 3: The Purposes of Church Discipline

There are several reasons God commands the church to discipline professing believers who live in unrepentant sin.

1. To seek the sinning person's repentance, reconciliation and if necessary, restoration to the fellowship of the local church ("gained your brother," Mt 18:15; "restore him," Gal 6:1)
2. To win a soul to Christ (if a professing Christian).
3. To maintain the church's witness and the honor of Christ(1Pe 2:11-12; 3:8-16; Mt 5:13-16).
4. To adorn the gospel (Tit 2:4-5,9).
5. To maintain purity in the body (1Co 5:6-7).
6. To warn other members about the dangers of sinful behavior or teaching (Dt 19:20; Ac 5:11; 2Co 7:11).
7. To make others fearful of sinning (1Ti 5:20).
8. To avert the wrath of God (1Co 11:31).

Part 4: The Spirit of Church Discipline

Discipline does not entitle the elders to abuse their authority over the members of the church (1Pe 5:1-3). Scripture is clear that the motives of the individual(s) or the elders dealing with the erring member must be pure before our Savior, His Church, and the world.

1. They are to discipline in the spirit of humility, gentleness and patience, looking to themselves lest they too are tempted (Gal 6:1; 2Ti 2:24-25).
2. They are not to be motivated by hostility or anger but by a loving concern for the erring member (2Th 3:15).
3. They are to approach the erring member with heart-felt sorrow and sincere concern (1Co 5:2; 2Co 2:4).
4. They are to be ready to grant restoration to the erring member when repentance occurs (Lk 17:1-10; 2Co 2:6-8).

Part 5: The Practice of Church Discipline

1. *When It Is To Be Practiced*

Great care must be exercised here. Scripture does not warrant the exercise of church discipline for an individual or a church's pet taboos or peeves. Only sins of action should be confronted because evaluating an attitude alone is extremely difficult with our human limitations and judging what is in someone's heart is simply wrong (Ro 14:4; 1Co 4:5), unless his words or actions clearly reveal a problem in his heart. We should confront someone only when he or she acts in a

way forbidden in Scripture. That means being careful not to confront another based on a mere preference outside of Scripture (1Co 4:6) or even a principle inferred from Scripture by “exegetical gymnastics” and wrongly elevated to a universal standard (cf. Ro 14:1-12).

According to Scripture, there are four categories which warrant church discipline. These are:

- a. **Violations of brotherly love.** This includes private offenses against a brother or a sister as those sins listed in Matthew 5:22-23; 18:15; Romans 1:29-32; and Ephesians 4:31.
- b. **Violations of Christian Truth.** This includes the following:
 - 1) Apostasy - a public denial of the essential truths of God's Word (i.e., a belief in the inspired Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the final authority for belief and behavior; a belief in the Trinity; a belief in the complete humanity and the complete deity of Christ; a belief in the utter sinfulness of all humanity; a belief in the virgin conception of Christ and His Incarnation as the eternal Son of God; a belief in Christ's substitutionary atonement as the only way of salvation; a belief in the bodily resurrection and return of Christ; a belief in salvation by God's grace alone through faith in Christ alone; a belief in the eternal damnation of the lost and the eternal glorification of the saved). These essential truths are reflected in the SDGCC Doctrinal Statement (1Ti 4:1; Heb 3:12; 1Jn 2:19).
 - 2) False teaching - a deliberate and persistent teaching that rejects the foundational doctrines of Scripture (Gal 1:8-9; 1Ti 1:20; 2Ti 2:17-18; 2Pe 2:1; also implied in Rev 2:14-16; Phil 3:2-3, 15-19; Ro 16:17-18).
- c. **Violations of Christian Unity.** This includes causing division among members (Ro 16:17-18; Tit 3:9-11; Gal 5:19-21; 1Co 1:10-12) and defiance of God's established authorities in the church (3Jn 9-10; 1Co 4:19-21; Tit 1:9).
- d. **Violations of Christian Standards** (1Co 5:1, 11; 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; 1Th 4:3-8; 2Th 3:6,10). These include habits and activities which are harmful to the body, binding to the will, damaging to Christian witness, and not glorifying to God.

2. *How It Is To Be Practiced*

According to Matthew 18:15-18, the procedure for church discipline is:

a. **To Members**

Step 1: One-on-One

- 1) It shall be the duty of any member of SDGCC who bears

knowledge of erring individuals engaged in heresy or scandalous conduct (i.e., sin that can no longer be overlooked, Pr 19:11) to warn and correct such sinning individual in private, with the view of bringing him to repentance and restoration.

2) This step in the process of corrective discipline is informal and does not require the involvement of any elder or staff member of the church. This disciplinary process will not advance beyond this point if the person acknowledges his sin and repents.

3) This step may occur over several meetings, whatever the offended party think is prudent.

4) If there is no repentance upon rebuke for sin, then

Step 2: Bring Along One or Two Others

1) The confronting member shall again go to the sinning individual, still seeking his repentance, but accompanied by one or two others, preferably spiritual leaders (Gal 6:1), “that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses” (Mt 18:16).

2) They will serve as witnesses who shall affirm that the sin has indeed occurred, or is continuing, and/or that the erring individual has been appropriately confronted and has refused to repent.

3) They may also be the first counselors who will seek to reconcile the two estranged parties.

4) As in the first step, Step 2 may occur over several meetings, whatever the reconciling party think is prudent.

5) If the sinning individual still refuses to repent, then

Step 3: “Tell it to the Church”

Since the Bible does not give us details how to go about this step, we will apply the following guideline:

1) The matter shall be brought to the attention of the Board of Elders (or a duly-appointed committee of the Board). If the Board of Elders (or the same duly-appointed committee) determines—after thorough investigation and consideration according to the procedures prescribed in the Scripture, including Matthew 18:15-18 and 1 Timothy 5:19—that there is corroborating evidence that the sinning individual has indeed sinned or continues to sin, he shall again be confronted. If the sinning individual still refuses to repent, then

2) The Elders shall inform the Church in order to publicly call him to repentance. The Elders will announce his name to the members of SDGCC in a special business meeting called for that purpose. (Only members in good standing shall be permitted to attend such a special business meeting.) The Elders will provide a brief and discreet description of the sin so as not to cause stumbling to others or to bring undue embarrassment on any family members. They will then give the congregation two months to seek out the sinner and call him or her to repentance.

3) If the sinning individual still does not repent in response to the

Church's collective call to repentance, then

Step 4: Disfellowship (aka Excommunication) and Disassociation

1) He shall be dismissed from the fellowship and/or membership of the Church. Disfellowship and disassociation will be announced publicly in a special business meeting for members called for that purpose, and, consequently, his name shall be stricken out from the official membership register.

2) When Christ said, "let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector" (Mt 18:17), what He meant was to regard the unrepentant sinner in a way the Jews of that period regarded Gentiles and tax collectors. Perhaps the attitude that Jesus had in mind was no different from the way He wanted His disciples to relate with the proud and unrepentant Pharisees. In Matthew 15:14 Jesus said, "Let them alone; they are blind guides." Christ's stern words are equivalent to Paul's in the following excommunication passages:

³⁵/₁₇ "have nothing more to do with him" (Tit 3:10);

³⁵/₁₇ "have nothing do with him that he may be ashamed" (2Th 3:15);

³⁵/₁₇ "avoid them" (Ro 16:17);

³⁵/₁₇ "not even to eat with such a one" (1Co 5:11);

³⁵/₁₇ "Purge the evil person from among you" (1Co 5:13); and

³⁵/₁₇ "deliver this man to Satan" (1Co 5:5; 1Ti 1:20). MacArthur Study Bible says, "'Deliver' is a strong term, used of judicial sentencing. This is equal to excommunicating the professed believer. It amounts to putting that person out of the blessing of Christian worship and fellowship by thrusting him into Satan's realm, the world system" (cf. 1Jn 5:19). It should be noted, however, that even in excommunication the purpose is to effect the person's correction, restoration to the church, and eventual salvation (1Co 5:5, "*so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.*" See also 1Ti 1:20)

3) The word "you" in the phrase "let him be to you as," is singular. "This suggests that each member of the church is to abide by the corporate judgment and reminds the reader of the individual responsibility each believer has toward the others" (Expositor's Bible Commentary, Revised Series).

Step 5: Restoration and Reinstatement (2Co 2:5-11)

1) In the case of repentance in any of the first three steps, the member in question will be subjected to a restoration process which may include going through discipleship counseling, submitting to parameters set by the leadership of the church, or whatever other requirements deemed necessary to ensure spiritual restoration. In this event, the member will be required to sign an agreement of submission before the leaders of the church.

2) In the case of repentance after excommunication, it should be

ascertained that the person in question is willing to submit to discipleship counseling and whatever parameters or requirements deemed necessary to ensure spiritual restoration set by the Elders of the church. Once ascertained, public announcement of his repentance and submission will be made to the church. He may now be allowed to attend regular church services but not yet as a restored member. The discipling process then commences immediately. Regular assessment of the person's progress will be made. Upon completion of all requirements and visible manifestation of the fruits of repentance, he shall then be restored to all the rights, duties, privileges, and responsibilities of fellowship and/or membership. This restoration will also be publicly announced to the body by the Elders.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, the Elders in the exercise of their discretion may proceed directly to the second portion of Step 3 (i.e., informing the Church and the congregation and publicly calling the sinning individual to repentance) or Step 4 of church discipline (i.e., dismissing the individual from the fellowship and/or membership of the Church) when one, or more, of the following have occurred:

- 1) When the sin or transgression and the refusal to repent have been public, i.e., openly, flagrantly, brazenly and to the offense of the church at large (1Co 5:1-5; 2Th 3:14);
- 2) When the disciplined individual has taught or otherwise disseminated doctrine deemed false or erroneous by the Elders and has chosen to disregard their correction or reproof (Ro 16: 17); or
- 3) When the disciplined party has been warned twice to cease from making factious and divisive statements or conduct and has chosen to disregard that warning (Tit 3:10-11).

Separate and apart from the process of church discipline outlined above, and subject to the discretion and approval of the Board of Elders, the Elders (or a duly-constituted committee thereof) may notify, expressly or impliedly, a member, non-member regular attendee, or other individuals not to be present, or seen, within Church premises or such other premises where the Church will hold other activities for a period of time as it shall deem necessary for the safety and well-being of others. Such required absence may, or may not, be concurrent with any measure of discipline sanctioned by the Church upon that individual.

b. To Non-members

The nature and purpose of church discipline is equally applicable to both members and non-members who attend SDGCC and those who profess to be a Christian. Therefore, even though a person is not a member of SDGCC, the elders may, in their sole discretion, exercise church discipline over a non-member.

By attendance at SDGCC, a person concedes to the authority of the Elders to exercise church discipline. In accordance with the Word of God, a professing Christian caught in any trespass is to be approached by the person who first discovered their sin, and in a spirit of love, call them to repentance and holiness. (See Mt 18:15-20; Gal 6:1; Ps 51; Lk 3:8; 2Co 7:9-11.)

- 1) The disciplinary procedure begins with the initial contact and call to repentance. This step in the process is informal and does not require the involvement of any elder or staff member of the church. This disciplinary process will not advance beyond this point if the person acknowledges his or her sin and repents.
- 2) However, if the person does not acknowledge his sin and repent, then the person that knows about the sin is to seek one or two others and go as a group to confront the sinning person and call him back to repentance again.
- 3) If he or she is still unwilling to repent, the Elders will be contacted. Disclosure of the sin to the elders, pastor or counselor of the church may result in full disclosure to other elders, pastors and/or counselors of the information obtained in confidence.
- 4) By the decision of the Elders, the professing believer's name and sin may be announced from the pulpit by the Elders to the congregation. Any such announcement may include disclosure of information obtained in confidence by an elder, pastor or counselor of the church.
- 5) Disclosure of such information may be necessary to fulfill the biblical requirements for discipline. The congregation will be asked to pray for and encourage the rebellious person to repent. If there is still no repentance, the person will be removed from the fellowship of the local body of SDGCC.
- 6) If the disciplined person repents and asks to be restored, they must contact the leadership of the church for a personal meeting. If the elders determine they have demonstrated true repentance, they will be restored to full fellowship.

Chapter 11: Grievance Procedures

Suggestions and proposals from the flock can be a vital and healthy avenue by which the leadership may minister to the rest of the flock (Pr 15:22). When handled scripturally, this type of communication edifies the body, ministers to the needs of the flock, helps preserve and promote unity within the church and brings glory to God.

Following the principles outlined above, any member of the flock who harbors a disagreement about any policy or procedure promoted by the church or its leadership, should as a first step, prayerfully and privately approach the leadership. This may be done through informal consultation

with an elder, by means of a signed letter to the Board, or meeting with the Board at the church member's request. It is recognized that these steps should be taken prior to public discussion of any issue so as to help the leadership minister to the body more effectively and to help avoid discord and disunity within the flock (Heed the warnings of Proverbs 13:3, 16:27-28 and 17:4).

The church leadership should seek to prayerfully accept and address any complaint thus presented and seek to resolve all problems in a manner which best promotes those benefits mentioned above.

When the above procedures are not followed, causing factions and strife, it will be necessary to exercise church discipline to deal with the offending member as per Chapter 10. Titus 3:10-11 says, *“As for a person who stirs up division, after warning him once and then twice, have nothing more to do with him, knowing that such a person is warped and sinful; he is self-condemned.”*

Chapter 12: Board of Elders

Part 1: General Statement

SDGCC affirms that Jesus Christ alone is the Head of His Body, the Church, but that He has ordained that local churches be governed by a plurality of elders assisted by deacons (Col 1:18; Ac 20:17; Phil 1:1; 1Ti 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-9; 1Pe 5:1-5).

The elders, as a body, are tasked with the responsibility of leading, overseeing, shepherding, and caring for the local church. The elders, therefore, are not just board members of a religious corporation with whom the pastor cautiously consults. The term elder is used interchangeably with overseer, and shepherd or pastor. This means all appointed Elders will be considered pastors, shepherds, overseers and elders. While there may be a difference between Elders in the areas of giftedness, spiritual maturity, training, and Bible knowledge, all Elders are to function as co-equals.

[See also Chapter 8, Part 9]

Part 2: Qualification of Elders

The office of the Elder is restricted to Christian males who meet the character qualifications of an elder as mentioned in 1Timothy 3 and Titus 1, have the appropriate spiritual gifts, desire the work, and be able and willing to commit the time necessary to function as an elder.

Qualities set forth in 1Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 are as follows:

1. Above reproach (Tit 1:6,7; 1Ti 3:2) – This qualification summarizes and embraces every other qualification of elders. It is to live in such a way that no

- legitimate accusation could be brought him that would bring disrepute on the gospel or church.
2. *The husband of one wife (Tit 1:6; 1Ti 3:2) – marital faithfulness, not flirtatious; not in bondage to lust.
 3. Manages his household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive (1Ti 3:4,5) – because he is able to lead his family in spiritual matters, his children are not open to the charge of debauchery and insubordination (Tit 1:6).
 4. Not arrogant, being obstinately self-willed (Tit 1:7) – willing to consider the wishes, opinions and feelings of others.
 5. Not quick tempered (Tit 1:7) – does not have a propensity to anger and to be easily provoked.
 6. Not addicted to wine (Tit 1:7; 1Ti 3:8) – does not have a drinking problem; this also includes addiction to drugs.
 7. Not violent (Tit 1:7; 1Ti 3:3) – not ready to fight physically. This includes not being given to verbal abuse, meanness, abusiveness, or retaliation when provoked.
 8. Gentle (1Ti 3:3) – not insisting on every right or letter of law or custom, but yielding, gentle, kind, courteous, tolerant, easily pardons human failure.
 9. Not greedy for gain (Tit 1:7), not a lover of money (1Ti 3:3) – is not motivated to serve in the ministry for money; not materialistic; not a gambler.
 10. Hospitable (Tit 1:8; 1Ti 3:2).
 11. A lover of good (Tit 1:8) – one who willingly and with self-denial does good or is kind. Or one who appreciates, pursues, defends that which is truly good.
 12. Self-controlled (Tit 1:8; 1Ti 3:2) – controlled by the Holy Spirit and in control of his mind. His thoughts are redeemed thoughts (i.e., not immoral, unspiritual, foolish, trivial, unproductive).
 13. Respectable (1Ti 3:2) – well-organized, orderly, and behaves appropriately which causes him be respected in the church and in the community.
 14. Upright (Tit 1:8) – to live in accordance with God’s righteous standards so that he can be counted to make fair, just and righteous decisions for the church.
 15. Holy (Tit 1:8) – devout towards God, constant in all religious exercises; lives in godly way in the world despite the changing winds of culture and circumstances.
 16. Disciplined (Tit 1:8) – possessing the inner strength to control one's desires and actions. Abstains even from lawful things for the sake of the weak, church peace, and glory of God.
 17. Holds firm to the trustworthy Word (Tit 1:9) – has an unshakable, fervent conviction and commitment to orthodox, biblical doctrine.
 18. Able to teach – skilled in teaching and can exhort believers and refute false teaching (1Ti 3:2; Tit 1:9); implies constant studying and growing in his understanding of God’s Word.
 19. Sober-minded (1Ti 3:2) – balanced in judgment, and free from excesses or rash behavior.
 20. Not a new convert – a mature Christian (1Ti 3:6).
 21. Must be well thought of by outsiders – well-respected by non-Christians (1Ti 3:7).

*Note: An Elder candidate who has been divorced (or whose marriage has been

made null and void) must be evaluated for eldership based on the “above reproach” qualification mandate. When selecting an Elder, a divorce should be seen as a “yellow or red flag” in the candidate’s past. Since an Elder must be above reproach and a good steward of his family, a recent divorce or any concerns about his relationship with his wife or leadership of his family, disqualifies a man from serving as an Elder. However, divorce is not the unpardonable sin for church leaders. For example, a man may have divorced many years ago. Since then, he may have remarried and, for years, lived an exemplary and mature Christian life. This man may now enjoy a godly marriage, raising children who love the Lord. When we take the man’s total life experience into consideration, the divorce should not disqualify him from consideration as an Elder (1Ti 3:2-7; Tit 1:6).

Part 3: Authority of Elders

The church is not a democracy or a government where the majority rules. Scripture declares that the Holy Spirit has made the elders to be overseers to care for the church of God (Ac 20:28). The Board of Elders is therefore the highest governing entity within the church. The authority of the elders is only that authority given to them by the Word of God. Elders have no authority to do anything or ask anyone to do anything contrary to the Scriptures.

The Elders shall be equal in authority (1Pe 5:1) but may be specialized in function. All the affairs and activities of SDGCC shall be exercised by, or be under the direct control and supervision of, the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders has the authority to create, modify, or dissolve any ministry or program within the local church. These men also have the authority and responsibility to delegate to individuals, committees or other boards (e.g. a Board of Deacons) authority and responsibility to carry out the business or ministry of the church in spiritual and physical (material) matters (Ac 20:28; 15:6; Eph 4:11-12; Phil 1:1; 1Th 5:12-13; Heb 13:7, 17).

God requires the church, including individual elders, to submit to and obey the eldership. And so Scripture says, “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account...” (Heb 13:17). The Board of Elders is also to be esteemed very highly in love because of their work (1Th 5:12-13).

Part 4: Composition of the Board of Elders

The Board of Elders shall always be a plurality (more than one), to be composed of a minimum of three members, with the number of Non-Vocational Elders always exceeding by at least one, the number of Vocational Pastors. The total number of elders at any time on the Board of Elders shall be determined by the needs of the ministry and by the call and qualification of men in the church. The man who holds the full-time office of pastor/teacher (or Lead Pastor) will be part of the Board of Elders.

Part 5: Selection and Confirmation of Elders

The Bible does not say much about how to identify new elders but there are instances in the New Testament where existing church leaders in the early church appointed elders (Ac 14:23; Tit 1:5). In SDGCC the congregation will have some part in assessing potential elders but the Board of Elders will initiate the selection and make the final approval. Elders will be appointed as the need arises. However, only qualified and willing men will be appointed. If no qualified men are able or willing to serve, no appointment will be made. The church shall wait on the Lord to provide a qualified man to meet the need.

f.1. Selection: The Board of Elders will select and contact the potential candidates for Elders and asked if they have both the time and desire to serve as Elders. Those who do will be asked to read some material on eldership and after which, fill out an Elder application.

f.2. Interview: Individually, candidates will be interviewed by a team of leaders consisting of the Elders and two or three small group leaders. The candidate will be asked questions that focus on the candidate's walk with God; his fit with SDGCC doctrinal statement, distinctives, mission, values, and philosophy of ministry; his service in the church; his family, work, and community life.

f.3. Training and Assessment: When a candidate moves forward in the process, the next step involves a special leadership training and assessment by the Elders. One of the major areas to be evaluated is the candidate's chemistry with the Elder team. At the end of this period, after prayerful deliberation, the Elders will decide whether the candidate should continue in the elder process or not. The candidate moves to the next step if the result is positive.

f.4. Evaluation by the Congregation: The candidate will be introduced to the congregation and his name will be posted in the bulletin for 30 days. During this period SDGCC members will be given the opportunity to raise serious reservations or objections about any of the candidates. These reservations or objections must be based on biblical grounds and the person raising such must do so formally, either in writing or personally appearing before the Board of Elders to present his case. During this period the wife of a married candidate will also be interviewed to hear why she respects his leadership and why she feels he would make a good elder.

f.5. Affirmation: If no concerns are raised or substantiated during the 30-day period, the candidate must be approved after prayer and discussion by the unanimous decision of the Elders. The Board of Elders will affirm what God has already done in the man's life by setting him apart in an ordination service for the leadership position.

Part 6: Term of Office of Elders

Elders may serve as long as they 1) desire to serve as an elder, 2) continue to meet the qualifications of an elder, and 3) continue to function as an elder according to the Word of God.

Part 7: Sabbaticals, Resignation, or Removal of Elders

Elders may be allowed to take sabbaticals from serving or resign from their office for compelling reasons, e.g., family problems, relocation to another place on an unreasonably extended period, change of ministry involvement, or feeling disqualified and can't continue to serve for conscience sake. But they must first seek the counsel and confirmation of their peers in the Eldership. A thirty-day notification of resignation will be given. Exception for special circumstances may be granted with approval of the Elders. The possibility of reinstatement after such sabbatical or resignation from office is subject to the discretion and approval of the Board of Elders.

Any Elder may be removed from office at any regular or special meeting of the Board, if he is found to be physically or mentally incapacitated or spiritually unqualified according to Scripture (1Ti 3:1-7; Tit 1:5-9), after a thorough investigation by the Elders (or a duly appointed Committee of the Board), in accord with the procedures prescribed by Scripture (Mt 18:15-18; 1Ti 5:19). When an elder is removed because of sin that is deemed sufficient to disqualify him from office, the removal shall be accompanied by a public rebuke, and notice shall be made before the Church at a regularly-scheduled worship service as prescribed in 1 Timothy 5:20.

Elders who have been subjected to disciplinary procedures under Chapter 12, Part 12, #2, shall be permanently barred or disqualified from resuming their office, nor serve as any other office of the Church, even after they have been officially restored.

Part 8: Role and Responsibilities

The office of the Elder is the highest level of local church leadership and thus, carries a great amount of responsibility. Recognizing that all believers are of equal standing in the sight of God, elders were only given authority by God to shepherd God's flock in an attitude of service, willingness and humility. They are not to lord it over those whom God entrusted to their care but they are to live as examples (1Pe 5:1-6).

We, at SDGCC, believe in the plurality of Elders who are to be leaders in the church. (1Ti 5:17; Jas 5:14; Tit 1:5; Ac 14:23; Heb 13:17; 1Th 5:12). The purpose for this is for accountability, balance, sharing burdens, and to focus on Christ as the true Head of the church. (1Ti 5:19-20; Gal 2:11ff; Pr 11:14; 1Co 3:4). All Elders meet the same qualifications, share the same responsibilities, are due the same respect, and are equal in value, power, and rank.

Although all elders are co-equals, this does not remove the fact that there will be

difference between Elders in the areas of giftedness, spiritual maturity, training, and Bible knowledge. We also recognize the principle of *primus inter pares* (first among equals), where in most cases the Vocational Pastor will serve as presiding Elder. In some instances however, the Elders may appoint, by a majority vote, another Elder to serve as presiding Elder.

Our Elders, then, are expected to fulfill the following roles and responsibilities:

1. Elders are to lead/oversee all the affairs of the local church (1Ti 3:4-5; 5:12, 17; 1Th 5:12; Ro 12:8).

Elders are primarily responsible to “take care of the church of God.” They must have a firm commitment and love for the local church. They are to be caretakers of His church (1Ti 3:15); they are to “rule” or “have charge over,” which means that they exercise the duty of general oversight in the church. They are to determine church policies that relate to church administration, membership, and discipline. They are to determine and implement appropriate measures in terms of arbitration, or of settling of disputes which can no longer be handled at a certain level. On a practical level, SDGCC Elders meet on a regular basis (once a week) to make decisions, determine and review policies with regard to the regular operations of the church. Along with this, their role carries with it the delegation of authority to the office staff and ministry workers. They are also responsible to recommend and appoint new members to the Eldership, and to determine procedures for confirming and ordaining them into office.

2. Elders are to shepherd the flock of God (Ac 20:28-30; 1Pe 5:1-3).

They shall examine prospective members and acquaint them with the Vision, Mission and Purpose, Doctrinal Statement, Philosophy of Ministry, Doctrinal Distinctives of the Church, Membership Covenant, and this Church Manual. They are commissioned by God to feed and protect the flock. They act as caring and loving shepherds over the flock and set examples for others to follow.

3. Elders are responsible to preach and teach (1Ti 3:2; 5:17; Tit 1:7-9).

They are to determine doctrinal issues for the church and have the responsibility of proclaiming God’s truth to the congregation. With this, it is important for them to study and agree on a common doctrinal position for the church. They must know essential and important doctrines, defend their biblical convictions, refute false teachers, train and teach others as well. Elders must be able to exhort believers (Tit 1:9), persuade (Ac 2:4; 14:22), plead (2Co 8:17), comfort (1Th 2:11), encourage (1Th 4:1), and patiently reiterate sound doctrine (2Ti 4:2).

4. Elders are a resource for those who seek partnership in prayer (Jas 5:14).

Elders must make themselves available to pray for the sick members, to intercede or pray with others who are in need, to dedicate their homes, children and even properties.

5. Elders are to devote themselves first of all to prayer and to the ministry of the Word (Ac 6:4).

They must be earnest in seeking God for guidance and be able to know God's will and have the mind of Christ for every decision that they make. If there is division, all the Elders should pray, study and seek God's will together until consensus is achieved.

6. Elders are to represent the church or send others whenever appropriate and necessary for formal representation in the community (Cf. 1Ti 3:7; Ac 6:3).

Participation in such community-related activities must be in accordance with the church's mission statement and must not compromise/be in conflict with what the church stands for.

7. An Elder is to make himself accountable to his peers for the evaluation of his life and doctrine and for discipleship.

The elders will reserve the right to remove any elder from office or request that an elder take a temporary leave of absence. If at any time a majority of the elders believe a fellow elder is disqualified, that elder will be asked to step down and the congregation will be notified.

Part 9: The Activities of the Eldership

1. Regular

a. The Elders hold weekly meetings to discuss and decide on current issues and needs of the church. Topics that are regularly tackled during this meeting include, but are not limited to the following:

- ³⁵/₁₇ Reports/observations of the conduct of ministries
- ³⁵/₁₇ Office and operational concerns
- ³⁵/₁₇ Assignments/review of ongoing activities
- ³⁵/₁₇ Review of financial reports
- ³⁵/₁₇ Review and development of policies and procedures
- ³⁵/₁₇ Others

b. The Elders pray weekly for the concerns of the SDGCC.

c. The Elders hold a twice-a-year planning and evaluation retreat to review and approve the plans of the different ministries. Special sessions for the equipping of the Elders are included in these retreats.

d. The Elders serve as advisers to the different ministries. They are assigned specific internal ministries and serve as overseers

of/consultants to these ministries in partnership with the heads of these ministries.

- e. The Elders may rotate among themselves or assign others to handle the prayer meetings.
- f. The Elders hold a discipleship meeting at least once a month.
- g. The Elders conduct Bible studies.
- h. The Elders are also involved in counseling and discipling of members.
- i. The Elders are also given Sunday pulpit assignment as agreed upon by the Board of Elders.

2. ***Special***

- a. The Board of Elders holds special/emergency meetings to plan, implement and evaluate disciplinary procedures as the need arises.
- b. As agreed upon by the Board of Elders, assigned Elders deliver exhortations, preach the Word during special occasions, e.g. family celebrations, deaths.
- c. The Elders attend and participate in conferences and seminars for equipping.
- d. The Elders represent the church in the community.
- e. The Elders oversee and respond to all emergency situations.

Part 10: Officers of the Board

All Elders will act as the Board of Elders.

The officers of the Board of Elders shall be a Chairman, a Vice-Chairman, a Secretary, a Treasurer, and an Executive Officer. Such officers shall be chosen by election with a majority vote from among themselves, and shall serve annually, and may be extended at the pleasure of the Board. Each officer shall hold his office until he shall have resigned; be removed; died; has transferred; or become otherwise disqualified to serve by reason of serious illness, physical or mental incapacity, or spiritually unqualified or until his successor shall have been elected and qualified. His successor shall serve for the unexpired term of his predecessor in office.

a.i.1. Chairman. The chairman will be responsible to organize the elder meetings and see that all decision-making is done in a Biblical and orderly

fashion. The Chairman shall preside over all meetings of the Board of Elders, except on matters or in situations where he must be excluded as agreed upon by a majority vote of the Elders present. He shall be an ex-officio member of all the standing committees, if any, and shall have powers and duties as may be prescribed by the Board of Elders.

a.i.2. Vice-Chairman. In the absence or disability of the Chairman, the Vice-Chairman shall perform all the duties of the Chairman, and when so acting shall have all the powers of, and be subject to all the restrictions upon, the Chairman. The Vice-Chairman shall have such other powers and perform such other duties as from time to time may be prescribed for him by the Board of Elders.

a.i.3. Secretary. The secretary shall keep the minutes of the Board of Elders and will keep on file all minutes and other appropriate documentation used in making decisions and/or taking action. He shall also act as Corporate Secretary in all legal matters unless another person is specifically named by the Board to act as representative or signer for a certain matter. He shall keep a record of the membership of the assembly and perform any other clerical work necessary to the proper discharge of his duties. He shall be the custodian of all legal documents. He shall also have such other powers and perform such other duties as prescribed by the Board.

a.i.4. Treasurer. The Treasurer shall ensure the stewardship of the physical and financial resources of the Church, "taking precaution that no one should discredit us in our administration...for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men" (2Co 8:20-21 NASB). He shall select "men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom" (Ac 6:3) to implement and accomplish this responsibility. He shall make, or cause to be made, the financial reports at each regular Board meeting, or at an otherwise special meeting called for that purpose, and at the annual meeting of members.

a.i.5. Executive Officer. The Executive Officer shall implement, or cause to be implemented, all the directions, policies, and decisions of the Board of Elders pertaining to the administration of the Church's affairs. These include the appointment and supervision of all Church employees; the review and approval of disbursements; ensuring compliance with the law and government requirements; the preparation and implementation of the approved annual expense budgets; the preparation and presentation of the Church's annual report to the members at the annual meeting; and the overall coordination of Church-wide activities such as prayer retreats, training seminars, conferences, sports fests, Family Days, etc.

Part 11: Elder Decision-making

Decisions shall be reached by the Board of Elders after prayerful consideration only by the unanimous or majority vote of the Board, as differentiated below, in a spirit of

humility, each elder thereby regarding others before himself. Therefore, in essence, whether the decision is one that necessitates a *unanimous vote* or a *majority vote*, the net result after all discussions are terminated and binding decisions have been made, the Board must have a spirit of unanimity as to the direction the church should take.

The “spirit of unanimity” will be defined as, “the willingness on the part of all the Elders who disagree to submit to and support the decision of the other Elders.” Any violation of this spirit of unanimity must be considered a serious breach of elder qualifications. If it should occur more than once, without genuine repentance, this elder must seek the re-approval of the Board of Elders to continue in the office of elder (Tit 3:10).

12.i.1. Decisions requiring *unanimous vote* of all Elders:

Whenever the matter to be considered concerns the approving of an elder or pastor, deacon or missionary, an amendment to or modification of the Constitution and/or Bylaws in general or the Doctrinal Statement or the Church Manual, the approval or modification of a Policy/Position Statement, a quorum as it pertains to the vote shall consist of all of the members of the Board of Elders, whether voting in person, by telephone or Skype, etc., and must be unanimous.

12.i.2. Decisions requiring *majority vote* of Elders:

All other decisions (other than those listed under the preceding unanimity paragraph), will be made on the basis of simple majority of all Elders. Those Elders in the minority position, after opportunity to defend their minority view from Scripture, will yield to the majority position of the Board of Elders in the spirit of Philippians 2:3, thereby preserving the spirit of unanimity that the Board of Elders must maintain to the church congregation and the public in general. Therefore, the minority elder/s must publicly support the decision of the majority of the Board of Elders in every situation. Any violation to this spirit of unanimity will be dealt with as outlined in the opening paragraph of this section.

12.i.3. Voting exclusions:

Decisions by the Board of Elders that pertain directly to any of the Elders themselves (such as church discipline or salary review, etc.), may be made (at the discretion of the majority of the other Elders without the participation of the elder in question (other than input required of him by the other Elders), in the discussions or the final decision of the Elders.

12.i.4. Church participation:

The Elders may seek entire church participation in decisions on some major issues so determined by the Board in the following manner:

- a. Decisions made by the Elders will be presented to the entire church for consideration and clarification at a meeting deemed appropriate by the Board of Elders.
- b. Questions of a clarification nature only will be answered by the Elders at the time of presentation. Questions of an objectionable nature

or other information deemed appropriate to support one's objection will be directed to one of the Elders on a personal basis at some time other than the time of presentation and within one week from the time of presentation. If the elder who is presented with the information relating to the objection is not able to answer satisfactorily the member's concern, that elder must take the information to the entire Board of Elders for consideration. To assist the Elders in their discussion of the issue at hand, the individual may be asked to meet with the Board of Elders to clarify the concerns or objections.

c. Before any final action may be initiated, the Elders must come to a decision as outlined in paragraphs 1 and 2 of this section. Should the new information presented prevent the unanimous/majority vote required of the Elders, no action will be taken. The congregation will be informed of this process in a manner deemed appropriate by the Elders, and no action will be taken on the issue at hand until the required unanimous/majority vote is reached. But after all consideration is given to the input of the congregation, and the required unanimous/majority vote is still the mind of the Board of Elders, then the decision will be implemented as originally presented.

Part 12: The Discipline Of Elders

The Bible lays down clear requirements for the office of the Elder. Anybody serving in this office must maintain the standards set in Scripture (1Ti 3:1-7; 2Ti 2:15; Tit 1:6-9). Failure to do so will result in his disqualification. Needless to say, the discipline or disqualification of an Elder is a serious matter; hence the Church must carefully follow the guidelines set by Paul in 1Timothy 5:19-20. If the accusation of sin against an elder is proven to be true, he is to be rebuked publicly by his peers in the eldership, and where necessary, dismissed from office. This measure is established in order to maintain the holiness and purity of the Church.

1. Grounds for reprimand, suspension, temporary disqualification and other cases which require disciplinary action.

- a. Moral failure involving sexual misconduct.
- b. Moral failure involving pornography (whether out of curiosity, or experimental).
- c. Any moral or ethical failure other than sexual misconduct.
- d. General inefficiency in the ministry.
- e. A contentious or noncooperative spirit.
- f. An assumption of dictatorial authority over an assembly.
- g. A declared open change in essential doctrinal views.
- h. Immoral, unethical, or illegal practices related to personal, church, or ministry finances.

2. Grounds for permanent disqualification.

- a. **False doctrine (1Ti 4:16; Tit 1:9; Gal 1:8).**
If the elder was found embracing wrong doctrine, contrary to the essentials and nonnegotiable tenets of the faith or other doctrines that the church teaches.
- b. **Sexual immorality (1Ti 3:2; Tit 1:6; Cf. Gal 5:19; Mt 5:28; 1Co 6:9).**
 - ³⁵/₁₇ Adultery
 - ³⁵/₁₇ Fornication
 - ³⁵/₁₇ Homosexuality
 - ³⁵/₁₇ Sexual harassment
 - ³⁵/₁₇ Bondage to Pornography (whether regular, i.e., recurring usage at certain set times, under certain conditions, or within certain contexts; habitual or addictive)
- c. **Dishonest handling of church finances (1Ti 6:10; 1Pe 5:2).**
If the elder uses church funds in direct violation of church policies (e.g., stealing and malversation of church funds)
- d. **Involvement in criminal/illegal activities (1Ti 3:7).**
- e. **Vices (Gal 5:19-21).**
 - ³⁵/₁₇ drug abuse
 - ³⁵/₁₇ drunkenness
 - ³⁵/₁₇ smoking
 - ³⁵/₁₇ gambling
- f. **Habitual neglect of duty as an elder (Pr 27:23; Ac 20:28; 1Ti 4:16; 1Pe 5:2-3).**
- g. **Consistent failure as husband and father in the home (1Ti 3:4-5).**
This may include cases of spousal and/or child abuse.
- h. **A marriage in violation of the SDGCC stand on marriage and divorce.**
(See Chapter 7, Part 2, #7)

Note: When there is question on permanent disqualification, such situations will be dealt with in a case-to-case basis.

3. **Discipline Process.**

- a. **Inquiry and investigation.**
When an elder is accused of sin, we are to be bound by the principle of 1 Timothy 5:19 which states, “Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.” If there is only one witness/accuser, the accusation cannot be entertained. The eldership

must explain this to the accuser. The accused elder may be asked to speak with his accuser on a personal level. If there are at least two or three witnesses, an investigation will be conducted to prove or disprove the accusation.

The investigation must meet the following criteria:

- 1) The accusations, in order to be entertained, must be accusations of clear acts of sin.
- 2) The accusations cannot be hearsay.
- 3) The accusations must not be based on subjective judgments of the accuser.
- 4) A search for additional witnesses is generally not carried out unless circumstances indicate that incrimination would not occur.
- 5) This practice is carried out with the benefit of the doubt going to the accused elder.

b. If the elder is accused of sin and declares innocence, the following process will take place:

- 1) The Eldership who acts as the disciplining body of the church will summon the accused elder to come face to face with his accuser(s) and vice versa in an appropriate venue and time set by the disciplining body.
- 2) The accuser(s) will be given the opportunity to tell the body in the presence of the accused his/her allegations or accusations pertaining to the elder in question and likewise the accused will be given opportunity to respond.

c. If the elder is found to be innocent:

- 1) If the accusation was found to be malicious in intent, church discipline will be applied on the accuser(s).
- 2) If the accusation was not malicious but a misjudgment, the accuser(s) will be required to issue an apology to the concerned elder. If necessary, the Board of Elders will issue an official statement regarding the innocence of the concerned elder.

d. If the elder is indeed found to be in sin:

Case #1. If the elder acknowledges and repents and submits to his peers for discipline, the following procedures will take place for his restoration process:

1) First Step (1Ti 5:20; Gal 6:1).

2.a) There will be a public acknowledgement of the sin committed. *"Public acknowledgement"* may refer to facing the elders, facing the ministry heads, facing the workers, facing the membership or may be in a form of a written public confession.

2.b) He will then be relieved from all ministry positions and functions.

2.c) The Eldership sets parameters for him to follow while on discipline.

2.d) He will then undergo a special discipleship counseling which will continue until he is fully restored in the church or to the office.

Note: All meetings held shall be documented: there must be minutes of the meeting which will be kept as confidential files.

2) Second Step (2Co 2:7-8).

a) Part of loving discipline is the restoration of his relationships especially within the church by encouraging the brethren to offer and extend forgiveness, give comfort and reaffirm their love for him.

b) Discipleship counseling continues.

3) Third Step (1Ti 5:22, 25).

a) In due time he will be given opportunities to serve in the different ministries of the church again (but not as an elder if his sin disqualifies him for good) to prove the fruit of his true repentance.

b) Discipleship counseling continues.

4) Fourth Step (1Ti 3:7).

a) After proven genuinely repentant and having continued going through the process of discipline and restoration, the elder will eventually be restored of the trust, credibility and reputation due him.

b) Discipleship counseling may continue as deemed necessary.

c) At this point, there is now the formal lifting of the discipline process.

d) Depending on the nature and gravity of the sin, the elder is now either restored to church position or restored in church but disqualified from the position.

Note: These steps will also apply in the case of an elder who is not accused but rather voluntarily confesses his sin.

Case #2. If the elder is found to be in sin and is unrepentant, the following process will take place:

a.i.1.a.1) First Step - The sinning elder must be relieved from all ministry positions and functions.

a.i.1.a.2) Second Step - Public Rebuke (1Ti 5:20).

- a) The Eldership will have to publicly disclose the case in a form of a letter to be read to the congregation whether the accused elder is present or not.
- b) Members of the congregation will now apply third level of Matthew 18.
- c) If at this point the elder in question is yet unrepentant, proceed to the Third Step.

a.i.1.a.3) Third Step - Excommunication (Mt 18:17b; 2Th 3:14-15; 2Co 5:11; 2Ti 5:22).

- a) The disciplining body will give a letter of disfellowship to the elder in question stating his sin and unrepentance. This letter must be signed by all or majority of the existing Elders.
- b) His excommunication will be announced to the church.
- c) The elder is now treated as a “Gentile and tax collector.”

Case #3. In cases where the ex-elder is repentant after the excommunication process:

His restoration process starts from the public acknowledgement of the sin until his restoration to church (as mentioned above). But he is disqualified for good from position as elder.

Note: All meetings held shall be documented: there must be minutes of the meeting which will be kept as confidential files.

Chapter 13: Deacons

Part 1: Description

Deacons shall serve under the direction of the Eldership. They are considered as second level leadership of the church. They shall assist or implement the decisions of the Board of Elders.

The fact that deacons must meet certain requirements and be publicly examined before they serve as deacons (1Ti 3:10) reveals that they exercise official responsibilities of public trust.

But the diaconate is not a ruling or governing office nor is it a teaching office which belongs to the Elders. The two offices of overseers and deacons are meant to complement one another. The former is a pastoral-oversight body that teaches, protects and leads the local church. The latter is a servant body that relieves the pastoral body and provides official, responsible care for suffering, needy members

Part 2: Qualifications

The biblical qualifications for deacons are found in 1Ti 3:8-13 and Ac 6:1-3.

- A. Reverent - He must be a spiritual man who is first and foremost interested in serving and worshiping God (1Ti 3:8);
- B. Not double-tongued - He must be honest. His word must be his bond (1Ti 3:8);
 - C. Not given to much wine - He should not be a drunkard. While there is some question concerning this passage it does not give deacons the right to be social drinkers (1Ti 3:8);
 - D. Not greedy for money - He should never be covetous concerning money (1Ti 3:8);
 - E. Holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience - He should be sincere in his faith. There should be nothing in his life which will cause him to have a guilty conscience (1Ti 3:9);
 - F. Proven - He must have demonstrated his ability, faithfulness, and willingness to serve, before the congregation (1Ti 3:10);
 - G. Found blameless - There must be nothing in his life that would bring reproach on the body of Christ. Blameless denotes that he does not seek to ignore or cover up his mistakes, but that he is penitent of heart and life and makes proper correction where it can be made (1Ti 3:10);
 - H. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things (1Ti 3:11);
 - I. The husband of one wife - He must demonstrate his Christian life in his family (1Ti 3:12);
 - J. Ruling his children and house well - He must have demonstrated his ability in taking care of his family and guiding them in the way they should live (1Ti 3:12).

Part 3: Composition

Deacons shall be composed of male members of SDGCC, both *Vocational Workers* and *Lay Deacons*. The number of Deacons shall be determined by the needs of the ministry and by the call and qualification of men in the church. A Deacon may be raised to the position of Elder upon recommendation of the Board of Elders, and upon affirmation of the church.

Part 4: Nomination and Selection Procedures

When a need to appoint deacons arises, then the Board of Elders shall notify all ministry heads and cell servants of the need and ask them to recommend to the Board those men whom they believe meet the qualifications.

The Board of Elders will review the names submitted to them along with any additional names of men they believe to be qualified. Each name submitted will be carefully and prayerfully considered and reviewed according to their qualifications, gifts, the need, and the individual's willingness to serve. If there is support to

consider the person as a candidate the candidate is approached and offered the opportunity to complete a Deacon Questionnaire. The submission of the Deacon Questionnaire to the Board is the "application" for the office. The candidate will be evaluated, interviewed, and subsequently approved or denied by the Board of Elders. Approved nominees will be presented at an appointed date to the church.

Part 5: Installation and Removal from Office

Church deacons are appointed for life and are removed from office only in cases of disqualification (spiritually unqualified or in sin, found to be causing division, be unsubmitive in the implementation of the Board of Elders' decisions, etc.), or in cases of physical and mental incapacity, or in case of voluntary resignation.

Part 6: Responsibilities

Deacons shall assist and advise the Elders and perform any service that shall support and promote the ministry of the Word and prayer, new and existing ministries of SDGCC, and the care of the members of SDGCC. Their responsibilities may include

- A. Counseling and assisting in the process of church discipline;
- B. Administering a fund to assist the poor and needy and otherwise providing aid in times of crisis or distress;
- C. The greeting, welcoming, and follow-up ministries of SDGCC;
- D. Assisting in administering the ordinances of the Gospel;
- E. Assisting at fellowship gatherings of SDGCC;
- F. Caring for, securing, and maintaining SDGCC's properties and assets;
- G. Administering the business affairs of SDGCC that pertain to its material assets and financial services.
- H. They also assist in the ministry of the gospel in terms of evangelism, follow-up, counseling, shepherding the flock by giving personal attention to individuals and families in the body.
- I. They are to make recommendations pertaining to the assessed needs and concerns of the congregation.
- J. Their tasks may include visitation of the sick and the needy, bringing comfort and encouragement to the bereaved.
- K. They may organize the meeting of any of the practical needs such people may be facing. They are to be involved in the emergency activities of the church during calamities and the like. They are also to take part in organizing, preparing the Lord's Supper, baptisms, and child dedication services in a regular and orderly fashion.

Given that deacons are also members of ministries, on a regular basis, they are generally to operate in the context of their specific ministries, guided by their specific ministry policies. However, when performance of deacon responsibilities comes into conflict with his position and priorities within his particular ministry, then deaconship takes precedence over his ministry position and responsibility. In this particular instance, the ministry head may be called to submit to the deacons.

Part 7: Organization

Deacons shall organize themselves however they determine it best to carry out their duties and responsibilities and to achieve the mission and purpose of SDGCC. The Elders may designate any specific Deacon or group of Deacons to specialize in some particular function for SDGCC. Meetings of Deacons, or committees of Deacons, shall be held as needed.

Chapter 14: The Pastoral Ministry

Pastors assume a huge responsibility when they take on the task of shepherding God's flock (Heb 13:17, 1Pe 5:1-4, 1Co 4:1-5). And the benchmark by which God will commend or condemn the labor of the pastor is God's Word. The approach to ministry that a pastor is to employ must, therefore, not be man-centered, consumer-driven, need-based, and culturally-defined. Instead, God's work in the Church must characteristically be God-focused, biblically-defined and Scripturally-prioritized.

Part 1: Composition, Qualification, Selection Procedures, and Tenure

Vocational pastors, in response to God's call, have devoted their lives to the ministry of the Word and prayer in the service of Christ. There are three kinds of vocational pastors: the *Lead Pastor*, the *Associate Pastors* and the *Pastors-in-Training*. Whenever possible, the Lead Pastor is selected from the roster of vocational pastors.

Vocational ministers are workers of the Church who, in response to God's call, serve the Church of Christ as their primary vocation. They consist of both men and women of the church who are serving fulltime in ministry. (Those who are still in the process of confirming their call to the fulltime ministry will be placed temporarily in this group until such time their calling is confirmed.) A vocational minister handles Bible studies, discipling, counseling and other related tasks that may be assigned them by the Eldership and/or the Pastoral Staff. This group may include women who minister to other women, youth and children (Tit 2:3-5). The men in this group may or may not later on be called to be Vocational Pastors. The vocational ministers assist the vocational pastors of the Church in shepherding the flock.

Vocational pastors, Pastors-in-training, and vocational ministers may be salaried or supported financially by the Church through the Love Gifts of members.

A. The Lead Pastor

1. The Lead Pastor is to be selected solely by the Board of Elders as he is deemed to have met the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.
2. Confirmation from members or other levels of leadership may be done

only with the expressed permission of the Board of Elders.

3. Upon confirmation from the Board of Elders and presentation to the congregation the Lead Pastor becomes the Executive Officer of the Corporation as well as the Presiding Officer of the Board of Elders who will now have the authority for the general supervision, direction and control of the activities of all the members of the church. However if the Lead Pastor is new to the church, the Elders may select a Non Vocational Elder to be Presiding Officer of the Board of Elders.

4. The Lead Pastor makes himself accountable to the other elders for the evaluation of his life and doctrine.

5. The Lead Pastor shall conduct all public and regular services of the church and shall be responsible for the oversight of the general spiritual welfare of the church and shall be its leading and regular preacher and teacher.

6. The Board of Elders will serve as his co-shepherds in the work of the church and are co-equal with him in matters of decision-making in the affairs of the church.

7. He exercises general oversight over all existing ministries in the church.

8. He is to play an essential and deciding role in the direction and handling of the finances of the church together with the Board of Elders.

9. He can sign for and on behalf of the church in business matters and the acquisition of properties or assets, together with the Board of Elders after having decided on the matter by unanimous or majority vote.

10. He, however, is disqualified to directly handle physically any monetary activity of the church. Hence, he cannot be serving as treasurer, accountant, financial officer, or cashier of the church.

11. The Lead Pastor and the Board of Elders are given the responsibility of nominating and assessing individuals to serve as elders and deacons in the Church, in accordance with Scriptural qualifications.

B. The Pastoral Staff

1. The Pastoral Staff is composed of vocational pastors under the leadership of the Lead Pastor. Vocational pastors, in response to God's call, have devoted their lives to the ministry of the Word and prayer in the service of Christ.

2. The will of the Lord concerning the call of vocational pastors and ministers is made known through the prayerful judgment of the Church. This is expressed through the unanimous confirmation by the Board of Elders as

they observe the candidate's active involvement in the ministry of the Church.

3. The Board of Elders shall consider the candidate's spiritual giftedness from God, particularly in the areas of teaching and preaching (Eph 4:11-12), shepherding and administrative skills (1Th 2:8; Ac 20:28; 1Pe 5:2), effectivity and fruitfulness in ministry (Col 1:10), personal longing or inner desire (1Ti 3:1), and lifestyle of integrity (1Ti 3:1-7; Tit 1: 6-9).

4. Vocational pastors and ministers must meet the moral and spiritual requirements established in Scripture (1Ti 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-9). They must likewise show clear evidence of a Spirit-imparted desire and giftings (1Pe 5:1-3, 1Ti 3:1, 4:12-16).

5. Pastors serve for life unless they are disqualified or have compelling reasons to resign their office, e.g., physical incapacity, family problems, relocation to another country, change of ministry calling. Such reasons however are subject to confirmation by the eldership. Where there is a possibility of reinstatement, the eldership shall evaluate his re-entry and prescribe a process of confirmation.

6. The calling of all vocational pastors and ministers is subject to testing and confirmation by the Board of Elders.

7. Pastors shall be removed from the office either by voluntary resignation or grievance.

a. *By resignation.* The termination of an individual's call as a vocational pastor or vocational minister shall be considered at any time by the Church upon the presentation of a letter of resignation.

b. *By grievance due to sin.* The vocational pastor or vocational minister may be disqualified from service if, after thorough investigation and consideration, the Board of Elders finds sufficient proof that the *Pastor* or *Minister* has preached or taught doctrines contrary to Scripture and the beliefs of the Church as stated in the Church Manual, Statement of Faith, Philosophy of Ministry, Mission Statement, Doctrinal Distinctives and Covenant of Membership, or has conducted himself in a manner unbecoming his position as Pastor or Minister, and continues to be unrepentant. If grievances or accusations are proven true, the vocational pastor or vocational minister shall be told by the Board of Elders to immediately step down from his office and cease from discharging all his duties and responsibilities in the Church. He shall then be asked to submit to a process of restoration and discipline under the supervision of the Board of Elders and according to principles laid out in Scripture. Vocational pastors who have been subject to disciplinary procedures at Step 3 (i.e., informing the Church and the congregation and publicly calling the sinning individual to repentance) and Step 4 shall not be allowed to resume

their position nor serve as an officer of the Church, even after they have completed their restoration process.

c. *By grievance due to incapability.* The vocational pastor or vocational minister may be disqualified from service if, after thorough investigation and consideration, the Board of Elders finds sufficient proof that the pastor or minister was unable to fulfill all the tasks specified and expected of him in all the assignments given him. This incapability is a clear and sufficient ground for his removal from office.

Part 2: Authority

The pastor must be driven by a concern for God, His glory and His truth and not by a desire for ego fulfillment and a need to be in charge. No one dominated by self is fit for the pastoral ministry (Mt 20:25-26). The pastor must not be self-willed; instead, he must be open to other people's ideas. Most of all, he needs to seek out the mind and heart of God and to do only what God wants done in His church. It is in this context that the pastor exercises whatever authority is given him by Scripture and conferred by the eldership of the church.

Part 3: The Role and Responsibilities of the Pastoral Staff

A pastor (whether the *Lead Pastor* or an *Associate Pastor*) is a vocational elder—meaning, he is engaged in his work full-time. His work includes these primary activities: praying (1Th 1:2-3, 3:9-13), evangelizing (1Th 1:4 -5, 9-10), equipping (1Th 1:6-8), defending (1Th 2:1-6), loving (1Th 2:7-8), laboring (1Th 2:9), modeling (1Th 2:10), leading (1Th 2:10-12), feeding (1Th 2:13), watching (1Th 3:1-8), warning (1Th 4:1-8), teaching (1Th 4:9-5:11), exhorting (1Th 5:12-24), encouraging (2Th 1:3-12), correcting (2Th 2:1-12), confronting (2Th 3:14), rescuing (2Th 3:15).

Section 4: Financial Support

The Pastoral Staff may be salaried or supported by church members through their love gifts and other forms of giving. The church leadership may also opt to use church funds to provide for certain portion of their needs as they see fit.

Lay officers are the non-Vocational Elders and Deacons of the Church. They serve the church part-time and are not financially supported by the church, i.e., they have other means of livelihood.

Part 4: The Discipline Of The Pastoral Staff

The disciplinary procedures that will be applied to the pastoral staff will be based on the disciplinary procedures for elders. (See Chapter 12, Part 12.)

Chapter 15: Church Employees

The Church may employ additional personnel who will assist the Board of Elders and Vocational Pastors and Ministers in the fulfillment of the ministries of the church. The salaries and other compensation of Church employees shall be in compliance with the Labor Code, and shall be determined by the Board of Elders. The Board of Elders shall be responsible for determining the duties of and the hiring of such personnel.

Day-to-day supervision of Church employees shall be exercised by the Executive Officer.

Chapter 16: Meetings

Part 1: Meetings for Worship

Worship services shall be held on Sundays. The Lord's Supper shall be celebrated on the first Sunday of each month or at such times as the Board of Elders may deem necessary. Other services may be established as the work of the Church may require. Such worship meetings shall not be confined to official members of the Church, except for special circumstances as determined by the Board of Elders.

Part 2: Meetings for Business

Annual Meeting. A general assembly of Church members shall be held on the last Saturday of the month of May of each year. At such meetings, reports shall be given by the Officers of the Church (and others who may be assigned by the Board of Elders) concerning the activities and the finances of the Church.

Special Meetings. Special meetings of the members may be called by the Lead Pastor or by a quorum of the Board of Elders.

Part 3: Notice for Meetings

Notice of all regular meetings shall be given from the pulpit by the Lead Pastor or by any Elder for two successive Sundays immediately prior to the meeting. Special meetings may be called on shorter notice by the Lead Pastor or by a quorum of the Board of Elders.

In matters of church discipline necessitating immediate action, meetings may also be announced at shorter notice.

The venue of all the foregoing meetings shall be the principal office of the Church, unless otherwise provided by the Board of Elders.

Part 4: Quorum

The members of the Church should regard their presence at a duly-called meeting as

a matter of responsibility and conscience. The simple majority of the duly-recognized members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Chapter 17: Funds

Believers are to give financially from an attitude of commitment to the Lord (2Co 8:1-6). Each believer is to give according to their ability with a cheerful heart (2Co 9:7), which Scriptures call “grace giving.” Therefore, as a regular practice, we do not pass an offering basket but rather let the individual pick up and use the love offering envelopes voluntarily and drop them in assigned offering boxes. Because giving is done unto the Lord, it is critical that the local church handle the finances given with care and wisdom both for the glory of the Lord and for the testimony of the church (2Co 8:20-21). With this view in mind, the following outlines the policies of handling financial decisions:

- A. The Board of Elders is responsible for the financial management of church funds. The Elders exercise oversight over the church’s general operations and general financial requirements. For each internal ministry of the church a core of leaders manage their own funds according their own internal policies and based on their planned programs and activities. However, the Elders also exercise oversight over their internal management by providing a general structure and guidelines in accordance with the general direction of the church.
- B. All general operational disbursements are decided by the Board of Elders. However, the Lead Pastor may make a discretionary financial decision based on an amount set by the Board of Elders. Beyond this amount, a Board decision will be required.
- C. The support each internal ministry of SDGCC receives is used for the regular operational needs of the particular ministry. These funds are collected and disbursed by the accounting office according to the specific request of each ministry. However, beyond a limit defined by the Elders, approval from the eldership is required.
- D. Each outreach of SDGCC will manage its own finances and are required to submit a quarterly financial report to the Board of Elders.
- E. All funds given as a designated offering will be used as designated on the church’s offering envelopes. Otherwise, all other unspecified gifts will go into the General Fund. All special solicitations for funds shall be sanctioned by and under the direction of the Board of Elders. No public solicitations of funds shall be made by anybody for any person or cause, in any assembly, which has not been recognized and approved by the Elders.
- F. Members of the Board of Elders can be signatories to the church’s bank accounts. In the weekly church collections, assigned deacons of the church, together with

those assigned from the accounting staff to assist, take responsibility in both counting and recording of collections.

- G. All full-time ministers of SDGCC may be salaried or receive love gifts from the church (1Ti 5:17-18; Gal 6:6-7; 1Co 9:6-11).
- H. All administrative staff shall be paid a salary commensurate to their duties and abilities. On an annual basis, during the first quarter of the year, the Board of Elders will examine the salaries of all administrative staff members to see if there are any necessary adjustments needed. The final decisions will be recorded in the written minutes of the next elders' meeting.
- I. The church follows a centralized accounting system where financial receipts and disbursements are recorded. These are all reported to the Board of Elders on a regular basis in the weekly Elders' management meeting.
- J. In order to keep orderly records, an accountant shall be appointed by the Board of Elders. He shall be tasked to keep all necessary books, prepare necessary checks to pay bills, submit weekly financial statements and perform any other duties as prescribed by the Board of Elders. He shall also be monitored by the church Treasurer.
- K. A yearly audit of the church's finances will be made by an external auditor upon preparation of the year-end financial report. All Internal Revenue requirements will also be submitted on the prescribed dates.
- L. A yearly financial report will be presented to the members of the church during the annual members' meeting set by the Board of Elders.

Chapter 18: Records and Reports

Part 1: Records

The Church shall maintain adequate and correct accounts, books, and records of its businesses and properties, as required by law and by the Board of Elders. All such books, records, and accounts shall be kept in the Church's place of business.

Part 2: Access of Books of Accounts

SDGCC will provide summary financial statements upon request. However, because of the confidential nature of counseling records, staff salaries, member contributions, elder minutes and similarly confidential documents, such records will not be made available to members of the congregation or to the general public. The Elders will make every effort to discuss pertinent and appropriate information with any member who has just cause for inquiry.

Part 3: Fiscal Year

The fiscal year of SDGCC shall start on April 1 and shall end on March 31 of the following year (as amended on January 17, 2009).

Chapter 19: Dissolution of Property

Should it happen that for any reason SDGCC can no longer continue in the pursuit of its mission and purpose, the Board of Elders shall cause the assets of the Church to be distributed to another church with purposes similar to that identified in Chapter 4 and a Doctrinal Statement that is similar to that enumerated in Chapter 6 of this Manual.

Chapter 20: Corporate Seal

The Corporate Seal of the Church shall be in the form and design determined by the Board of Elders.

Chapter 21: Relationship with SDGCC Outreaches

Part 1: Autonomy and Accountability

All outreaches of SDGCC operate according to the philosophy of ministry, doctrinal positions, and general policies of the central church. As such, and based on the central church's organizational chart, all outreaches are under the authority of the central church. On the other hand, the central church is responsible for supporting each outreach whenever necessary in the areas of spiritual guidance, moral support, training, administration, finances, and conflict resolution.

Although there is accountability to the central church, we, however, recognize that each outreach has its own character and context. Each exercises sufficient autonomy in its daily operations, decision-making, and financial management. This autonomy is also expressed in the formulation and implementation of their own plans, programs and internal policies (e.g., yearly ministerial themes, activities, policy manuals, etc.).

Each outreach is also responsible for discipling its members, raising its own leaders and workers, and, whenever necessary, disciplining the same and resolving any internal conflict.

Each outreach is required to submit a regular financial report and is encouraged to give a portion of their collected love gifts to the central church whenever they can.

The central church will evaluate each outreach on a regular basis.

Part 2: Classification of Outreach Churches

The outreach churches are classified in the following manner (adapted from CCM):

A. Beginning Work

- a.i.a.1.1. Regular Sunday service.
- a.i.a.1.2. Regular attendees to Sunday service: 15 adults minimum.
- a.i.a.1.3. Week day ministries.
- a.i.a.1.4. One year minimum.
- a.i.a.1.5. May receive support from mother church.
- a.i.a.1.6. Submits a monthly financial report.

B. Growing Work

- 1. Regular Sunday service.
- 2. Regular attendees to Sunday service: 25-30 adults depending on population density.
- 3. Has CSV's (Church Service Volunteers).
- 4. Starting a discipleship program.
- 5. Able to partially support ministry and pastor/s.
- 6. Covers 2-3 years.
- 7. Has interim core of leaders and undergoing core training.
- 8. Submits a quarterly financial report.

C. Maturing Work

- 1. Regular Sunday service.
- 2. Regular attendees to Sunday service.
- 3. Has CSV's (Church Service Volunteers).
- 4. Has a discipleship program.
- 5. Able to support ministry and pastor/s.
- 6. Covers 4 years.
- 7. Has interim core of leaders or Board of Elders.
- 8. Has special groups (cells & fellowship ministries – young adults, youth, men and women's ministries, etc.).
- 9. Submits a bi-annual financial report.

D. Fully Developed Work

- 1. Regular Sunday service.
- 2. Regular attendees to Sunday service.
- 3. Has CSV's (Church Service Volunteers).
- 4. Has a discipleship program.
- 5. Able to support ministry and pastor/s.
- 6. Has Board of Elders and deacons.
- 7. Has special groups (cells & fellowship ministries – young adults, youth, men' and women's ministries, etc.).
- 8. Has outreaches and/or able to support other ministries.
- 9. Financially independent .
- 10. Submits a yearly financial report.

Chapter 22: Relationship with CCM and Other CCM Churches

SDGCC is a member of the Communion of Christian Ministries (CCM). This chapter defines our relationship with the CCM.

Part 1: Definition of the CCM Alignment

7.1.A. This is a non-denominational assembly or association of independent and autonomous churches which are biblically evangelical and walk according to the “ancient paths.”

7.1.B. This association has a shared Biblical Philosophy of Ministry characterized by the following:

- a.1. A high view of God
- a.2. Recognition of the total sufficiency of Scriptures.
- a.3. An accurate view of man.
- a.4. An understanding of the need and priority of biblical leadership.
- a.5. An understanding of the purposes of the church.

7.1.C. This serves as an advisory body to all member churches dedicated to upholding the truth of Scripture in life and ministry.

7.1.D. All member churches are accountable to both major doctrines and practices of this aligning body. Non-compliance to doctrine and practices mean that membership in this aligning body will be revoked.

7.1.E. Above all, this is a Bible-believing, Christ-honoring body that seeks to support one another by guarding and strengthening each others’ walk with God in the spirit of love and unity.

7.1.F. This aligning body believes in the local autonomy of each church as it is ruled by a set of elders, either appointed or elected. It believes that governance is with the local body. Moreover, it believes in the accountability of the local church to the universal body, upon which the alignment is seen as a manifest expression of it. In instances, however, where there is a conflict between CCM perspectives and decisions, submission to local church be upheld over submission to CCM.

Part 2: The Role of CCM In God's Program

- A. Shepherding
- B. Contending for the purity of Biblical faith
- C. Discipling of one another
- D. Edifying non-CCM brethren
- E. Evangelizing unbelievers
- F. Modeling biblical leadership to fellow ministers outside of CCM

Part 3: Purposes of the Alignment

- A. The association is bound by a mutual respect for each others' calling, office and ministries, but at the same time seeks to enhance each others' professionalism and excellence in calling, office and ministry as God's word is embraced as the rule for ministerial conduct.
- B. The association seeks to help in defining the essential vision and direction for the churches.
- C. This body recognizes the dangers of unaccountability and desires to serve as a check and balance or a safeguard to all pastors against doctrinal and moral compromise. This body is likewise designed to monitor standards for ministry office and would be of assistance in somehow reminding and admonishing each other to embrace and adhere to the aligning body's doctrines and practices. Of course, liberty is to be tolerated in matters of minor doctrines and practices.
- D. This aligning body, likewise, recognizes the need for mutual support, encouragement, etc. This may come in different forms like financial support, ministerial and spiritual advice, exchange of pulpits, joint seminars, annual conventions and the like.
- E. Discipline in the form of revocation of membership is also to be implemented if any of the major doctrines and practices is violated. Of course, this shall be done with proper procedure and with due respect to the autonomy of each local church. This aligning body understands that the primary tool for check and balance would be the elders of the local church.
- F. The association will also seek the proper restoration of repentant pastors and leaders.

Part 4: The Rules and Regulations of the Aligning Body

- A. All member churches must adhere to the major doctrines and practices of the aligning body. Failure to do so would mean that the officers of this aligning body would inform the eldership of the local body and suggest that proper corrections be done. If both pastor and elders decide against the advice of said officers, then membership of the church would be revoked.
- B. The officers must understand the limitations of their authority and must not impose anything that is not included in the body's major doctrines and practices on the local congregation that is not agreeable to the elders of the local church.
- C. Any board resolution affecting the operation of the particular local

church will be subjected to consultations with the government of the local church.

D. Upon consultation with the local eldership of each church, CCM board members and bona fide members are to take a vote regarding the amendment. Implementations are to be made with 2/3 majority vote.

Chapter 23: Amendments

This Church Manual may be amended and new and additional chapters and bylaws, or any provision thereof, may be made at any time for reasons deemed necessary by the unanimous vote of the Board of Elders and two-thirds (2/3) of its members at any regular or special meeting duly held for that purpose.

Adopted this ___ day of _____, 2014 in Davao City by the affirmative vote of the undersigned members representing a two-thirds of the official members of the SDGCC in a special meeting called for the purpose.

Appendixes

Appendix A: Specific Requirements for Membership

Requirements for membership vary from church to church. Here in SDGCC, to become a member, one must...

a.1. Be an identified regular attendee of SDGCC Sunday Worship Gatherings for at least six (6) months prior to application. The Board of Elders, in its discretion, may grant exemptions from this requirement in some cases.

a.2. Attend in a duly-recognized discipleship or accountability group/partner for at least six months and get a recommendation from its leader or representative.

a.3. Be interviewed by the Membership Committee.

a.4. Attend all sessions of the Membership Class.

a.5. Study and agree with the SDGCC Church...

- (b) Mission Statement
- (c) Essentials of the Faith
- (d) Membership Covenant
- (e) This Manual

5. Submit fully filled up the Membership Application Form, with the following attached:

- (a) One 2x2 colored picture (recent)
- (b) Typewritten or printed conversion testimony including life before becoming a Christian, circumstances that led to becoming a Christian, and life since becoming a Christian (All information shall be treated with confidentiality).
- (c) Three (3) Christian character references with their contact numbers. Write these on the space provided for in the Membership Application Form.

NOTE:

If you are transferring your membership to SDGCC, include the following:

- ³⁵/₁₇ Letter of Recommendation from your previous church's pastor or duly recognized church leader, if deemed necessary, and
- ³⁵/₁₇ Photocopy of the certified of water baptism by immersion, if available.

- 6. Let your name be posted in the church for at least two (2) weeks.
- 7. Be baptized by immersion at SDGCC. Exceptions are those who have been baptized by immersion in other evangelical churches according to biblical injunction.
- 8. Sign Covenant of Membership and be formally introduced to the congregation on a designated day for such occasion.

Appendix B: Church Membership Covenant (Short Version)

We, the members of Soli Deo Gloria Christian Church, individually attest that we have received Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, that we have submitted to biblical baptism, and that we have voluntarily joined this local church with the understanding and pledge to abide by the provisions of this covenant of church membership, relying upon the help of God who is our witness.

Corporately and individually, we pledge

To uphold the Godward call of our church family

- ³⁵/₁₇ by worshiping God and enjoying Him (Ps 27:4; 37:4; 63:1-2; 73:25-26)
- ³⁵/₁₇ by striving to do everything for God's glory (1Co 10:31)
- ³⁵/₁₇ by deepening my knowledge of and relationship with Christ (Phil 3:8; Gal 2:20)
- ³⁵/₁₇ by totally relying upon the Holy Spirit in my efforts to serve God (Gal 5:16,18; Eph 5:18)
- ³⁵/₁₇ by guarding the doctrinal purity defined in its statement of faith and upholding them (1Ti 3:9,15)

To protect the spiritual unity of our church family

³⁵₁₇ by making every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual edification (Ro 14:19)

³⁵₁₇ by loving and serving others according to Christ's example (Mt 20:25-28; 1Co 13:4-7; Col 3:12; 1 Jn 3:16-18)

³⁵₁₇ by carrying one another's burdens, rejoicing with those who rejoice, sympathizing with those who hurt, and encouraging the weak (Gal 6:2; Ro 12:15)

³⁵₁₇ by praying for the unity of the church (Jn 17:20-23)

³⁵₁₇ by being slow to take offense, quick to secure reconciliation, and considerate of the personal convictions of other members (Mt 18:21-35; Lk 17:4; Ro 14,15; 1Co 8:9-13; Col 3:13)

³⁵₁₇ by dealing biblically with conflict as soon as possible (Mt 5:23-24; 18:15-17)

³⁵₁₇ by avoiding negative attitudes that destroy the unity of the church (1Co 1:10-12; 2Co 12:20; Gal 5:19; Eph 4:31; Col 3:8-9)

³⁵₁₇ by refraining from false doctrines or practices that promote controversies (1Ti 1:3-4)

³⁵₁₇ by respecting and submitting to its duly constituted leadership (1Th 5:12,13; Heb 13:17)

³⁵₁₇ by submitting to the standard of New Testament church discipline (Mt 18:15-20; 1Ti 5:20)

To support the discipling responsibility of our church family

³⁵₁₇ by maintaining a personal program of spiritual development through prayer and Bible study

³⁵₁₇ by discovering and using my spiritual gifts and talents to serve others (1Pe 4:10)

³⁵₁₇ by engaging in personal witnessing for Christ in word and deed (1Th 1:8; 1Pe 3:1,2)

³⁵₁₇ by participating in its evangelistic, education, and edifying programs through faithful attendance, prayer, and financial support (Eph 4:11-12; Eph 6:19)

³⁵₁₇ by supporting its mission of making disciples of all nations so that they are committed to the local church, growing in Christlikeness, and equipped for ministry and mission (Mt 28:18-20; 2Ti 2:2)

To preserve the excellent witness of our church family

³⁵₁₇ by attending church gatherings faithfully (Heb 10:25)

³⁵₁₇ by inviting the unchurched to attend and warmly welcoming those who visit (Lk 14:23; Heb 13:2)

³⁵₁₇ by praying for its health and impact (1Th 1:1-2)

³⁵₁₇ by giving graciously to its work and workers as God has graciously given to us (2Co 9:7)

³⁵₁₇ by upholding a high standard of morality in personal, public, business, and family life (Phil 1:27; Col 1:10; 1Th 4:11-12)

³⁵₁₇ by abstaining from habits and activities which are harmful to the

body, binding to the will, damaging to Christian witness, and not glorifying to God (Eph 5:18; 2Co 8:20-21)

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We also pledge that when we move to another place we shall seek to transfer our membership to a church with practices similar to these, which we now uphold.

Name of Member

Date Signed

Appendix C: Church Membership Covenant (Long Version)

BE IT KNOWN:

That I, ***NAME***, hereby bind myself freely and faithfully to the following terms and conditions for membership in SOLI DEO GLORIA Christian Ministries, Inc., to wit:

- I. ***I agree to guard the doctrinal purity of the church as defined in its essentials of faith and to respect its definite positions on certain doctrinal matters.***

2Ti 1:13-14 What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus. 14 Guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you--guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.

Jude 3 Dear friends, although I was very eager to write to you about the salvation we share, I felt I had to write and urge you to contend for the faith that was once for all entrusted to the saints.

- II. ***I agree to submit to the policies of the Church and to uphold its Constitution and Bylaws in every respect.***

1Co 11:2,16 I praise you for remembering me in everything and for holding to the teachings, just as I passed them on to you. 16 If anyone wants to be contentious about this, we have no other practice--nor do the churches of God.

- III. ***I agree to respect and submit to the duly constituted authorities of the Church.***

Heb 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that

their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.

1Th 5:12-13 Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. 13 Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other.

1Ti 5:19 Do not entertain an accusation against an elder unless it is brought by two or three witnesses.

IV. *I agree not to remain in and guard against vices such as, drug abuse, drunkenness, smoking, gambling, immorality and other intemperance.*

1Co 5:9-11 I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people-- 10 not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. 11 But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler. With such a man do not even eat.

V. *I agree not to commit any misdeeds with or against my fellow brethren and non-Christians concerning any material or financial transactions.*

1Co 5:11 But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a *swindler*. With such a man do not even eat.

VI. *I agree to avoid gossips, private piques and quarrels but rather to deal with conflict biblically.*

Eph 4:29-31 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. 30 And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. 31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

Mt 5:23-25a Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. 25 Settle matters quickly with your adversary...

Mt 18:15 If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just

between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.

VII. ***I agree not to promote any controversy or cause any division in the Church.***

1Ti 1:3-4 As I urged you when I went into Macedonia, stay there in Ephesus so that you may command certain men not to teach false doctrines any longer 4 nor to devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies. These promote controversies rather than God's work--which is by faith.

Ro 16:17-18 I urge you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and put obstacles in your way that are contrary to the teaching you have learned. Keep away from them. 18 For such people are not serving our Lord Christ, but their own appetites. By smooth talk and flattery they deceive the minds of naive people.

1Co 1:10-12 I appeal to you, brothers, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that all of you agree with one another so that there may be no divisions among you and that you may be perfectly united in mind and thought. 11 My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. 12 What I mean is this: One of you says, "I follow Paul"; another, "I follow Apollos"; another, "I follow Cephas"; still another, "I follow Christ."

Ro 14:1 Accept him whose faith is weak, without passing judgment on disputable matters.

VIII. ***I agree to commit myself to an official church gathering or cell group for deeper spiritual nurture and accountability.***

Heb 10:25 Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching.

IX. ***I agree to undergo restorative church discipline when proven guilty beyond doubt of violating a biblical command.***

Gal 6:1a Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.

1Co 5:6-8 Your boasting is not good. Don't you know that a little yeast works through the whole batch of dough? 7 Get rid of the old yeast that you may be a new batch without yeast--as you really are. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. 8 Therefore let us keep the Festival, not with the old yeast, the yeast of malice and wickedness, but with bread without yeast, the bread of sincerity and truth.

1Co 11:31 But if we judged ourselves, we would not come under judgment.

2Th 3:14-15 If anyone does not obey our instruction in this letter, take special note of him. Do not associate with him, in order that he may feel ashamed. 15 Yet do not regard him as an enemy, but warn him as a brother.

1Ti 5:20 Those [elders] who sin are to be rebuked publicly, so that the others may take warning.

X. ***I agree not to bring to the court of law any professing believer in the Church but rather allow and exhaust biblical processes to take place within the Church.***

1Co 6:1-6 If any of you has a dispute with another, dare he take it before the ungodly for judgment instead of before the saints? 2 Do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if you are to judge the world, are you not competent to judge trivial cases? 3 Do you not know that we will judge angels? How much more the things of this life! 4 Therefore, if you have disputes about such matters, appoint as judges even men of little account in the church! 5 I say this to shame you. Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers? 6 But instead, one brother goes to law against another--and this in front of unbelievers!

Mt 18:15-17 If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. 16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

XI. ***I agree to have my membership withdrawn or myself expelled from the Church in the event that I willfully and repeatedly violate the terms of this agreement.***

1Co 5:12-13 What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? 13 God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you."

Mt 18:15-17 If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. 16 But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' 17 If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he

refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

XII. ***I agree that if ever I decide to transfer to another church for whatever reason, I will not leave unresolved, issues I may have with the SDG Church so as to depart therefrom with the lord's peace and blessings.***

1Co 16:10-11a If Timothy comes, see to it that he has nothing to fear while he is with you, for he is carrying on the work of the Lord, just as I am. 11 No one, then, should refuse to accept him.

2Co 3:1 Are we beginning to commend ourselves again? Or do we need, like some people, letters of recommendation to you or from you?

FULLY UNDERSTANDING the significance and purposes of the foregoing covenant for my regular membership in this church, I hereunto affix my signature this xth day of Month , Year at the city of Davao.

Further, I hereby sincerely acknowledge and certify before our congregation and our reverend Pastor that my conformity to this Church Membership Covenant is purely of my own and voluntary act and deed.

Name of Member

ATTEST:

Ptr. Jurem Noel U. Ramos
Lead Pastor, SDGCC