



# Doctrines and Constitution of Providence Christian Church Rio Rancho, NM

## 1. **Name of the Church**

### **Providence Christian Church**

Building a Heritage of Believers for God's Glory

- Providence: We believe in God's Providence as the cornerstone of our faith and practice (Prov. 16:9).
- Christian: We are His disciples and we are called to imitate Christ (Acts 11:26).
- Church: We are those who Christ loves and died to save (Eph. 5:25).

## 2. **Vision Statement:**

"Uniting Families and Building Generations of Disciples to Glorify, Honor, and Serve Our Sovereign God"

We are a family-integrated fellowship where all ages gather corporately for worship and teaching in a multigenerational setting with the desire to build up God's people to serve Him and display His Glory and Honor.

## 3. **Core Values:**

When we say "core values," we mean those principles based on doctrine that is central to who we are and how we function. We use the word "CHRIST" as an acronym to describe our approach to life as believers:

- **Covenant Community** – We are a community of covenanted believers who value spending time together throughout the week. We come alongside one another during times of joy and sorrow, in times of work and leisure, and to encourage one another to grow in Christ. Through hospitality and Christ-centered fellowship, we hope to become a true family of believers (Acts 2:42-46; I John 3:17).
- **Harmonious Homes** – The current state of the home has left most people with poor models, or no models at all, when it comes to what a biblical family looks like. At PCC, we are committed to the discipleship of believers of all ages with a view toward establishing sound biblical principles upon which the home is built. We believe in distinct, biblical roles for men and women. We are committed to training moms and dads, including single parents, to disciple the children with whom they have been entrusted (Matt. 28:18-20; Eph. 4:11-16; Col. 2:6; Deut. 6:5-9).

- **Reaching The Lost** – Evangelism is part of every Christian’s calling, and we teach all our people to look for opportunities to share Christ. We believe our first mission field is the home, then our community and then the world at large. Our families are wonderful evangelism tools, and when others see our lifestyle, it is a testimony to the life-changing power of Christ (Matt. 5:16; I Tim. 6:17; John 15:12).
- **Integrated Worship** – We integrate all generations into our worship service and the majority of our activities at PCC. Our church life is intentionally designed to gather, rather than to separate, the family unit. We hold to the belief that age-integrated worship brings positive growth to all individuals in the church (Heb. 10:24; Deut. 6:6-7; Matt. 19:14; Psa. 78:2-7).
- **SOLAS** – We affirm the five solas of the Reformation: Scripture alone, Grace alone, Faith alone, Christ alone, and to the Glory of God alone!
- **Teaching God’s Word** – God’s Word is the foundation of PCC, and we strive to communicate the truth of Scripture through a steady diet of preaching and teaching. Expository teaching through books of the Bible is the primary emphasis in order to bring clarity, passion, conviction, and understanding to its hearers, that they may embrace God’s perspective on life. This does not preclude topical teaching at times, but presses us to hold up the whole council of God in all teaching (Matt. 28:18-20; II Tim. 3:16).

#### **4. Church Constitution:**

##### **PREAMBLE:**

Standing firmly upon the Word of God, fervently desiring to please our Lord Jesus Christ, and joyfully following the leading of the Holy Spirit, we, the members of Providence Christian Church of Rio Rancho, New Mexico, in order to constitute an independent, non-denominational, Bible-believing church, do hereby agree to the following Articles and Bylaws (hereinafter referred to as “Articles”).

##### **ARTICLE I: ASSOCIATIONS**

This assembly shall be known as Providence Christian Church (hereinafter referred to as “PCC”). This organization is a church recognized as a non-profit organization under the Federal Tax Laws. It is the intention of PCC to obey the federal, state, and local laws pertaining to it, except when such obedience would constitute a violation of scriptural principles. Because Christ is its sole Lord and Head, PCC acknowledges allegiance to no other person or entity. At its own discretion, PCC may associate, fellowship, and cooperate with those of like faith and practice; it may declare itself in agreement with other doctrinally sound entities in a common cause. Under no circumstances shall such association or agreement ever be construed as bringing PCC under the authority of any person, group, or body outside itself. PCC may withdraw its association with any group or body outside itself at any time at the elders' discretion.

## ARTICLE II: PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

The primary purpose of PCC is to operate as a non-profit church, to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ in and around Rio Rancho, New Mexico, and to the very ends of the earth, and to disciple Christians to live out their faith in accordance with God's Word. The ultimate and singular purpose of the PCC body is to glorify, honor, and serve our sovereign God by uniting families and building generations of disciples.

PCC is a non-profit, charitable institution functioning within the parameters of the government's guidelines as found in Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 2010. In exercising its purposes, PCC shall have all of the rights and powers conferred upon nonprofit associations under the laws of New Mexico or which may hereafter be conferred, including but not limited to the power to contract, rent, buy, or sell personal or real property. PCC shall not engage in any activities or exercise any powers:

- That shall result in pecuniary gain or profit to the members thereof
- That a substantial part of which are intended to influence legislation
- That intervenes in political campaigns

## ARTICLE III: GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH

PCC shall be an independent body of baptized believers. The government of PCC shall be vested in its assembled membership, through its appointed elders, deacons, and church staff. No denomination or associational representatives shall ever sit in judgment over its affairs. PCC may fellowship and cooperate with other churches or other organizations when such shall be wholly in accordance with the Scriptures and the purposes stated in ARTICLE II.

## ARTICLE IV: STATEMENT OF FAITH

### SECTION 1: Doctrine:

We believe that:

- The inerrant Scripture is 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 (Sola Scriptura).
- Our salvation is accomplished by the mediatorial work of the historical Christ Jesus alone. His sinless life and substitutionary atonement alone are sufficient for our justification and reconciliation to God the Father (Solus Christus).
- 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 (Sola Gratia).
- 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 (Sola Fide).

- Because salvation is of God and has been accomplished by God, it is for God's glory, and 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 (Soli Deo Gloria).

## SECTION 2: Statement of Faith:

The following doctrines are delineated, with their respective Scripture references, in the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith as republished in 1974 under the title A Faith to Confess. While we do not hold this or any other confession document to be equal in authority to the Holy Scriptures, we do regard the 1689 London Baptist Confession as a reasonable expression of our beliefs and an edifying assistance for studying God's Word, settling matters of controversy, and giving ready reasons for the hope that is within us as Christians\* (See note).

### i. The Holy Scriptures

We believe that Almighty God has revealed all that is necessary to life and salvation in the sixty-six books of the Holy Scripture, which are the Word of God. All Scripture was given by inspiration of God, is infallible and inerrant in the original manuscripts, and is the final arbiter in all disputes. Its authority is derived from its Author and not from the opinions of men.

### ii. The Godhead

We believe in one, Triune God, eternally existing in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—each with distinct personal attributes, yet co-eternal in being, co-identical in nature, co-equal in power and glory, without division of essence or being, and who is invisible, personal, omnipresent, eternal, dependent on none, unchanging, truthful, trustworthy, almighty, sovereign, omniscient, righteous, holy, good, loving, merciful, long-suffering, and gracious.

### iii. Creation

We believe that the Triune God—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—created the world in six, consecutive, 24-hour days.

### iv. God's Providence

We believe that God, in His infinite power and wisdom, upholds, directs, disposes, and governs all creatures and things by His most wise and holy providence according to His infallible foreknowledge and by His own will for the glorious praise of His wisdom, power, justice, infinite goodness, and mercy.

### v. The Fall of Man and Man's Inability

We believe that Adam fell from his original righteousness into sin and brought upon himself and all his offspring slavery to a sin nature, condemnation, and spiritual and physical death.

We believe it is utterly beyond the power of fallen man to love God, to keep His laws, to understand the Gospel, to repent of sin, or to trust in Christ.

- vi. Christ the Mediator  
We believe that God sent His Son into the world, conceived of the virgin Mary by the Holy Spirit, unchangeably sinless, both God and man, born under the Law, to live a perfect life of righteousness on behalf of His elect people.
- vii. Christ the Redeemer  
We believe that God's Son died at Calvary to affect propitiation, reconciliation, redemption, and atonement for His elect people. God bore testimony to His acceptance of His Son's work by raising Him from the dead.
- viii. Election  
We believe that God, before the foundation of the world and for His own glory, did elect an innumerable host of men and women to eternal life as an act of free and sovereign grace. This election was in no way dependent upon His foresight of human faith, decision, or works of merit.
- ix. Effectual Calling  
We believe that God the Son has poured out the Holy Spirit to work alongside the preached word. The Spirit of God regenerates the elect sinner and draws him irresistibly to faith in Christ the Savior.
- x. Justification  
We believe that the elect, who are called by grace, are justified in the sight of God on account of the imputed righteousness of Jesus Christ, which is received through faith alone.
- xi. Sanctification  
We believe that those who are united to Christ are also further sanctified by His Word and Spirit dwelling in them. The dominion of the whole body of sin is destroyed, and the fleshly lusts, which still exist within our members, are weakened and mortified, while at the same time we are quickened and strengthened to the practice of all true holiness.
- xii. Perseverance  
We believe that such as are regenerated, called, and justified shall persevere in holiness and never finally fall away.
- xiii. Gospel Message and Evangelism  
We believe it is the command of every member of the local church to participate in fulfilling the Great Commission by making disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything Christ has commanded us.

xiv. Christian Liberty and Liberty of Conscience:

Christ has purchased for all believers a liberty inherent in the Gospel. It comprises freedom from the guilt of sin, from the condemnation that follows upon guilt, from the wrath of God, and from the severity and curse of God's Law.

God alone is Lord of the conscience. He has set it free from all obligations to receive or obey any such doctrines or demands of men as are in any respect in opposition to His Word or not contained in it. Indeed, to believe and obey such doctrines and demands is tantamount to a betrayal of true liberty of conscience. It is against all reason, and nothing less than the destruction of liberty of conscience, when men demand of their fellows an implicit faith, in other words, an absolute and blind obedience.

xv. Worship and the Lord's Day

The light of nature shows that there is a God who has dominion and sovereignty over all. He is just and good, and He does good to all. He is, therefore, to be feared, loved, praised, invoked, trusted, and served by men with all their heart and soul and **mind and** strength and worshiped in spirit and in truth as supported by Scripture.

We believe that all Christians should keep a day holy to the Lord, setting it apart as a day to rest from normal workday activities and focus on worshiping God. We set Sunday apart as the Lord's Day to celebrate Christ's victory over death, hell, and the grave.

xvi. The Church

We believe that the local church is under the authority of Christ alone. Nevertheless, He has appointed men to be elders (under-shepherds) to represent Him as they care for His body. Deacons also serve Christ as His ministers of mercy. Furthermore, the communion of saints requires the recognition of and fellowship with other local, evangelical churches.

xvii. Church Ordinances

We believe that baptism by immersion and the Lord's Supper are Gospel ordinances belonging only to regenerated believers. We believe that baptism should be administered by all who are qualified, that is, all believers in Christ as the Great Commission commands.

xviii. Christ's Ascension:

We believe that God's Son ascended to the right hand of His Father and is enthroned in glory, where He intercedes on behalf of His people and rules over all things for their sakes.

xix. The Last Judgment and Resurrection of the Saints:

We believe that God has appointed a day when He will judge the world in righteousness. The Lord Jesus Christ shall come again to raise the dead bodily, both righteous and unrighteous. At His return, believers who are alive to witness the

event will be caught up to meet Christ in the air. In that day of judgment, Christ shall judge all; the righteous shall enjoy everlasting life, and the wicked endure everlasting punishment. After these events, God will dwell with His saints forever.

In addition to the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith, there are other doctrines PCC holds to which are needed to clarify other, scriptural principles:

xx. Marriage:

We believe God ordained marriage and the family as the foundational institution of human society, and that the only legitimate marriage is a sacred and permanent covenant relationship between one man and one woman, symbolizing the union of Christ and His Church (Gen. 2:18-25; Matt. 19:4-6).

We believe God has commanded that no sexual activity is to be engaged in outside of the marriage of a man and a woman. Any form of fornication, adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, bestiality, bisexuality, incest, child molestation, pedophilia, or pornography is a sinful perversion of God's gift of sex. We believe God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance (Gen. 2:22-24; 19:5, 13; Lev. 18:1-30; Matt. 19:4-6; Rom. 1:26-29; 7:2; I Cor. 5:1; 6:9; Gal. 3:28; Eph. 5:22-23; I Thess. 4:1-8; Heb. 13:4).

xxi. Biblical Roles of Men and Women in Marriage

Men and women have equality in Christ, meaning that they are equal in God's eyes as co-heirs of salvation and eternal life. There is equality in personhood and importance, but there are differences in roles and authority. We affirm that God has created men and women with complementary roles in respect to marriage and family life.

Man's Roles:

- To love, cherish, and nurture his wife, laying down his life for her (Eph. 5:25-28; Col. 3:19)
- To teach his wife, shepherding her and washing her in the water of the Word (Eph. 5:26)
- To dwell with his wife in understanding (I Pet. 3:7)
- To be the spiritual leader and covering for his wife (I Cor. 11:3)
- To teach his children without provoking them (Eph. 6:4; Col. 3:21; Deut. 6:7; Prov. 22:6; Is. 38:19)
- To be the leader of and provider for his family (I Tim. 5:8)
- To be a spiritual leader within the church by leading in corporate prayer, teaching, and worship (I Cor. 14:23-40)

Woman's Roles:

- To be a helpmate to her husband in his roles (Gen. 2:18)
- To respect and honor her husband (Eph. 5:33)
- To submit to her husband as her head (Eph. 5:23-24; Col. 3:18)
- To teach the younger women (Titus 2:3-5)

xxii. Divorce and Remarriage

We believe that marriage is designed to be a covenant of permanency (Matt. 19:5-6). To divorce and then remarry generally constitutes an adulterous union (Matt. 19:9). However, certain allowances are made in Scripture for which a believer can legitimately divorce and remarry without incurring the guilt of sin. These allowances are:

- If the divorce occurred while an unbeliever, all actions including marriage and divorce are considered “passed away.” We believe all things, including remarriage after salvation have “become new” (II Cor. 5:17).
- If one partner commits adultery, the wronged party may divorce and remarry without creating an adulterous partnership (Matt. 5:32). However, we believe that God’s highest design is for reconciliation and that divorce should be considered only after all avenues of reconciliation have been exhausted.
- Desertion by an unbelieving spouse (I Cor. 7:13-15).

xxiii. Sanctity of Life

We affirm the sanctity of life to the spectrums of human existence. We believe that life begins at conception, that abortion is a direct violation of scriptural commandments, and that any means of birth control that might result in abortion should be avoided. We grieve for the babies whose lives have been ended by abortion, but seek to show grace to their families, knowing that God fully forgives all who turn to Him in repentance. We stand firmly against the practice of euthanasia or assisted suicide for anybody, including the young, the old, the disabled, and the terminally ill (Ex. 20:13; 21:22-23; Lev. 18:21; Psa. 139:13; Jer. 32:25; Mark 10:19).

\* In review of the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith, three items need clarification.

1. In Chap 22: section 1, we recognize that there are a wide range of views about what constitutes "mere human contrivance" and "forms of worship not prescribed in the Holy Scriptures". At PCC, we believe that as "holy priests" before God and desiring to worship Him "in spirit and truth", the use of musical instruments and the offering of praise through "psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs" from all church ages is in accordance with God's will, both within and outside of congregational worship. We believe that worship done to exalt self over God is "expressly forbidden" in all and that worship is to be given to God and God alone (Isa. 14:12-14; John 4:23-24; Col. 3:16; I Pet. 2:9; Col. 2:16; Gal. 5:13).

2. We affirm that the Fourth Commandment of the Ten Commandments, pertaining to the Sabbath rest, is included in God’s moral Law and is morally obligatory in the present to all people of all nations. However, while the local church is called to gather and worship on the first day of the week (commonly known as the Lord’s Day or Sunday), the day of rest required by the Fourth Commandment does not require rest on Sunday [chap. 22: section 7], seeing as all days are to be equally esteemed and alike in this age. Consequently, the specific day on which someone rests is not the focus, but rather, that a day of rest is observed with the purpose of honoring the Lord. What is restful for one person might be different than another person, but as long as the person is resting from work, especially from their occupation that provides their livelihood, and worshiping the Lord, then the Sabbath is obeyed (Ex. 20:8-11; Acts 20:7; Rom. 14:5-6; Rom. 2:14-16; Gen. 2:1-3).

3. Although we hold that Romanism and the Papacy have doctrinal errors, we do not adopt the assertion in [chap 26: section 4] that the Pope of Rome "is the Antichrist, and man of sin," described in II Thessalonians 2:4f.

## ARTICLE V: MEMBERSHIP OF THE CHURCH

All believers are under obligation to join themselves to a local church when they have opportunity to do so as part of their commitment to Jesus Christ, to His truth, and to His people (Matt. 28:18-20; Luke 22:19; Heb. 10:23-25; 13:17; I Thess. 5:11-15; II Thess. 3:6, 13-15; Acts



12:1; 14:27; 20:28). The following sections provide details about membership requirements, procedure for receiving new members, membership covenant and responsibilities, discipline, termination, and restoration of membership.

### SECTION 1: Membership Requirements

A member is one who freely chooses to be yoked together in covenant with the other members of PCC, in accountability and love, in a spirit of harmony, under the direction of the elders, for the edification of the saints, to God's glory.

Any individual or family seeking church membership at PCC shall be eligible if they:

- profess repentance toward God and saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ,
- have been baptized in accordance with the Scriptures, and
- are aware of the doctrines, government, and direction of PCC as expressed in this Constitution.

In addition, we encourage anyone who becomes a member of PCC as a child while part of their parent's household to independently reaffirm their covenant membership upon reaching adulthood.

### SECTION 2: Procedure for Obtaining PCC Membership

Any individual or family desiring church membership will be given a copy of this Constitution and the booklet, A Faith to Confess (1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith), to read and consider. When ready, the applicant(s) are to meet with one or more of the elders for further information about PCC. Should the applicant(s) and elders still desire to continue the membership process, the name(s) of the applicant(s) will be announced on the following Sunday during the worship service and/or written in the weekly bulletin. During the following three weeks, the rest of the church membership will be encouraged to personally become acquainted with the applicant(s). [In the rare event that problems in approving the applicant(s) might arise, they will be handled according to the Scriptures (Matt.18:15-17; Gal. 6:1), and reconciliation will be accomplished before the membership process continues.]

Assuming all parties believe that God would have the applicant(s) commit themselves to membership at PCC, the applicant(s) will be added to the membership directory and presented to the church, at which time the following shall be recited:

**Presiding elder to applicant(s):**

*“Do you (name the applicant(s) – if a family then both husband and wife if present), having been led by the Spirit of God to repent, believe, and receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Savior, now, in the presence of God and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with us as one body in Christ?”*

**Applicant(s):** “Yes, I do.”

**Elder:** “Have you been scripturally baptized?”

**App.:** “Yes, I have.”

**Elder:** *Will you, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit,*

*strive to live in a way that becomes followers of Christ?”*

**App.:** “Yes, I will.”

**Elder:** “*Will you, to the best of your ability, strive to support the ministry of this church in its worship and work, submit to its government and discipline, and pursue its purity and peace?”*

**App.:** “Yes, I will.”

**Elder to PCC members:**

*“As members of the Body of Christ at PCC, do you receive this Christian (these Christians) into the covenant membership of this church and renew the same covenant yourselves to them and one another?”*

**Members:** “We do.”

The presiding elder will then present the applicant(s) to the church as member(s) of PCC.

### SECTION 3: Christian Principles for Members and Non-Members

We believe that the principles revealed in scripture are many and take a lifetime to attain (Phil. 1:6). We should strive to follow these scriptural principles, and as Christians, it is our mutual desire that:

- We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace and, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, walk together in Christian love (I Cor. 13:1-13; Eph. 4:1-6; John 13:34).
- We will seek the salvation of our kindred, acquaintances, and strangers who have not repented for saving faith in Christ, be in prayer for the spiritual awakening of the lost in our community, and be a faithful witness of the Gospel both here and to the ends of the earth (Matt. 28:19; Luke 24:44-48; Acts 1:3-8).
- We will strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; promote its prosperity and spirituality; sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; and submit to its leaders as they are faithful to Christ (Heb. 10:24-25; 13:17; I Thess. 5:12-15).
- We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel throughout all nations (II Cor. 9:6-7; I Cor. 9:1-14; Job 34:19; Mark 10:21; Luke 4:18).
- We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Heb. 10:25; Acts 2:42-47; 20:7).
- We will maintain family and private devotions, educate our children in the Christian faith, and demonstrate the love of Christ in all of our household relationships (Matt. 6:6; Eph. 6:1-4; Deut. 6:1-9; I Chr. 28:9).
- We will watch over one another in brotherly love, remember one another in prayer, aid one another in sickness and distress, walk circumspectly in the world, be just in our dealings, and be faithful in our engagements and exemplary in our behavior toward others. We will cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech and strive to avoid all scriptural prohibitions, such as tattling, backbiting, and unrighteous, quick anger (Matt. 19:16-19; Gal. 6:1-2; Eph. 4:31-32; 6:18; James 5:13-16).

- We will abstain from gluttony, drunkenness, illicit drugs, materials, entertainments, or the practice of things which jeopardize our own or another's faith (Eph. 5:3-12, 18; Col. 3:1-17; II Cor. 12:20; Rom. 1:28-32; Lev. 19:16; Gal. 5:21; Deut. 21:20; I Cor, 6:9-10; Prov. 23:20-21; Psa. 101:1-2).
- We will refrain from speaking evil of one another, be slow to take offense, think the best of one another, and always ready for biblical reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay so far as it depends upon us (Psa. 19:14; 34:13-14; Eph. 4:29; I Pet. 3:8-12; Matt. 5:21-26; Prov. 26:20-26; Rom. 12:19).
- We will, if necessary, submit to biblically defined and regulated church discipline for the purpose of reconciliation with God and man. We accept that refusing to communicate with the body or choosing to flee usurps the authority of the church for reconciliation and breaks Christian fellowship (Matt. 18:15-20; Heb. 12:11; I Cor. 5:1-13; I John 2:19; I Tim. 1:20; II Cor. 2:5-11; Luke 17:3-4).

#### SECTION 4: Membership Discipline (See ARTICLE VIII: DISCIPLINE EXERCISED BY THE CHURCH)

#### SECTION 5: Membership Termination

Membership may be terminated in one of four ways:

1. By **physical death**;
2. By **transfer**: When it is requested, the elders will grant to a departing member in good standing a letter of dismissal to the fellowship of another church. No such letter will be given to a member who is at the time under the corrective discipline of this church. The elders will also refuse to grant a letter of transfer to any church that is doctrinally unfaithful to the Gospel (Jude 3);
3. By **self-exclusion**: If a member habitually forsakes the assembly of the church without expressing valid reasons, or if due to relocation he ceases to maintain a vital contact with the church, he may be removed from membership; or
4. By **dismissal** as a final step of church discipline: The elders shall carry out such a dismissal in accordance with the Scriptures (see Article VIII).

#### SECTION 6: Membership Restoration

While the discipline of church members, even to the point of dismissal from fellowship, is in harmony with the teachings of the New Testament (Matt. 18:16-17; I Cor. 5:13; II Thess. 3:6), it is always to be carried out in a spirit of humility, love, and restoration (Gal. 6:1). The hope of any church discipline is a true repentance toward God by the one disciplined, and, should they desire it, we welcome their joyful restoration into fellowship with the church (Luke 3:8; II Cor. 2:6-8).

#### SECTION 7: Non-Member Responsibilities and Exceptions

- **Attending Non-Members**: Those desiring to fellowship with the church, but for some reason not wishing to become members, are welcome to do so as long as their fellowship does not threaten the unity and edification of the membership. It should be understood

that “attending non-member” status will exclude one from privileges given to members of PCC (e.g., leadership consideration).

- Exceptions: The membership status and corresponding privileges of those whose relationship to the church involves exceptional circumstances shall be subject to the discretion of the elders.

#### SECTION 8: Additional Member and Attending Non-Member Responsibilities

- Grievances and Lawsuits: In the event of an irreconcilable conflict within PCC, those involved should seek the counsel of PCC leadership for reconciliation according ARTICLE VIII. If reconciliation is not possible, according to I Corinthians 6:1-8, they are not to go before the unsaved to settle their dispute. The innocent party should rather suffer wrong than go to a civil court to settle the matter.

### ARTICLE VI: LEADERSHIP OF THE CHURCH

Jesus Christ is the head of the Church which has been revealed to us in the scriptures. He has given us a structure to follow as His earthly representatives which includes elders and deacons.

[For further study of church leadership by a plurality of Elders, we recommend *Biblical Eldership* by Alexander Strauch, Lewis & Roth Publishers.]

#### SECTION 1: Elders

This church shall be governed by a plurality of elders. We believe that a "plurality" of elders necessitates more than one elder. The elders are men who are responsible for the spiritual oversight and education of the church as mandated by the Scriptures (I Pet. 5:1-4; I Tim. 3; Titus 1). No elder at PCC has more formal authority than the other elders, and each elder serves the body according to his particular, God-given gifts.

Within the council of elders, decisions must be unanimously agreed upon in areas of doctrine, church operations, discipline of a leader, and adherence to the articles of the Constitution. If a disagreement among the elders arises that cannot be resolved, then the deacons and/or heads-of-households (HOHs) of the church will be called together for a council to bring about reconciliation (Prov. 11:14).

##### i. Responsibilities of Elders

1. Leading and serving the members and fellowship of PCC with a life of humility, integrity, and devotion to Jesus Christ according to His Scriptures;
2. Corporate teaching that is done for, or as a representative of PCC. (This includes the selection of guest speakers, lecture series, and any other instruction utilized for the edification of the church as a whole;
3. Discipling and equipping the men of PCC to be the spiritual leaders of their families and credible ambassadors of Christ in society;
4. Overseeing the worship services at, or as a representative of, PCC;

5. Overseeing stewardship of the financial business of the church;
  6. Performing weddings and funerals for, or representing, the members of PCC according to the following guidelines:
    - a. All weddings and funerals shall comply with the laws of the state in which they are performed.
    - b. No weddings will be performed:
      - i. for same-sex couples, or
      - ii. for couples where both partners have not demonstrated, to the satisfaction of the elder representing PCC, a confession and lifestyle becoming a Christian according to the Scriptures, or
      - iii. for couples who have not counseled with an elder to determine the couple's preparation for and commitment to a lifelong marriage.
    - c. Weddings or funerals will not be co-officiated with ministers or religious artifacts of non-Christian religions.
    - d. Final discretion of whether a ceremony may be performed shall be left to the elders of PCC.
  7. Any admonition, correction, and discipline required by the Scriptures to protect the unity and general well-being of PCC; and
  8. Counseling specifically requested of the elders according to the following guidelines:
    - a. All counseling shall be subject to the teachings and principles of the Scriptures.
    - b. Counseling needs that are beyond the knowledge and experience of the elders may be referred to someone trained in nouthetic counseling.
    - c. No counseling of a child or member of the opposite sex shall ever be done without the presence of a parent, the counselee's spouse, the counselor's spouse, or another elder. [It is required that any significant one-on-one ministry taking place within the fellowship of PCC be limited to same-gender situations (Gal. 5:13; Titus 2:3-4).]
    - d. Any confidentiality expectations are subject to the discretion of the counseling elder and will include:
      - i. A married elder should not be expected to exclude his wife from knowledge that, if it were withheld from her, would bring suspicion or disunity to his marriage (Matt. 19:6).
      - ii. Any matter may be discussed between elders. Hence, there is no confidentiality required between elders.
      - iii. By state law, any elder or person representing PCC in a counseling situation is required to report knowledge of unlawful abuse (sexual, physical, et. al.) to law enforcement authorities. Counselees will not be extended protective confidentiality in such cases.
- ii. Selection of Elders:
1. Any man aspiring to the office of elder should inform the elders of his desire and submit himself for evaluation and testing by the elders according to the qualifications given in the Scriptures (I Pet. 5:1-4; I Tim. 3:1-10; Titus 1:5-9).

- a. Aspirants of the office will be required to be a member of PCC for at least one year before confirmation as an elder (i.e. aspirant can be evaluated before one year but cannot be confirmed before being a member for one year).
2. Aspirants of the office will then go through evaluation by the elders in order to become a candidate for eldership to the church.
  - a. Aspirants will go through a study on biblical eldership with current elders in evaluation and preparation for eldership.
  - b. Aspirants will begin attending elders' meetings when determined by elders.
3. Once elders agree that an aspirant meets their evaluation, the proposed candidate will be presented to the church for a three-month evaluation period.
  - a. The candidate will prepare and teach at church services during the three-month evaluation period in which time the members of the church will be able to test for themselves whether the nominee is qualified for the office
  - b. Any challenges to the nominee's fitness to hold the office during this period of time shall be handled according to the Matthew 18:15-18 process.
4. If, after this process, the elders still believe the nominee to be called and qualified by God to hold the office sought, they shall formally ordain him to that office during a subsequent worship service.

iii. Resignation of an Elder

1. An elder who can no longer fulfill his responsibilities may at any time resign his office by providing a letter of resignation to the other elders.
2. An elder may at any time with counsel of the other elders take a leave of absence from PCC leadership until the agreed-upon time at which he will be reinstated.

iv. Removal of an Elder

1. The elders will consider removal of another elder when:
  - a. an accusation against an elder is received according to I Timothy 5:19 and proved to be valid;
  - b. an elder no longer adheres to the Constitution of this church; or
  - c. an elder does not meet the qualification listed in Section 1.ii.
2. If an elder is found to be disqualified, then the disqualification will be brought to the congregation, and the elder will be removed from eldership. The desire is to bring purity in Christ's church and the brother's restoration according to ARTICLE VIII.
3. The removed elder may be reinstated to eldership after a period of demonstrated repentance determined by the remaining elders.

SECTION 2: Deacons

God has ordained the office of deacon for the ministry of service, mercy, and love to the body of Christ. The work of the deacon involves the practical care of the congregation. The work of the deacons is accomplished in conjunction with the leadership of the elders and by adherence to the Articles of the Constitution. (I Tim. 3:8-12; Phil. 1:1; Acts 6:2-4; Acts 4:34-37).

i. Responsibilities Of Deacon

1. Serving the members and fellowship of PCC with a life of humility, integrity, and devotion to Jesus Christ according to His Scriptures;
2. Caring for the widows, the orphans, and the poor;
3. Practical organization of work and activities deemed needful for the body;
4. Maintenance of the church property;
5. Stewardship of the financial business of the church; and
6. Attendance at elders' meetings when required.

ii. Selection of Deacons:

1. Any man aspiring to the office of deacon should inform the elders of his desire and submit himself for evaluation and testing by the elders according to the qualifications given in the Scriptures (I Pet. 5:1-4; I Tim. 3:1-7, 8-10; Titus 1:5-9).
  - a. Aspirants of the office will be required to be a member of PCC for at least one year before confirmation as an elder (i.e. aspirant can be evaluated before one year but cannot be confirmed before being a member for one year).
2. Aspirants of the office will then go through evaluation by the elders in order to become a candidate for deacon to the church.
  - a. Aspirants will go through a study on biblical deaconate with current elders in evaluation and preparation for deaconate.
3. Once the elders agree that an aspirant meets their evaluation, the proposed candidate will be presented to the church for a three-month evaluation period.
  - a. During the three-month evaluation period, members of the church will be able to test for themselves whether the nominee is qualified for the office.
  - b. Any challenges to the nominee's fitness to hold the office during this period of time shall be handled according to the Matthew 18:15-18 process.
4. If, after this process, the elders still believe the nominee to be called and qualified by God to hold the office sought, they shall formally ordain him to that office during a subsequent worship service.

iii. Resignation of a Deacon

1. A deacon that can no longer fulfill his responsibilities may at any time resign his office by providing a letter of resignation to the elders.
2. A deacon may at any time with counsel of the elders take a leave of absence from PCC leadership until the agreed-upon time at which he will be reinstated.

iv. Removal of a Deacon

1. The elders will consider removal of a deacon when:
  - a. an accusation against a deacon is received according to I Timothy 5:19 and proved to be valid;
  - b. a deacon no longer adheres to the Constitution of this church; or
  - c. a deacon does not meet the qualification listed in Section 2.ii.
2. If a deacon is found to be disqualified, then the disqualification will be brought to the congregation, and the deacon will be removed from office. The desire is to

bring purity in Christ's church and the brother's restoration according to ARTICLE VIII.

3. The removed deacon may be reinstated after a period of demonstrated repentance determined by the elders.

### SECTION 3: Head-of-Household

The mandate for elders' leadership calls on the elders to support, not supersede, the primary role of the believing husband/father as the head-of-household ("HOH") to lead his own family and "bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord" (Eph. 6:4).

The elders do desire to fulfill their responsibilities with all the wisdom and unity of mind available in the church body at PCC. Therefore, the elders may call for a meeting of the HOHs or congregation as a whole to supply input. Otherwise, each HOH shall provide their input concerning the direction of PCC by:

1. affirmatively submitting to the direction taken by the elders, or
2. sharing their differences privately with the elders. These discussions should be governed by scriptural instruction and conducted in Christian love until:
  - a. the elders are convinced that God would have them change direction in the matter;
  - b. the HOH is convinced that the elders' direction is acceptable and submits to it;
  - c. it becomes apparent that God would have the HOH peacefully and lovingly leave PCC with his family to fellowship elsewhere in Christ's Church.

## ARTICLE VII: ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH

The biblical and other historical records of Christ's Church clearly teach that water baptism and partaking of the Lord's Supper are important testimonies of Christ's work on the cross for the salvation of sinners and are to be perpetually practiced. The manner and meaning of their practice, however, have been points of vigorous debate among Christians throughout history. At PCC, the teachings and observance of baptism and the Lord's Supper can be summarized as follows:

### SECTION 1: Water Baptism

- Baptism is a public demonstration of the believer's personal faith in Jesus Christ's death on the cross as the only sufficient substitute and satisfaction of God's judgment upon his/her sins (Heb. 2:14-17; 9:10; Acts 8:12).
- Baptism is a command of the Lord to be observed by every believer (Matt. 28:19).
- Baptism is to be done promptly after a public confession of faith as an act of obedience to the Lord's command (Acts 8:26-38; 16:30-33).
- Baptism is not the point at which a believer receives salvation, nor does it in any way affect the sovereign grace of God in choosing those whom He saves (John 5:24; Titus 3:5-7; Rom. 4:1-14; 9:15-16; Gal. 3:1-3; Eph. 2:8-9). If, however, a professing believer is unwilling to be baptized in obedience to Christ's command, the genuineness of his faith



may be called into question, and the privileges afforded a believer (such as participation in the Lord's Supper) may be withheld (Luke 6:46; James 2:14ff).

- PCC believes in Credo (believer) baptism, and, therefore, Paedo (infant) baptisms will not be performed.
- We baptize by immersion in water, but do not believe the focus of God's Word to be on the *mode* as much as the *meaning* of baptism.
- Baptism symbolizes, but does not affect, the washing away of sins (I John 1:7; Acts 10:43; I Pet. 3:19-21[with Heb. 9:9b-14]).
- The father, as the spiritual leader of his household, will determine when new converts are ready to be baptized. That father will also have the option of choosing himself or another Christian brother to baptize the new convert (John 4:1-2; Acts 9:17-18).
- Those Christians, who have not been baptized in a manner as stated above may, after consultation with the elders, qualify for membership privileges at PCC under "EXCEPTIONS" status (See Article V, Section 7, Paragraph 2, EXCEPTIONS).

## SECTION 2: The Lord's Supper

- The eating of the bread and the drinking of the cup during the Lord's Supper is done in remembrance and as a proclamation of Jesus' atonement for the sins of His people through His death on the cross at Calvary (I Cor. 11:24-26).
- At PCC, the Lord's Supper will be celebrated when believers are gathered together during the Sunday worship service (Acts 20:7, I Cor. 11:26).
- All participants should be aware of God's promise of judgment upon anyone who partakes of the Lord's Supper in an unworthy manner which would include knowingly partaking:
  - a. as an unbeliever;
  - b. with a guilty conscience concerning sin in one's life;
  - c. with resentment, unforgiveness, jealousy, or other sinful attitudes toward another believer;
  - d. without reverence for the sanctity of the Supper's observance; or
  - e. without regard for the needs of others who are participating (I Cor. 11:27-34).
- The worthiness of a participant will be determined by the conscience of that participant unless:
  - a. the parent of a child participant chooses to deny participation, or
  - b. the elders exercise church discipline upon that person as an unrepentant sinner as per Matthew 18:17.
- A believer need not be a member of PCC in order to participate.

## ARTICLE VIII: DISCIPLINE EXERCISED BY THE CHURCH

Disorderly conduct or the teaching of heretical doctrine (that which is clearly at odds with historical Christian orthodoxy) that is opposed to the church's life and faith will result in corrective church discipline.

Such discipline will always be conducted in a spirit of love, humility, and gentleness as a means of:

1. Effecting the return to a biblical standard of conduct and doctrine of a Christian brother (or sister—and so throughout this Article) who errs (Gal. 6:1),
2. Maintaining purity in the local church (I Cor. 5:6), and
3. Deterring sin (I Tim. 5:20) as a witness of Christ's love and glory (Col. 3:17; Eph. 4:32).

Reasonable efforts shall always be made to clear up difficulties and remove offenses before any subsequent action is taken (Luke 6:41ff; Gal. 6:1). In the event that such preliminary efforts fail, the brother in this church who teaches or insists on holding false doctrine, persistently conducts himself in a manner inconsistent with biblical teaching, or who persists in disturbing the unity or peace of the church shall be dealt with as follows, according to God's Word:

1. It is the duty of any Christian of this church who has knowledge of a Christian brother's alleged misconduct to, as soon as possible (Matt. 5:23), talk with the alleged erring brother in private, listen carefully to establish the truth, and, if necessary, appeal to him for his repentance and restoration (Matt. 18:15).
2. If the alleged erring brother does not heed this first appeal, the offended brother shall again go to the alleged erring brother, accompanied by one or two other brothers as witnesses, to test the evidence and effect repentance and restoration where necessary (Matt. 18:16).
3. If the alleged erring brother still refuses to heed the warning, the matter shall be brought to the attention of the elders, who shall evaluate the situation, and, if necessary, appeal to the alleged erring brother and seek repentance and restoration. In the case where an elder is already involved, the process will go directly to the evaluation of the elders and any biblically legitimate assistance they deem necessary from the church beyond PCC (Acts 15; Matt. 18:17).
4. If the erring brother refuses to hear and heed the appeal of the elders, it will be announced to the church body (in a manner left to the discretion of the elders—taking into consideration the overall edification of the church and the restoration of the unrepentant brother) that the erring brother has been confronted according to the Scriptures and found to be in need of prayer and encouragement by the church body to repent from proven sin (Matt. 18:17).
5. If the erring brother refuses to heed the appeals of the elders and the church, he shall be dismissed from the church pursuant to the Scriptures and regarded as an unbeliever, and the congregation shall be encouraged to pray for the repentance and restoration of the erring brother (Matt. 18:17).
6. Refer to Article V Section 8 for member seeking any additional action beyond PCC's disciplinary procedures.

#### ARTICLE IX: FINANCES OF THE CHURCH

The finances of the church are dependent upon the work, service, and gifts of the Lord's people. The elders and deacons will be financially accountable to the congregation by submitting regular financial reports and making the books open for review at any time. In order to avoid preferential treatment of members based upon their giving, salaried elders will not be permitted to count or record member contributions so that the elders might be above reproach (Rom. 13:14; James 2:2-3).

A collection box will be placed within the church for the collection of tithes and offerings. The collections will be counted and the deposit slip written by two or more men selected by the elders (a combination of elders, deacons and/or church members). The designated member will then enter amounts into the bookkeeping system for accounts and tax purposes and then deposit the funds. Any financial transactions (i.e. checks or transfers) will require two signers from the list of elders, deacons, and designated church members.

The elders and deacons will be responsible to generate and manage all aspects of the budget for PCC. The elders may consult with the HOHs on financial decisions with respect to purchases, financial direction, and management of the budget. However, the elders make all final budgetary decisions. The elders will periodically review all income and expenses, and annual reports will be made by elders, deacons, and/or a third-party accounting firm.

At such time that the church maintains salaried employees, salaries will be determined by the non-salaried elders and deacons.

#### ARTICLE X: AMENDMENTS MADE BY THE CHURCH TO THE CONSTITUTION

1. Any proposed change shall be provided to the members at least four weeks in advance.
2. During this time, members will be able to provide input to the elders and deacons on the proposed change.
3. The elders must then reach unanimous approval of any changes.

#### ARTICLE XI: DISSOLUTION OF THE CHURCH

The church may be dissolved by a unanimous decision by the elders. Upon dissolution of PCC, the elders shall cause all bills to be paid in full and the assets liquidated and distributed to other organizations of like faith. No funds should accrue to the members of the church or any other person associated with PCC.