

BIGELOW CHURCH CONSTITUTION

415 Washington Street
Portsmouth, Ohio

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**THE
CONSTITUTION**

Covenant - Doctrinal Statement - By Laws

Of

BIGELOW CHURCH, INC.

Portsmouth, Ohio

PREAMBLE

The Bible admonishes us saying, "*Let all things be done decently and in order.*" (I Corinthians 14:40) To this end, we the members of Bigelow Church of Portsmouth, Ohio, solemnly and sincerely set forth the following constitution by which we willingly and cheerfully agree to be governed as a church, knowing full well that the Bible is the supreme and final authority in all matters of faith and life.

Article I - NAME

The name of this local New Testament church shall be Bigelow Church. The church shall be located in the city of Portsmouth, county of Scioto, in the state of Ohio. The terms for which this church will exist shall be perpetual.

Article II - PURPOSE

This church exists by the grace of God, for the glory of God, which shall be the ultimate purpose in all its activities.

This church glorifies God by loving Him and obeying His commands through:

- Worshipping Him;
- Equipping the saints through Bible instruction and study;
- Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching and personal evangelism, and any other means consistent with the teachings of Holy Scripture;
- Encouraging, supporting, and participating in missions work, local, domestic, and international;
- Administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper;
- Encouraging Biblical fellowship among believers;
- Serving other individuals, families, and churches by providing for physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, in the name of Jesus Christ.

The purpose and responsibility of church leadership shall be to develop and maintain characteristics (or marks) of the church both through equipping of the saints and execution of the various ministries. These characteristics shall include:

- Expository Preaching
- A Biblical Theology
- A Biblical Understanding Of The Good News
- A Biblical Understanding Of Conversion
- A Biblical Understanding Of Evangelism
- A Biblical Understanding Of Church Membership
- The Practice of Biblical Church Discipline
- A Concern For Promoting Christian Discipleship And Growth
- Biblical Church Leadership

Article III - CHURCH COVENANT

Having, as we trust, been brought by Divine Grace to repent, and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ and to give up ourselves to Him, and having been baptized upon our profession of faith, in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, we do now, relying on His gracious aid, solemnly and joyfully affirm our covenant with each other.

We will work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

We will walk together in brotherly love, as becomes the members of a Christian Church, exercise an affectionate care and watchfulness over each other and faithfully admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require.

We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, nor neglect to pray for ourselves and others.

We will endeavor to bring up such as may at any time be under our care, in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, and by a pure and loving example to seek the salvation of our family and friends.

We will rejoice at each other's happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows.

We will seek, by Divine aid, to live carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, and remembering that, as we have been voluntarily buried by baptism and raised again from the symbolic grave, so there is on us a special obligation now to lead a new and holy life.

We will work together for the continuance of a faithful evangelical ministry in this church, as we sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines.

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 through all nations.

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen.

Article IV - CHURCH GOVERNMENT

This church shall always recognize its relationship and responsibility to other churches of like faith and practice, but it shall remain democratic and independent in Government. It shall be a completely autonomous and self-governing body, not subject to control or interference from any hierarchy of individuals or organizations. This church shall practice a congregational form of government in that the membership shall have the final authority in matters of voting and the selection of leadership. Except where otherwise noted, all questions shall be decided by a simple majority vote by eligible voters present.

Article V - DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

Section I. The Scriptures

We believe that the Holy Bible was **written by men moved by the Holy Spirit**, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction (1); that it has **God for its author**, salvation for its end (2), and truth without any mixture of error for its matter (3); that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us (4); and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union (5), and the **supreme standard** by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried (6).

1. 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Sam. 23:2; Acts 1:16; 3:21; John 10:35; Luke 16:29-31; Psa. 119:11; Rom. 3:1-2
2. 2 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; Acts 11:14; Rom. 1:16; Mark 16:16; John 5:38-39
3. Prov. 30:5-6; John 17:17; Rev. 22:18-19; Rom. 3:4
4. Rom. 2:12; John 12:47-48; 1 Cor. 4:3-4; Luke 10:10-16; 12:47-48
5. Phil. 3:16; Eph. 4:3-6; Phil. 2:1-2; 1 Cor. 1:10; 1 Pet. 4:11
6. 1 John 4:1; Isa. 8:20; 1 Thess. 5:21; 2 Cor. 8:5; Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:6; Jude 3; Eph. 6:17; Psa. 119:59-60; Phil. 1:9-11

Section II. Of The True God

We believe that there is **one, and only one**, living and true God, an infinite, intelligent Spirit, whose name is JEHOVAH, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of Heaven and earth (1); inexpressibly glorious in holiness (2), and worthy of all possible honor, confidence, and love (3); that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the **Father, the Son, and the Holy**

Spirit (4); equal in every divine perfection (5), and executing distinct and harmonious offices in the great work of redemption (6).

1. John 4:24; Psa. 147:5; 83:18; Heb. 3:4; Rom. 1:20; Jer. 10:10
2. Exod. 15:11; Isa. 6:3; 1 Pet. 1:15-16; Rev. 4:6-8
3. Mark 12:30; Rev. 4:11; Matt. 10:37; Jer. 2:1-13
4. Matt. 28:19; John 15:26; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 1 John 5:7
5. John 10:30; 5:17; 14:23; 17:5, 10; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor. 2:10-11; Phil. 2:5-6
6. Eph. 2:18; 2 Cor. 13:14; Rev. 1:4-5

Section III. Of The Fall Of Man

We believe that man was **created in holiness**, under the law of His Maker (1); but by **voluntary transgression** fell from that holy and happy state (2); in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners (3), not by constraint, but choice (4); being by nature **utterly void** of that holiness required by the law of God, positively inclined to evil; and therefore under just condemnation to eternal ruin (5), without defense or excuse (6).

1. Gen. 1:27, 31; Eccl. 7:29; Gen. 2:16
2. Gen. 3:6-24; Rom. 5:12
3. Rom. 5:19; John 3:6; Psa. 51:5; Rom. 5:15-19; 8:7
4. Isa. 53:6; Gen. 6:12; Rom. 3:9-18
5. Eph. 2:1-3; Rom. 1:18, 32; 2:1-16; Gal. 3:10; Matt. 20:15
6. Ezek. 18:19-20; Rom. 1:20; 3:19; Gal. 3:22

Section IV. Of The Way Of Salvation

We believe that the **salvation** of sinners is **wholly of grace** (1), through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God (2); who by the appointment of the Father, freely took upon Him our nature, yet without sin (3); honored the divine law by His personal obedience (4), and **by His death** made a full atonement for our sins (5); that having **risen from the dead**, He is now enthroned in heaven (5); and uniting in His wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfections, He is every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and **an all-sufficient Savior** (7).

1. Eph. 2:5; Matt. 18:11; 1 John 4:10; 1 Cor. 3:5-7; Acts 15:11
2. John 3:16; 1:1-14; Heb. 4:14; 12:24
3. Phil. 2:6-7; Heb. 2:9, 14; 2 Cor. 5:21
4. Isa. 42:21; Phil. 2:8; Gal. 4:4-5; Rom. 3:21
5. Isa. 53:4-5; Matt. 20:28; Rom. 4:25; 3:21-26; 1 John 4:10; 2:2; 1 Cor. 15:1-3; Heb. 9:13-15
6. Heb. 1:8, 3; 8:1; Col. 3:1-4
7. Heb. 7:25; Col. 2:9; Heb. 2:18; 7:26; Psa. 89:19; Psa. 14

Section V. Of Justification

We believe that the **great gospel blessing** which Christ (1) secures to such as believe in Him is Justification (2); that Justification includes the **pardon of sin** (3), and the promise of **eternal life** on principles of righteousness (4); that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but **solely through faith** in the Redeemer's blood (5); by virtue of which faith His perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us of God (6); that it brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity (7).

1. John 1:16; Eph. 3:8
2. Acts 13:39; Isa. 53:11-12; Rom. 8:1
3. Rom. 5:9; Zech. 13:1; Matt. 9:6; Acts 10:43
4. Rom. 5:17; Titus 3:5-6; 1 John 2:25; Rom. 5:21
5. Rom. 4:4-5; 5:21; 6:23; Phil. 3:7-9
6. Rom. 5:19; 3:24-26; 4:23-25; 1 John 2:12
7. Rom. 5:1-3, 11; 1 Cor. 1:30-31; Matt. 6:33; 1 Tim. 4:8

Section VI. Of The Freeness Of Salvation

We believe that the blessings of salvation are **made free to all** by the gospel (1); that it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a cordial, penitent, and obedient faith (2); and that **nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner** on earth but his own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the gospel (3); which rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation (4).

1. Isa. 55:1; Rev. 22:17; Luke 14:17
2. Rom. 16:26; Mark 1:15; Rom. 1:15-17
3. John 5:40; Matt. 23:37; Rom. 9:32; Prov. 1:24; Acts 13:46
4. John 3:19; Matt. 11:20; Luke 19:27; 2 Thess. 1:8

Section VII. Of Grace In Regeneration

We believe that, in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated (**born again**) (1); that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind (2); that it is effected in a manner above our comprehension **by the power of the Holy Spirit**, in connection with divine truth (3), so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel (4); and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of **repentance**, and **faith**, and **newness of life** (5).

1. John 3:3, 6-7; Rev. 21:27
2. 2 Cor. 5:17; Ezek. 36:26; Deut. 30:6; Rom. 2:28-29; 5:5; 1 John 4:7
3. John 3:8; 1:13; James 1:16-18; 1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 2:13
4. 1 Pet. 1:22-25; 1 John 5:1; Eph. 4:20-24; Col. 3:9-11
5. Eph. 5:9; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 5:16-23; Eph. 3:14-21; Matt. 3:8-10; 7:20; 1 John 5:4, 18

Section VIII. Of Repentance And Faith

We believe that Repentance and Faith are **sacred duties**, and also **inseparable graces**, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God (1); whereby being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger, and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ (2), we **turn to God** with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy (3); at the same time heartily receiving the **Lord Jesus Christ** as our Prophet, Priest, and King, and relying on Him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior (4).

1. Mark 1:15; Acts 11:18; Eph. 2:8; 1 John 5:1
2. John 16:8; Acts 2:37-38; 16:30-31
3. Luke 18:13; 15:18-21; James 4:7-10; 2 Cor. 7:11; Rom.10:12-13; Psa. 51
4. Rom. 10:9-11; Acts 3:22-23; Heb. 4:14; Psa. 2:6; Heb. 1:8; 8:1-6; 2 Tim. 1:12

Section IX. Of God's Purpose Of Grace

We believe that Election is the **eternal purpose of God**, according to which He graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners (1); that being perfectly **consistent with the free agency of man**, it comprehends all the means in connection with the end (2); that it is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, being infinitely free, wise, holy, and unchangeable (3); that it utterly excludes boasting, and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God, and active imitation of His free mercy (4); that it encourages the use of means in the highest degree (5); that it may be ascertained by its effects in all who truly believe the gospel (6); that it is the **foundation of Christian assurance** (7); and that to ascertain it with regard to ourselves demands and deserves the utmost diligence (8).

1. 2 Tim. 1:8-9; Eph. 1:3-14; 1 Pet. 1:1-2; Rom. 11:5-6; John 15:15; 1 John 4:19; Hos. 12:9
2. 2 Thess. 2:13-14; Acts 13:48; John 10:16; Matt. 20:16; Acts 15:14
3. Exod. 33:18-19; Matt. 20:15; Eph. 1:11; Rom. 9:23-24; Jer. 31:3; Rom. 11:28-29; James 1:17-18; 2 Tim. 1:9; Rom. 11:32-36
4. 1 Cor. 4:7; 1:26-31; Rom. 3:27; 4:16; Col. 3:12; 1 Cor. 3:5-7; 15:10; 1 Pet. 5:10; Acts 1:24; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 2:9; Luke 18:7; John 15:16; Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 2:12
5. 2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Cor. 9:22; Rom. 8:28-30; John 6:37-40; 2 Pet. 1:10
6. 1 Thess. 1:4-10
7. Rom. 8:28-30; Isa. 42:16; Rom. 11:29
8. 2 Pet. 1:10-11; Phil. 3:12; Heb. 6:11

Section X. Of Sanctification

We believe that Sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made **partakers of His holiness** (1); that it is a **progressive work** (2); that it is **begun in regeneration** (3); and that it is **carried on in the hearts of believers** by the presence and power of the Holy

Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means-especially the Word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer (4).

1. 1 Thess. 4:3; 5:23; 2 Cor. 7:1; 13:9; Eph. 1:4
2. Prov. 4:18; 2 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 6:1; 2 Pet. 1:5-8; Phil. 3:12-16
3. Rom. 8:5; John 3:6; Phil. 1:9-11; Eph. 1:13-14
4. Phil. 2:12-13; Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18; 2 Cor. 13:5; Luke 11:35; 9:23; Matt. 26:41; Eph. 6:18; 4:30

Section XI. Of The Perseverance Of Saints

We believe that such only are **real believers** as endure unto the end (1); that their **persevering attachment to Christ** is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors (2); that a special Providence watches over their welfare (3); and they are **kept by the power of God** through faith unto salvation (4).

1. John 8:31; 1 John 2:27-28; 3:9; 5:18
2. 1 John 2:19; John 13:18; Matt. 13:20-21; John 6:66-69; Job 17:9
3. Rom. 8:28; Matt. 6:30-33; Jer. 32:40; Psa. 121:3; 91:11-12
4. Phil. 1:6; 2:12-13; Jude 24-25; Heb. 1:14; Heb. 13:5; 1 John 4:4

Section XII. Of The Harmony Of The Law And The Gospel

We believe that the Law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of His **moral government** (1); that it is **holy, just, and good** (2); and that the inability which the Scriptures ascribe to fallen men to fulfill its precepts arises entirely from their love of sin (3); to deliver them from which, and to restore them through a Mediator to **unfeigned obedience** to the holy Law, is one great end of the Gospel, and of the means of grace connected with the establishment of the visible Church (4).

1. Rom. 3:31; Matt. 5:17; Luke 16:17; Rom. 3:20; 4:15
2. Rom. 7:12, 7, 14, 22; Gal. 3:21; Psa. 119
3. Rom. 8:7-8; Josh. 24:19; Jer. 13:23; John 6:44; 5:44
4. Rom. 8:2, 4; 10:4; 1 Tim. 1:5; Heb. 8:10; Jude 20-21; Heb. 12:14; Matt. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 12:28

Section XIII. Of A Gospel Church

We believe that a visible Church of Christ is a **congregation of baptized believers** (1), **associated by covenant** in the faith and fellowship of the gospel (2); observing the **ordinances** of Christ (3); governed by His laws (4), and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word (5); that its only scriptural officers are Elders, and Deacons (6), whose qualifications, claims, and duties are defined in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus.

1. 1 Cor. 1:1-13; Matt. 18:17; Acts 5:11; 8:1; 1 Cor. 4:17; 14:23; 3 John 9; 1 Tim. 3:5
2. Acts 2:41-42; 2 Cor. 8:5; Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 5:12-13
3. 1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 3:6; Rom. 16:17-20; 1 Cor. 11:23; Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:6; 2 Cor. 2:7; 1 Cor. 4:17
4. Matt. 28:20; John 14:15; 15:12; 1 John 4:21; John 14:21; 1 Thess. 4:2; 2 John 6; Gal. 6:2; all the Epistles
5. Eph. 4:7; 1 Cor. 14:12; Phil. 1:27; 1 Cor. 12:14
6. Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23; 15:22; 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1

Section XIV. Of Baptism And The Lord's Supper

We believe that Christian Baptism is the **immersion in water** of a believer (1), into the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost (2); to show forth, in a **solemn and beautiful emblem**, our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Savior, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life (3); that it is **prerequisite** to the privileges of a Church relation; and to the Lord's Supper (4), in which we commemorate together the dying love of Christ (5); preceded always by solemn self-examination (6), lest we bring judgment upon ourselves.

1. Acts 8:36-39; Matt. 3:5-6; John 3:22-23; 4:1-2; Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:12; 16:32-34; 18:8
2. Matt. 28:19; Acts 10:47-48; Gal. 3:27-28
3. Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:20-21; Acts 22:16
4. Acts 2:41-42; Matt. 28:19-20; Acts and Epistles
5. 1 Cor. 11:26; Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20
6. 1 Cor. 5:1, 8; 10:3-32; 11:17-32; John 6:26-71

Section XV. Of The Christian Sabbath

We believe that the **first day of the week** is the Lord's Day, or Christian Sabbath (1); and is to be **kept sacred** to religious purposes (2), by preparation for that rest that remaineth for the people of God (3).

1. Acts 20:7; Gen. 2:3; Col. 2:16-17; Mark 2:27; John 20:19; 1 Cor. 16:1 - 2
2. Exod. 20:8; Rev. 1:10; Psa. 118:24
3. Heb. 4:3-11

Section XVI. Of Civil Government

We believe that civil government is of **divine appointment**, for the interests and good order of human society (1); and that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored and obeyed (2); except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ (3) who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the Prince of the kings of the earth (4).

1. Rom. 13:1-7; Deut. 16:18; Exod. 18:23; Jer.30:21
2. Matt. 22:21; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13; 1 Tim. 2:1-8
3. Acts 5:29; Matt. 10:28; Dan. 3:15-18; 6:7-10; Acts 4:18-20
4. Matt. 23:10; Rom. 14:4; Rev. 19:16; Psa. 72:11; Psa. 2; Rom. 14:9-13

Section XVII. Of The Righteous And The Wicked

We believe that there is a **radical and essential difference** between the righteous and the wicked (1); that such only as through faith are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God, are **truly righteous** in His esteem (2); while all such as continue in impenitence and unbelief are **in His sight wicked**, and under the curse (3); and this **distinction holds** among men both in and after death (4).

1. Mal. 3:18; Prov. 12:26; Isa. 5:20; Gen. 18:23; Jer. 15:19; Acts 10:34 - 35; Rom. 6:16
2. Rom. 1:17; 7:6; 1 John 2:29; 3:7; Rom. 6:18, 22; 1 Cor. 11:32; Prov. 11:31; 1 Pet. 4:17 - 18
3. 1 John 5:19; Gal. 3:10; John 3:36; Isa. 57:21; Psa. 10:4; Isa 55:6-7
4. Prov. 14:32; Luke 16:25; John 8:21-24; Prov. 10:24; Luke 12:4-5; 9:23- 26; John 12:25-26; Eccl. 3:17; Matt. 7:13-14

Section XVIII. Of The World To Come

We believe that the end of the world is approaching (1); that at the last day Christ will **descend from heaven** (2), and **raise the dead** from the grave to final retribution (3); that a solemn **separation** will then take place (4); that the **wicked** will be adjudged to endless punishment, and the **righteous** to endless joy (5); and that this judgment will fix forever the **final state of men** in heaven or hell (6).

1. 1 Pet. 4:7; 1 Cor. 7:29-31; Heb. 1:10-12; Matt. 24:35; 1 John 2:17; Matt. 28:20; 13:39 - 40; 2 Pet. 3:3-13
2. Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7; Heb. 9:28; Acts 3:21; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 5:1-11
3. Acts 24:15; 1 Cor. 15:12-59; Luke 14:14; Dan. 12:2; John 5:28-29; 6:40; 11:25-26; 2 Tim. 1:10; Acts 10:42
4. Matt. 13:49, 37-43; 24:30-31; 25:31-33
5. Matt. 25:35-41; Rev. 22:11; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Mark 9:43-48; 2 Pet. 2:9; Jude 7; Phil. 3:19; Rom. 6:23; 2 Cor. 5:10-11; John 4:36; 2 Cor. 4:18
6. Rom. 3:5-6; 2 Thess. 1:6-12; Heb. 6:1-2; 1 Cor. 4:5; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:2-16; Rev. 20:11-12; 1 John 2:28; 4:17

Article VI - BY-LAWS

Section 1. Officers

A. Titles:

In order to meet the Biblical requirements for a New Testament Church, Bigelow Church shall recognize the offices of Elder and Deacon. Specially gifted Elders shall be recognized and called to the offices of Senior Pastor and Associate Pastor.

To meet the logical requirements of a functioning corporation, the offices of Treasurer, Financial Secretary and Clerk shall be recognized.

To meet the legal requirements of the state of Ohio, Bigelow Church shall further designate a Corporate President and Vice President from among the Elders. The Elders shall also serve as the Corporate Trustees as provided for in the church's Articles of Incorporation.

B. Description and Duties:

Senior Pastor

The Senior Pastor shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of expository preaching and teaching.

The Senior Pastor shall be elected by the congregation after being interviewed by the Elders and presented to the congregation. A two-thirds majority vote of the congregation shall be required to call the Senior Pastor.

His duties shall be to preach and teach on the Lord's Day, administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and perform such other duties as usually pertain to that office.

The Senior Pastor shall be compensated for the performance of duties from the tithes and offerings rendered to the Church in an amount recommended by the Elders and approved by the congregation at the time of initial employment and at the Annual Business Meeting thereafter.

In the absence or incapacity of the senior Pastor, the Associate Pastor(s) and/or the Elder(s) shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which can be shared or delegated among them.

The Senior Pastor shall serve until he resigns or is terminated by a vote of two-thirds majority of the congregation or by death.

Associate Pastor

The church may call additional Pastors whose relationship to the senior Pastor is that of associate. He/they shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching.

The Associate Pastor will be compensated for the performance of duties from the tithes and offerings rendered to the Church in an amount recommended by the Elders and approved by the congregation at the time of initial employment and at the Annual Business Meeting thereafter

The duties of Associate Pastor(s) shall be to assist the senior Pastor in the performance of his regular duties and shall perform any other duties as usually pertain to the office of Pastor, or which may be specifically assigned to him by the Elders.

In the absence or incapacity of an Associate Pastor, the Elders shall assume his duties, any of which can be shared or delegated among them.

The Associate Pastor(s) shall serve until he resigns or is terminated by a vote of two-thirds majority of the congregation or by death.

Elders

The composition of Elders shall be comprised of not less than three men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of Elder set forth in I Timothy 3: 1–7 and Titus 1: 6–9. A majority of the active eldership shall be composed of church members not in the regular pay of the church, and no Elder shall hold the office of Deacon simultaneously. The church shall recognize men gifted and willing to serve in this calling. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His Church and set apart as Elders.

The Elders shall oversee the ministry and resources of the church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6: 1–6 and I Peter 5: 1–4, the Elders shall devote their time to prayer, the ministry of the Word (by teaching and encouraging sound doctrine), and shepherding God's flock. The Elders shall have primary responsibility for the employment, supervision, and evaluation of staff members. This responsibility may, on a case-by-case basis, be delegated to another staff member. The Elders shall take particular responsibility to examine and instruct prospective members, examine and recommend all prospective candidates for offices and positions, oversee the work of the Deacons and appointed church agents and committees, conduct worship services, administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, equip the membership for the work of the ministry, encourage sound doctrine and practice, admonish and correct error, oversee the process of church discipline, coordinate and promote the ministries of the church, and mobilize the church for world missions. The Elders are further to ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share our fundamental convictions.

The Elders shall be responsible to evaluate the ongoing fitness of each Elder on an annual basis. All Elders shall be evaluated as to their agreement with Bigelow's Purpose stated in Article II, the Doctrinal Statement stated in Article V, and their meeting of the qualifications for Elders listed in Article VI Section 1B Elders. Any Elder unable to give their wholehearted assent to these Articles will resign immediately so as not to disrupt the unity of the church body. Prior to acceptance of such resignation, the Elders will meet with Elder(s) having difficulty with affirming said Articles to seek to resolve any confusion or dispute.

In the absence or incapacity of an Elder, the remaining Elders shall assume his duties, any of which can be shared or delegated among them, until such time a replacement can be nominated by the Elders, and recommended to the congregation for a vote.

An Elder shall serve until he is terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members with reason to believe that an Elder should be dismissed should express such concern to the Elders and, if need be, to the membership. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18: 15–17 and I Timothy 5: 17–21. Any of the Elders may be dismissed by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the members present at a Special Members' Meeting called for this purpose.

The Elders shall meet on a regular basis to pray and to consider the spiritual and temporal needs of the fellowship. A report of the actions and recommendations of the Elders shall be presented at the Monthly Members' Meetings. The Elders shall elect a chairman of Elders' meetings and shall also elect one of their number to serve as moderator of the Monthly Members' Meetings and the Annual Business Meeting. For purposes of compliance with the laws of the State of Ohio, the Elders shall elect one of their number to serve as the President of the corporation and one to serve as Vice President of the corporation.

Deacons

The office of Deacon is described in I Timothy 3: 8–13 and Acts 6: 1–7. The church shall recognize, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections, men who possess particular gifts of service. These members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as Deacons.

Deacons shall care for the temporal needs of members, attend to the accommodations for public worship, and encourage and support those able to help others and those with gifts of administration and any other duties as assigned by the Elders. Each year the Deacons, with the approval of the Elders, shall present to the church an itemized budget at the Annual Business Meeting. No money shall be solicited by or on behalf of the church or any of its ministries without the approval of the Elders and Deacons.

The Deacons shall receive, hold, and disburse a fund for benevolence, reporting on its use to the Elders at their request, and reporting to the church its total receipts and total disbursements only.

In the absence or incapacity of any Deacon, the Elders shall determine whether a replacement is needed and will have the authority to appoint a replacement to serve out the term or to not fill the designated duties of the absent Deacon.

The Deacons, with the agreement of the Elders, may establish unpaid administrative positions or committees of members to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities in the church.

Treasurer

The church Treasurer shall have custody of all church funds and shall maintain an accurate record of all receipts and expenditures. The Treasurer shall be prepared to make a financial report to the officers and members of the church each month, and shall give a full financial report to the congregation at the Annual Business Meeting.

Financial Secretary

The Financial Secretary shall maintain an accurate record of all offerings received. The Financial Secretary shall also keep an accurate record of individual contributions and present to each contributor an annual report of gifts received.

Clerk

The Clerk shall keep an accurate record of all business meetings of the church. The Clerk shall also maintain an accurate membership role, and, with the Pastor, shall be responsible for all communication with other churches regarding matters of membership. The Clerk shall maintain all minutes of membership meetings and business meetings. The Clerk shall enter into the records of the church events in the life of the church that may be of historical value, making the church records a true and complete history of the church. The Clerk shall report to the congregation at the Monthly Members' Meeting and the Annual Business Meeting.

B. Elections:

(1) Principles:

The process for church elections shall be interpreted and carried out to fulfill the following principles:

1. Substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, should be an integral part of the election process;
2. Nominations should proceed with the support of the Elders;
3. All candidates for church office should be treated with the grace, kindness, and honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow members;
4. The election process shall express that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration that is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(2) Qualifications:

All officers are to be members in good standing. In addition to this basic requirement, the Pastors, Elders and Deacons must meet the Biblical qualifications described in I Timothy 3:1-13.

(3) Calling and election of the Senior Pastor:

In the calling and election of any man to this position, the church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential candidate and, before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the Elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Statement of Faith and Church Covenant. Notice of the nomination of a man to be elected to membership and called as senior Pastor (which shall include, if necessary, election to membership of his wife if he is married) must be given at two Sunday morning services following the nomination, prior to a vote at a Special congregational Meeting called for the purpose of election. The moderator shall declare the Senior Pastor elected if he receives a three-quarters (3/4) majority of all votes cast by the members present. The Senior Pastor -Elect shall assume his duties at a time that is mutually determined with the Elders.

(4) Calling and election of Associate Pastor(s):

In the calling and election of any man to the position of Associate Pastor, the church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential candidate and, before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the Elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Statement of Faith and Church Covenant. Notice of the nomination of a man to be called as Associate Pastor (which shall include, if necessary, election to membership of him and his wife if he is married) must be given at two Sunday morning services following the nomination, prior to a vote at a Special Business Meeting called for this

purpose. The moderator shall declare the Associate Pastor elected if he receives a three-quarters (3/4) majority of all votes cast by the members present. The Associate Pastor-Elect shall assume his duties at a time that is mutually determined with the Elders.

(5) Calling and election of Elders:

In the calling and election of any man to the position of Elder, the church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the qualifications of any potential candidate and, before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the existing Elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Statement of Faith and Church Covenant. Notice of the nomination of a man to be elected as an Elder must be given at two Sunday morning services following the nomination, prior to a vote at an Annual Business Meeting or a Special Congregational Meeting called for the purpose of election. The moderator shall declare the Elder elected if he receives a majority of all votes cast by the members present. The Elder shall assume his duties at the time of election.

(6) Election of Deacons and Officers:

The election of Deacons and corporate Officers shall be held at the Annual Business Meeting of the church. Names of nominees to serve as Deacons, corporate President, Vice President/Financial Secretary, Treasurer and Secretary/Clerk shall be presented by the Elders at least four weeks prior, and the election shall proceed as directed by the moderator.

The Elders should seek recommendations and involvement from the membership in the nomination process. Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for an office should express such concern to the Elders prior to the date of election. Members intending to speak in opposition to a candidate should express their objection to the Elders as far in advance as possible before the Annual Business Meeting.

The moderator shall declare elected all persons receiving a majority of all votes cast by the members present; abstentions shall not be considered as votes cast. The persons elected shall assume their respective offices on the first day of January of the next year.

(7) Nominations:

All officers, except the Pastors and Elders, shall be nominated by a nominating committee, who shall present nominees for all offices at the Annual Business Meeting. The Nominating Committee shall consist of five members of the church, who shall be appointed by the Pastor, at least ten weeks before the annual election. All members of the church shall be encouraged to assist the Nominating Committee by suggesting individuals to fill the various offices as they note spiritual progress and dedication in the lives of their fellow members.

(8) Term of Office:

All officers, except Elders and Pastors, shall serve a one-year term and shall assume their responsibilities on the first day of January. When new officers assume their responsibilities the former officers shall promptly convey all church moneys, papers, records, and property to their successors.

Section 2. **Membership**

A. Qualifications:

To qualify for membership in Bigelow church, a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration, who has been baptized, in obedience to Christ, following his or her regeneration, and who wholeheartedly believes in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible. Each member must agree to submit to the teaching of Scripture as expressed in the Statement of Faith and must promise to keep the commitments expressed in the Church Covenant. The Elders shall be responsible for determining each person's qualification for membership. In making this determination, they may rely on a person's profession of faith, or such other evidence, as the Elders deem appropriate.

B. Admission of Members:

To be admitted into church membership, applicants shall: 1) Attend the new members class and 2) be recommended by the Elders for admission and accepted by affirmation of the members at any meeting of the members, and shall at that point relinquish their membership in other churches.

C. Duties and Privileges of Membership:

In accord with the duties enumerated in the Church Covenant, each member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the church, consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God. While it is the preference of the membership that only those who are members shall be entitled to serve in the ministries of the church, non-members may serve in the ministries of the church if approved by the Elders. Notwithstanding, non-members may serve the church for purposes of administration and professional consultation. Under Christ, this congregation is governed by its members. Therefore, it is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend all Monthly Members' and Annual Business Meetings and vote on the election of officers, and on such other matters as may be submitted to a vote.

D. Associate Membership:

Students and others temporarily residing in the Portsmouth area who are members of an evangelical church may apply for associate membership. Qualifications are identical to those for full membership as set out above, except that home church membership must be retained. A letter of commendation shall be sought from the applicant's home church. Duties and privileges of associate members are the same as for other members except that:

- (a) when absent from the Portsmouth area for extended periods of time they are released from the responsibility to attend our church services;
- (b) while they will be encouraged to participate in Members' Meetings they shall not be eligible to stand for any office or to vote.

Termination of associate membership as a disciplinary measure shall be as it is for other members, except that the Elders shall notify the Pastor or Elders of the home church of that termination. Associate membership shall normally terminate immediately upon the ending of the period of temporary residence in the Portsmouth area.

E. On Church Discipline:

Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct by which the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so opposing the welfare of the church, shall be subject to the discipline process of the Church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18: 15–17 and the example of Scripture. Prior to formal church discipline the following steps shall be taken:

- 1) Encourage member to go to offending/offended party to seek reconciliation/forgiveness (Matthew 18:15).
- 2) If step 1 does not result in reconciliation/forgiveness, then member is to take two or three witnesses and try again (Matthew 18:16).

If step 2 fails, then formal church discipline begins. The following steps shall be taken in this case:

- 1) The Elders shall be informed of the conflict so they can help seek resolution (Matthew 18:17a).
- 2) If step 1 fails, then the members shall be made aware of the matter by letter. The goal of such notification by letter is to get members involved in encouraging sinning (unrepentant) member(s) to repent and to be reconciled.
- 3) If step 2 fails, then sinning (unrepentant) member shall be removed from membership, and shall be treated as one in need of saving faith (Matthew 18:17b).

Church discipline can include admonition by the Elders or membership, suspension from communion for a definite period, deposition from office, and excommunication (see Matthew 18: 15–17; 2 Thessalonians 3: 14–15; 1 Timothy 5: 19–20; 1 Corinthians 5: 4–5).

The purpose of such discipline should be for the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined (see Proverbs 15: 5; 29: 15; I Corinthians 4: 14; Ephesians 6: 4; I Timothy 3: 4–5; Hebrews 12: 1–11; Psalm 119: 115; 141: 5; Proverbs 17: 10; 25: 12; 27: 5; Ecclesiastes 7: 5; Matthew 7: 26–27; 18: 15–17; Luke 17: 3; Acts 2: 40; I Corinthians 5: 5; Galatians 6: 1–5; II Thessalonians 3: 6, 14–15; I Timothy 1: 20; Titus 1: 13–14; James 1: 22);

For the instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to them (see Proverbs 13: 20; Romans 15: 14; I Corinthians 5: 11; 15: 33; Colossians 3: 16; I Thessalonians 5: 14 [note this is written to the whole church, not just to leaders]; I Timothy 5: 20; Titus 1: 11; Hebrews 10: 24–25);

For the purity of the church as a whole (see I Corinthians 5: 6–7; II Corinthians 13: 10; Ephesians 5: 27; II John 10; Jude 24; Revelation 21: 2);

For the good of our corporate witness to non-Christians (see Proverbs 28: 7; Matthew 5: 13–16; John 13: 35; Acts 5: 1–14; Ephesians 5: 11; I Timothy 3: 7; II Peter 2: 2; I John 3: 10); and

Supremely for the glory of God by reflecting His holy character (see Deuteronomy 5: 11; I Kings 11: 2; II Chronicles 19: 2; Ezra 6: 21; Nehemiah 9: 2; Isaiah 52: 11; Ezekiel 36: 20; Matthew 5: 16; John 15: 8; 18: 17, 25; Romans 2: 24; 15: 5–6; II Corinthians 6: 14–7: 1; Ephesians 1: 4; 5: 27; I Peter 2: 12).

F. Termination of Membership:

Termination of membership shall be recognized by the church following the death or voluntary resignation of any church member. Membership may be terminated as an act of church discipline at the recommendation of the Elders and with the vote of two-thirds (2/3) of the members present at any regular or special meeting of the members.

Section 3 **Committees**

All committees of the church shall be appointed by the Elders, with the understanding that only necessary committees shall be appointed. All committees that are appointed shall serve only until their original purpose for appointment has been accomplished, or until the end of the church year, at which time all committees shall be automatically dissolved, with the understanding that they may be reappointed if necessary.

Section 4 **Church Year**

The official and fiscal year of the church shall begin the first day of January and end the last day of December.

Section 5 **Meetings**

A. For Worship and Instruction:

Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day, and other meetings for instruction may be held throughout the week as the Elders determine.

B. For Business:

An Annual Business Meeting for the election of officers, approval of the annual budget, and transaction of other necessary business shall be held the first Wednesday of each December.

Monthly Members' Meetings shall be held for the purpose of monitoring the status and progress of the various ministries, financial reporting, and acting upon normal matters of business. Special Business Meetings may be called by the church officers at any time. However, all such meetings must be announced at not fewer than two Sunday Morning Worship services of the church prior to the special meeting. The announcements must include the purpose for the meeting, and no other business shall be transacted except that for which the meeting was called. An Elder designated by the Elders shall preside as moderator at all meetings of the church. The Elders shall see that the stated meetings of the church are regularly held and that required reports are submitted to the church by the responsible members.

Section 6 Quorum

Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those members present. All votes shall be tallied based on the number of votes cast by eligible voting members present.

Section 7 Eligibility to Vote

All members fifteen years of age and older shall be eligible to vote. There shall be no absentee voting.

Section 8 Dispute Resolution

Believing that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian Church (see, e.g., Matthew 18: 15–20, I Corinthians 6: 1–8), the church shall require its members to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblically based principles, without reliance on the secular courts. Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the church shall encourage the use of biblically based principles and the avoidance of suits of law or equity to resolve disputes between itself and those outside the church, whether Christian or pagan and whether individuals or corporate entities. The Elders shall adopt policies and procedures to effect these requirements and aspirations.

Section 9 Subsidiary Organizations

Subsidiary organizations shall only be recognized upon the approval of three-fourths (3/4) of the eligible voting members present at an Annual Business Meeting.

No subsidiary organization of this church shall engage in any practice contrary to the general policies and position of the church itself.

Section 10 Amendments

This constitution may be amended by a vote of three-quarters (3/4) of the eligible voting members present at any Monthly Members' Meetings. Special Business Meetings may not be called for the purpose of amending the constitution.