

Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle

Constitution and Bylaws

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CONSTITUTION

Preamble

WHEREAS, it is the express purpose of God, our Heavenly Father, to call out of the world a people who shall constitute the Body or Church of our Lord Jesus Christ, built and established upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone, and,

WHEREAS, God having ordained that this Global Church should find its expression in and through local churches, enjoining them to assemble together for worship, fellowship, counsel, and instruction in the Word of God, and for the work of the ministry, and for the exercise of those spiritual gifts and offices provided for in the New Testament,

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT for the purpose of establishing and maintaining a place for the worship of Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, to provide for Christian fellowship for those of like faith, where the Holy Spirit may be honored according to our distinctive testimony; to assume our share of responsibility and the privilege of propagating the Gospel of Jesus Christ by all available means, both at home and in foreign lands; we, whose names appear on the partnership roster, do hereby recognize ourselves as an sovereign local church in fellowship with other churches of like precious faith, and adopt the following articles of church order and submit ourselves to be governed by them.

Article I: Name

The name of this church, shall be Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle (SGT), located at 1 Higbie Drive, Smithtown, New York.

Article II: Purpose

Section 1 To maintain a place of worship of Almighty God, our Heavenly Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ, His only begotten Son, through the Holy Spirit, and for the advancement of Christian fellowship and edification.

Section 2 To obey in our capacity the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20; Mk. 16: 15-20; Acts 1:8, 8:4)

Article III: Prerogatives

Section 1 This body shall have the right to govern itself according to the standards of the New Testament Scriptures, "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace...till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Eph. 4:3, 13)."

Section 2 To disciple its partners according to the Scriptures, as determined by the partnership.

Section 3 To call its pastors, choose its overseers, officers, and leaders, and to transact all other business pertaining to its life and conduct as a local church.

Section 4 To establish and maintain departments, practices, ministries, and programs, etc., as may be deemed necessary for the propagation of the Gospel, and for the work and care of the local church.

Section 5 To purchase or acquire by gift, bequest, or otherwise either directly or as trustee, and to own, hold in trust, use, sell, convey, mortgage, lease, or otherwise dispose of any real estate or chattels as may be necessary for the furtherance of its purposes, all in accordance with its Constitution and Bylaws or as the same may be hereafter modified or amended.

Article IV: Affiliation

While maintaining its inherent rights to sovereignty in the conduct of its own affairs, this church can voluntarily enter into full cooperative fellowship with other churches of like precious faith.

Article V: Statement of Faith

1. We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament are inspired by God; that they are the revelation of God to man and are the supreme and final authority in both faith and practice. (II Timothy 3:16-17; II Peter 1:21)
2. We believe in one God, eternally self-existing in three persons: the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. (Deuteronomy 6:4; Matt. 28:19; Luke 3:22)
3. We believe that Jesus Christ is the eternal Son of God, begotten of the Father, conceived by the Holy Spirit, and born of the Virgin Mary; that He is fully God and fully man. (Romans 1:4; Matthew 1:23; John 1:14; Colossians 2:9)
4. We believe man was created in the image of God; that he sinned and thereby incurred not only physical death but also spiritual death which is separation from God; that all human beings are born with a sinful nature and are sinners in thought, word and deed. (Genesis 1:27; Romans 5:12-19)
5. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ died for our sins and has become our representative and substitutionary sacrifice; that He was bodily raised from the dead for our justification; that He is ascended into heaven as our High Priest and Advocate; that we are redeemed and born again as sons and daughters of God on the ground of our faith in the atonement provided by His shed blood; that the inward evidence of salvation is the direct witness of the Spirit and the outward evidence is a life of righteousness and true holiness before God and mankind. (Luke 24:46-47; Romans 10:9; Romans 8:16; Titus 2:11-14)
6. We believe in the ordinance of baptism by immersion for all who repent and believe on Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; that we are declaring to the world our identification with Christ's death and our being raised to newness of life in Him. (Matthew 28:19; Acts 8:36-38; Romans 6:4)
7. We believe in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper consisting of the elements of bread and the fruit of the vine. It is the symbol expressing our sharing the divine nature of our Lord Jesus Christ; a memorial of His suffering and death; a prophesy of His second coming; and is enjoined on all believers "till He comes!" (I Corinthians 10:16-17, 21; I Corinthians 11:26)
8. We believe in the Baptism in the Holy Spirit as the normal experience for all in the early church and for the church today; that we are commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ to seek this experience of endowment of power for life and service; that this experience is distinct from and subsequent to

the experience of the new birth; that the initial physical confirmation and provision of the Baptism in the Holy Spirit is speaking in tongues. (Acts 2:4; 38-39)

9. We believe that the manifestation of the gifts of the Spirit is operative in the church today; that these gifts are to be sought after and desired by believers in the Lord Jesus Christ for the edification of His Body. (I Corinthians 12:4-11)
10. We believe that divine healing is an integral part of the Gospel; that deliverance from sickness is provided for in the atonement and is the privilege of all believers. (Isaiah 53:4-5; Matthew 8:16-17; James 5:14-16)
11. We believe sanctification is an act of separation to God and is the ongoing work of the Holy Spirit in our lives; that it produces the fruit of the Spirit in our lives; that it brings us under the authority of the Lord Jesus Christ. (Romans 6:1-14; Romans 12:1-2; II Timothy 2:19-21)
12. We believe that the Church is the Body of Christ and is made up of believers in Christ; that in its local manifestation, it is an autonomous assembly of believers. (Ephesians 1:22-23; Romans 12:5)
13. We believe that every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is called to minister; that we are to build up the Body of Christ and to evangelize the world. (Romans 12:1, 4-8; Mark 16:15)
14. We believe in the rapture of the Church and the personal and imminent return of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ; that there will be a bodily resurrection of the just and the unjust; that there will be an everlasting blessedness of those who have received Christ as Savior, and everlasting punishment of those who are separated from God and remain in their sins; that there will be a new heaven and earth. (II Thessalonians 1:7-9; I Thessalonians 4:16-17; Titus 2:13; I Corinthians 15:51-52; II Peter 3:13; Revelation 20:11-15; 21:1-4, 8)

The following statements are offered in order to provide insight as to where Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle stands concerning certain sinful practices that have become accepted and celebrated by our society. However, in articulating our strong stance against these ungodly behaviors, we also want to strongly assert that no person is beyond the reach of God's grace, mercy, forgiveness, and healing. Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle stands ready at all times to walk with any and all who desire to confess and turn from their sins and walk with Jesus in a new and living way.

15. We believe that life after the new birth mandates the pursuit of Christ-like living, extending even to personal sexual purity, and that marriage is a covenant relationship between one man and one woman and God's only provision for sexual fulfillment. Further, seeing that it is clear in Holy Scripture that homosexuality is an abomination in God's eyes, persons who struggle with same-sex attraction yet desiring to be in right standing before God must renounce homosexuality as an orientation and a lifestyle—agreeing that it is forbidden by God, repent of and abstain from all homosexual activity and endorsement—daily crucifying same-sex desire and attraction, and be prepared, if need be, to live life as one chosen by God to remain single. (Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:6-8; John 3:5-8; Romans 1:27; I Corinthians 6:9-10, 18-20; 7:2; II Corinthians 5:15-21; Colossians 3:5)
16. We believe that life begins at conception. Several scriptures speak of God's involvement with humans while in their mother's womb. Abortion kills the life that God has begun, destroying the child that God has created. Humans are created in the image of God, and each child is considered by God to be a heritage from the Lord and a reward from Him. (Genesis 1:27, Job 31:15, Psalm 22:10, Psalm 127:3-5, Psalm 139:13-16, Jeremiah 1:5)

Article VI: Regular Observances

The ordinances of the Lord's Supper (I Cor. 11:23-30) and water baptism by immersion in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:38, 8:36-38), the dedication of children to the Lord (Matt. 19:13-15) and the anointing of the sick with oil for healing (James 5:14) shall be regularly observed.

Article VII: Officers/Boards

The Officers of the body shall be: Pastors, Elders, Combined Board Deacons (hereafter referred to as CB Deacons), Deacons, Trustees, Recording Secretary, Corporate Secretary, and Treasurer.

There shall be a Board of Pastors and Elders, a Board of Deacons, a Board of Trustees, and a Combined Board.

Article VIII: Partnership

Individuals shall be eligible for partnership in Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle who 1) give testimony and evidence of a personal living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, 2) meet the Standards of Partnership set forth in the Bylaws, and 3) agree to be governed by the Constitution and Bylaws of the church. The names on the partnership roster constitute the church and shall be referred to as such in the Constitution and Bylaws.

Article IX: Meetings

Section 1 All regularly scheduled meetings for public worship, prayer, teaching, training, etc., shall be held as determined by and under the direction of the senior/lead pastor and the Combined Board.

Section 2 There shall be regularly-held partnership meetings of the church, including the Annual Partnership Meeting. Special meetings may be called as needed.

Article X: Finances

The church shall be financed according to the Scriptural method of tithes and offerings. (Mal. 3:10; Matt. 23:23; Heb. 7:4-9).

Article XI: Property

Section 1 All property—real or chattel—shall be taken, held, sold, transferred, or conveyed in the name of Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle.

Section 2 No real or chattel property of Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle shall be sold, leased, mortgaged, or otherwise alienated without authorization by two-thirds vote of the voting partners present at a partnership meeting of the church. Notice of any such actions must be made known to the church partners at least two weeks prior to the partnership meeting.

Section 3 The senior/lead pastor, the corporate secretary and the chairperson of the Board of Trustees shall certify in such conveyance, lease or mortgage that the same has been duly authorized by the church partnership. Such certificates shall be held to be conclusive evidence thereof.

Section 4 In the event that the Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle ceases to function as a church, the Combined Board, at the time of dissolution, shall distribute any property, real or general, representing the net corporate assets of Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle to any church or ministry organized and operating under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or such corresponding sections as may be from time to time amended or succeed this section. In the event of dissolution, the Combined Board shall distribute the net corporate assets to a church or not-for-profit entity whose purpose is consistent with the statement of purpose in this Constitution. In the event that the existing Combined Board is unable or unwilling to designate an appropriate successor, then the corporate assets shall be transferred and distributed to such exempt devisers as a Judge of the Supreme Court of Suffolk County, State of New York, shall designate, provided the said designee shall be an organization of similar type and purpose as the aforesaid designee herein named, the said purpose being to further the Gospel of Christ, provided such organization shall qualify under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

Article XII: Amendments

Section 1 Prerogatives

- a. The Combined Board, with a majority vote, may propose an amendment to this Constitution.
- b. The church, with a majority vote at any partnership meeting, may propose an amendment to this Constitution.

Section 2 Proper Notice

A proposed amendment and the date and place of the partnership meeting at which the proposed amendment shall be voted upon shall have been posted and publicly made known to the partners at least two Sundays immediately preceding the partnership meeting. Public announcement of the proposal must be made on the two Sundays immediately preceding the partnership meeting vote.

Section 3 Required Vote.

An amendment to the Constitution requires a two-thirds vote at a partnership meeting.

BYLAWS

Article I: Partnership

Section 1 Standards of Partnership

The Standards of Partnership shall be:

- a. Evidence of spiritual regeneration (John 1:12; I Peter 1:18-23).
- b. Evidence of a consistent Christian life (Romans 6:4; 13:13-14; Ephesians 4:17-5:11, 15; Ephesians 4:1-2, 15; I John 1:6-7).

- c. Water baptism by immersion (Matthew 28:19-20; Romans 6:3-12).
- d. Full subscription to the Statement of Faith as set forth in the Constitution.
- e. Commitment to support the church by regularly praying for the body, attending services, attending partnership meetings, serving in ministry, and giving financially.
- f. A minimum of 18 years of age.

Section 2 Reception of Partners

A person desiring to become a partner shall make it known to either a pastor or an elder. Pastors and/or elders shall instruct the applicant in the doctrine, operation, and vision of Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle, and the responsibilities of partnership. The Board of Pastors and Elders shall examine the applicant to determine if the applicant meets the Standards of Partnership.

The Board of Pastors and Elders shall present the name of the approved and instructed applicant to the Combined Board. With the approval (majority vote) at a meeting of the Combined Board, the Combined Board shall present the name of the applicant to the partners at any partnership meeting. With the approval of the partners (majority vote), the applicant's name shall be added to the partnership roster and shall be designated a voting partner.

Section 3 Correction of Partners

The final authority for concerning issues requiring correction shall be the Board of Pastors and Elders. All partners agree to be bound by decisions of the church in these areas. In keeping with Scripture, all partners recognize that the church is the rightful place for the resolution of disputes; not an outside agency; not the court system (I Corinthians 6:1-8).

Should the Board of Pastors and Elders determine that a partner has exhibited unscriptural conduct or has departed from the Standards of Partnership, the Board of Pastors and Elders shall prayerfully administer correction in accordance with Scripture (Matthew 18:15-17, 35; Romans 16:17; I Corinthians 5:9-13; II Thessalonians 3:11-15).

The Board of Pastors and Elders may, at any Combined Board meeting, recommend that the partner's name be removed from the partnership roster. Removal from the partnership roster by the Combined Board requires a majority vote. The Board of Pastors and Elders may, at a future Combined Board meeting, recommend that the individual's name be returned to the partnership roster. Reinstatement of an individual requires a majority vote of the Combined Board. Notice of partners removed and/or reinstated will be announced at the Annual Partnership Meeting.

Section 4 Revision of Partnership Roster

The Board of Pastors and Elders shall examine the partnership roster annually and shall inform the Combined Board of any partner who has withdrawn from the church fellowship. The Combined Board may, by majority vote, remove the partners name from the partnership roster. The Board of Pastors and Elders shall notify, without delay, those whose names have been removed from the partnership roster. At the Annual Partnership meeting, an announcement shall be made that partners have been removed and made available upon request

Section 5 Automatic Membership

The name of any new pastor (and his wife, if married) shall automatically be added to the partnership roster and designated a voting partner.

Article II: Partnership Meetings

Section 1 Annual Partnership Meeting

There shall be an Annual Partnership Meeting of the church which shall be held in the first quarter of the calendar year as determined each year by the Combined Board. The regular order of business shall include the following:

- a. Opening Prayer
- b. Vision and Partnership Exhortation
- c. Identification of Parliamentarian, Corporate Secretary and Recording Secretary
- d. Reading of the Minutes
- e. Board and Ministry reports as required
- f. Treasurer Report
- g. New Business
- h. Unfinished Business
- i. Elections of Officers/Ratification of Appointees/Votes of Confidence
- j. Acceptance of New Partners
- k. Adjournment

Section 2 Other Partnership Meetings

There shall be one or more additional regular partnership meeting(s) each year if the Combined Board deems necessary. The Combined Board shall set the dates of any such additional meetings.

Section 3 Special Partnership Meetings

The Combined Board (by majority vote) or the senior/lead pastor may call for a special (non-regular) partnership meeting of the body.

Section 4 Proper Notice

Announcement of every partnership meeting must be given on the two consecutive Sundays immediately prior to the meeting.

Section 5 Quorum/Voting

No official business may be conducted at a partnership meeting of the body unless 20 percent of the voting partnership is present.

Section 6 Chairman

The senior/lead pastor shall ordinarily chair all partnership meetings. In the event the senior/lead pastor is unable to chair a meeting, he shall designate either the executive pastor or a qualified member of the Combined Board to serve as chairperson.

Section 7 Parliamentary Procedure

The rules contained in the *Modern Edition of Robert's Rules of Order* shall govern the partnership in all cases where they are not inconsistent with these Bylaws and any special rules of order the partnership may adopt.

Section 8 Parliamentarian

For every partnership meeting of the body, the chairman of the meeting shall designate a qualified partner as parliamentarian to assist the chairman in the orderly conduct of the meeting.

Section 9 Calculating Votes

All votes are calculated on the basis of votes cast by voting partners present at the meeting and votes cast on bona fide absentee ballots. A majority vote is achieved when more than half of the votes cast are in the affirmative. In the case of a two-thirds vote, there must be at least twice as many votes in the affirmative as in the negative. Abstentions have no effect on the calculation of votes.

Section 10 Decorum

All partnership meetings shall be conducted in the Spirit of Christ.

Section 11 Absentee Balloting

a. Availability

Absentee ballots for partnership meetings of the body shall be permitted only for:

- 1) the calling (or election) of a pastor
- 2) the election of officers and ratification of appointments
- 3) votes of confidence
- 4) votes of dismissal
- 5) votes on proposed amendments to the Constitution or Bylaws
- 6) votes on the proposed purchase or sale of real property

Should an absentee ballot be granted, it shall be counted only on the first ballot.

b. Absentee Ballot Committee

An Absentee Ballot Committee of three partners shall be established annually to receive, examine, and judge applications from partners requesting an absentee ballot.

The Board of Pastors and Elders, the Board of Trustees, and the Board of Deacons shall, at the first meeting of each board following the Annual Partnership Meeting, select one individual from their number to serve on this committee. The one selected from the Board of Pastors and Elders shall serve as the chairman of the committee. None of the members of the committee shall be in the final year of their term of office.

c. Duties of the Committee

The Committee shall receive written requests for an absentee ballot up until the Sunday immediately prior to meeting for which the ballot has been requested.

The Committee shall examine each request and either grant or deny the request for the absentee ballot according to the criteria specified herein, and shall make its decision known to the requester without undue delay.

Should the Committee grant the requester an absentee ballot, the Committee shall provide the requester a ballot(s) equivalent to the ballot(s) that will be provided to the voting partners at the partnership meeting in question.

d. Criteria for Granting an Absentee Ballot

The requester must be unable to attend the meeting in question for one of the following reasons:

- 1) The requester will be confined to a hospital or sick bed.
- 2) There is a family or other emergency situation the requester must attend to at the time of the meeting.
- 3) The requester's employer requires (not requests) the partner to be working or to be out-of-town at the time of the meeting.

The requester must be a voting partner and must fully understand the purpose of the vote(s). The Committee is empowered to grant an absentee ballot for a reason not listed above provided the reason is consistent with the clear restrictive intent of this provision.

Section 12 Votes of Confidence.

An affirmative vote of confidence requires a majority vote. Votes of confidence shall be conducted by secret ballot.

Article III: Officers/Boards

Section 1 The Senior/Lead Pastor

Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle finds its headship under the Lord Jesus Christ, and its overseer is the senior/lead pastor.

The senior/lead pastor, as the visionary of the church, shall be responsible for its spiritual life and direction and, as such, shall be honored in his sacred office. Unless otherwise stated in the Constitution and Bylaws, he is an ex officio member of all committees, departments, etc., within the partnership. He shall direct all services and meetings. No one shall be invited to speak or preach in a service or meeting without his approval. The senior/lead pastor is accountable to the Combined Board and, ultimately, the partners.

Section 2 Other Staff Pastors

Other staff pastors are to assist the senior/lead pastor in his overall responsibility for the spiritual life and direction of the church and shall be delegated specific overseer responsibilities by the senior/lead pastor. Each man is accountable to the senior/lead pastor.

Section 3 Elders

Elders shall serve in the capacity of advisors, counselors, and assistants to the pastors. These men shall pray for and anoint the sick and may also assume overseer responsibilities as assigned by the

senior/lead pastor. Each elder is accountable to the senior/lead pastor. There shall be a maximum of eight (8) elders.

Section 4 Board of Pastors and Elders

The Board of Pastors and Elders is comprised of the senior/lead pastor, all elders, and the senior/lead pastor's selection of other pastors on staff. The Board of Pastors and Elders shall primarily concern itself with the spiritual life and direction of the church and is the final authority for doctrinal issues. It is responsible for the correction of partners, the regular updating of the partnership roster, and for making recommendations for appointed leaders of ministries. It shall meet on a regular basis. The senior/lead pastor shall serve as its chairman. The Board of Pastors and Elders shall select a recording secretary at its first meeting following the Annual Partnership Meeting.

Section 5 Combined Board (CB) Deacons/Deacons/Board of Deacons

CB Deacons are men and women who are responsible to assist the pastors in spiritual service, including the serving of communion, assisting in water baptisms, praying for and anointing the sick, visitation, altar work, and counseling. There shall be a maximum of nine (9) CB deacons.

The partners may elect deacons in addition to the CB deacons. The qualifications for a deacon are the same as those of a CB deacon. The Board of Deacons is comprised of all CB deacons and deacons. The Board of Deacons shall meet on a regular basis as determined by their chairperson and shall, at its first meeting following the Annual Partnership Meeting, annually elect from among the CB deacons a chairperson and recording secretary. The senior/lead pastor may designate a pastor to serve as an advisor to the Board of Deacons in order to assist them in the coordination of their activities. CB deacons and deacons are accountable to their chairperson and the senior/lead pastor.

Section 6 Trustees/Board of Trustees

Trustees are men and women who are responsible for managing the facilities and finances of the church. The trustees shall also constitute the Corporate Board, as required by law.

The Board of Trustees is comprised of all trustees. The Board of Trustees shall meet on a monthly basis and shall, at its first meeting following the Annual Partnership Meeting, annually elect from among themselves a chairperson, a treasurer, and a corporate secretary. The senior/lead pastor may designate a pastor to serve as an advisor to the Board of Trustees in order to assist them in the coordination of their activities.

Trustees are accountable to their chairperson and the senior/lead pastor. There shall be a maximum of nine (9) trustees.

Section 7 Combined Board

The Combined Board is comprised of all members of the Board of Pastors and Elders, CB Deacons, and the Board of Trustees.

The Combined Board shall concern itself with matters of mutual concern to the three boards. Voting representation from each of these boards shall be:

- a. From the Board of Pastors and Elders—The senior/lead pastor, all elders, and the senior/lead pastor's choice of other pastors from the Board of Pastors and Elders such

that their combined number of votes does not exceed nine (9). The senior/lead pastor shall make his selection of voting pastors known to the Combined Board at its first meeting following the Annual Partnership Meeting. The voting pastors shall serve in such capacity for one year.

- b. From the Board of Deacons—All CB deacons, subject to a maximum of nine (9). Deacons are not members of the Combined Board.
- c. From the Board of Trustees—All trustees, subject to a maximum of nine (9).

Accordingly, there shall be a maximum of 27 voting members on the Combined Board.

The Combined Board shall meet on a bimonthly basis. The senior/lead pastor shall serve as its chairman. The Combined Board shall elect a recording secretary at its first meeting following the Annual Partnership Meeting. The quorum for Combined Board meetings is 67 percent.

The Combined Board is solely empowered (by majority vote) to:

- a. Create or dissolve ministries, departments, programs, and institutions.
- b. Create or dissolve administrative boards for selected works, such as a school board or missions board. The structure, authority, privileges, financial limitations, and responsibilities of such administrative boards shall be governed by the Combined Board.
- c. Assess any ministry, department, program, institution, etc., of the church by an appropriate existing board or by an entity specially created by the Combined Board for such purpose.
- d. Allow electronic voting in instances where time does not permit a meeting to take place. The procedures for this will be agreed upon by the Combined Board prior to activating it. Any adopted procedure must guarantee opportunity and ratification to all voting members.

Section 8 Recording Secretary

The recording secretary shall keep the minutes of all partnership meetings. The recording secretary shall present at all regular partnership meetings the minutes from the prior meeting(s) for the partners approval.

Section 9 Corporate Secretary

The corporate secretary shall deposit all important documents (legal, deeds, insurance policies, mortgages, etc.) and the corporate seal in a safe place as authorized by the Board of Trustees. The corporate secretary shall keep the minutes of the meetings of the Board of Trustees and perform all other obligations required by law or relating to the orderly functioning of the corporation.

Section 10 Treasurer

The treasurer shall be authorized to pay bills and shall give a report at meetings of the Board of Trustees, the Combined Board, and at regular partnership meetings.

Article IV: Qualifications of Leadership

Section 1 General

Each officer or leader of ministry must be:

- a. a partner of Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle
- b. a regular participant in the activities and corporate prayer life of the body
- c. exemplary in his/her Christian walk
- d. ready, willing, and able to assume the responsibilities of the position.

Section 2 Scriptural Qualifications/References

- a. The following Scriptural requirements/references for elder, CB deacon, deacon, and trustee shall be observed: I Timothy 3:2-12; Acts 2:4; Acts 6:3; Titus 1:6-9, Romans 16:1-2
- b. All elders, CB deacons, deacons, and trustees at Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle will be submitted to the same biblical and church qualifications of character, faith, and practice. Further, the same shall be baptized in the Holy Spirit with the confirmation and provision of tongues and in harmony with the church's official position regarding marriage, divorce, and remarriage.

Section 3 Miscellaneous

- a. A candidate for CB deacon or trustee shall have been a partner for at least one year.
- b. A candidate for the position of elder must have served three years as a CB deacon or trustee in the body at Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle.
- c. Elders, CB deacons, and trustees serve on their respective boards and the Combined Board. None of these individuals, however, may serve on any other administrative board unless such service is in the capacity of a designated representative of one board to another. Furthermore, representatives of one board to another may not chair the latter board on a permanent basis.
- d. A direct employee of the church with the exception of pastors may not be a member of the Combined Board during his time of employment. A direct employee of the church may, however, serve on any other board so long as there is no conflict of interest.
- e. An employee of a separate financial ministry under the control of the church, such as a Christian school, is not prohibited from serving on the Board of Pastors and Elders, the Board of Deacons, or the Board of Trustees during his/her time of employment, provided the employee is not present when voting is conducted on issues affecting the employing ministry. The employee may also serve on any other board so long as there is no conflict of interest.

Article V: Staffing

Section 1 Adding a New Pastoral Position

Should the Combined Board, by two-thirds vote, consider it necessary to add any paid pastoral position, it shall require the approval, by two-thirds vote, from the partnership.

For a new position, the Combined Board shall specify the duties and responsibilities of the position before the partners vote on the matter. The procedure for filling this new position shall be the same as that of filling a pastoral vacancy.

Section 2 Other Paid Staff Positions

The Board of Trustees is responsible for all paid staff hired in the areas of church facilities, finances, and pastoral office support. The addition of a new position requires approval from the Combined Board.

Section 3 Elders

The Board of Pastors and Elders shall recommend qualified men for the position of elder to the Combined Board. With the approval of the Combined Board (two-thirds vote), the Combined Board shall present the candidate to the body for ratification (majority vote) at the Annual Partnership Meeting. The term for elder is three years, after which time the elder shall be subject to a vote of confidence every three years at an Annual Partnership Meeting. If an elder receives an affirmative vote of confidence, he shall be granted another three-year term.

Section 4 Nominating Process

Annually in January, the pastoral staff shall seek nominations for the offices of deacons and trustees from the church partners. The partners shall be notified of the nomination process/window in two consecutive Sunday services and electronically through e-mail or equivalent. The Combined Board shall have the opportunity to add nominees as necessary during the first Combined Board meeting of the year.

Annually in February, the Board of Pastors and Elders and the pastoral staff shall review all prospective nominees in confidence, interview the nominees for consent to serve and confirm their qualifications as stated in these Bylaws for the office. The Board of Pastors and Elders will then vote by majority for the slate of nominees to be sent to the Combined Board for approval.

Annually in March, prior to the annual partnership meeting, the combined board shall approve the slate of nominees recommended by the Board of Pastors and Elders. The Combined Board may, by majority vote, add or delete candidates upon further consideration at the Combined Board meeting. Only with its approval (majority vote), shall the nominees be included as a candidate on the election ballot for the annual partnership meeting.

Section 5 Trustees, CB Deacons, and Deacons

Trustees, CB deacons, and deacons shall be elected at the Annual Partnership Meeting by majority vote.

The number of deacons shall be determined by the Combined Board prior to the elections.

The term of office for trustee and CB deacon shall normally be three years. However, since it is desirable that one third of the terms of CB deacons and trustees expire each year, the Combined Board may therefore set the term of a newly-elected CB deacon or trustee to either one year or two years, whichever is suitable.

The term of a deacon shall be one year.

Section 6 Appointments

The Board of Pastors and Elders shall prayerfully seek out qualified partners to fill the following appointed positions:

- a. Recording Secretary. The term of office is one year.
- b. Ministry/department leaders. The determination of appropriate appointed leadership positions is the responsibility of the Combined Board. The term of such appointments is one year.

The Board of Pastors and Elders shall submit their recommendations for all the above to the Combined Board. The names of those approved by the Combined Board (majority vote) will be presented to the body at the Annual Partnership Meeting for ratification (majority vote).

Section 7 Notice of Candidates/Recommended Appointees

The Nominating Committee shall post the names of all candidates and recommended appointees at least two Sundays prior to the Annual Partnership Meeting.

Section 8 Voting

All voting on individuals at all levels of the staffing process shall be by secret ballot.

Article VI: Dismissals

Section 1 Grounds

Grounds for dismissing the holder of any office, leadership position, etc., shall be (1) unscriptural conduct, (2) incompetence or ineffectiveness in the office or position, or (3) failure to meet the qualifications of the office or position. The pattern of Matthew 18:15-17 shall be followed prior to the initiation of any action towards dismissal.

Section 2 Prerogatives

Partners may, by majority vote at any business meeting, call for a vote of dismissal of an officer, leader, etc.

The Combined Board may, by majority vote, request the resignation of any officer, leader, etc. If the individual refuses the request, the Combined Board, by majority vote, may call for a vote of dismissal by the partners.

The vote of dismissal shall take place at a partnership meeting. The time and place of the vote shall be set by the Combined Board.

Section 3 Proper Notice

Notice for a vote of dismissal by the partners shall be posted at least two weeks prior to the meeting and announced on the two consecutive Sundays immediately prior to the meeting.

Section 4 Voting

Votes of dismissal shall be conducted by secret ballot. With a majority vote, the officer, leader, etc., in question shall be dismissed.

Article VII: Vacancies

Section 1 Senior/Lead Pastor Pulpit Committee

In the event of a vacancy in the office of senior/lead pastor, the Combined Board shall appoint, without delay, a Pulpit Committee, and the Pulpit Committee shall select its chairperson for the purpose of searching for candidates for senior/lead pastor. In the meantime, the Combined Board is empowered to select from its membership an acting chairperson of the Combined Board.

The Pulpit Committee shall consist of 11 church partners: 9 from the Combined Board, 2 at large partners. Of the 11, there must be a minimum of 3 elders. If the term of a CB Pulpit Committee expires during the search, the individual shall continue to serve the Committee as an at large partner. Pastors may serve as advisors to the committee in a non-voting capacity.

After prayerful inquiry, and with judicious counsel, full consideration being given to the leading of the Holy Spirit, the Pulpit Committee shall, without undue delay, select a scripturally qualified person as a potential candidate for the office of senior/lead pastor and shall present his name for approval to the Combined Board.

With the approval of the Combined Board (two-thirds vote), the individual will become a candidate for senior/lead pastor. If the candidate does not receive a two-thirds majority vote, the pulpit committee will reconvene and select another candidate to present to the Combined Board.

Any partner may offer the Pulpit Committee a name for consideration for the position of senior pastor.

Section 2 Other Pastors

Should the Combined Board wish to fill a vacant pastoral position, it shall, with a two-thirds vote and the approval of the senior pastor, present a qualified individual to the partnership for its approval. Any partner may offer the Combined Board a name for consideration for a vacant pastoral position.

Section 3 Expiration of Limited Terms

If a pastor has been called for a limited term of service, the tenure of the office shall automatically terminate at the end of the stipulated term of service.

If the Combined Board wishes to renew the call of the pastor in question for another limited term of service, or if it wishes to call the pastor for an indefinite period of time, it shall, with a two-thirds vote, present its recommendation to the partnership for its approval.

Section 4 Calling a Pastor

The calling, or election, of a pastor shall be done at a partnership meeting by two-thirds vote.

Notice for such a vote must be made publicly known on the two consecutive Sundays immediately preceding the meeting. The pastor in question shall be called for an indefinite period of time, unless otherwise stipulated by the body.

Section 5 Vacancy in the Office of CB Deacon or Trustee

Should a CB deacon leave office prior to the completion of his/her term, the Board of Deacons is empowered to fill the vacancy with a deacon. The position will be offered first to the deacon with the most votes in the last CB deacon election, then to the individual with the second-most votes, etc.

Should a trustee leave office prior to the completion of his/her term, the Board of Trustees is empowered to fill the vacancy with an individual who received a majority vote in the last election of trustees but was not elected at that time. The position will be offered first to the individual with the most votes, then to the individual with the second-most votes, etc.

Section 6 Voting

All voting in regard to the filling of vacated offices shall be conducted by secret ballot.

Article VIII: Ministries/Workers

Section 1 Recruitment of Workers

Leaders of ministries, departments, programs, institutions, etc., of the body may recruit qualified workers. Every individual desiring to participate in any ministry, department, program, institution, etc., of the body requires the approval of the overseeing pastor or elder.

Section 2 Worker Accountability

Every leader and worker of every ministry, department, program, institution etc., shall be accountable to its leader and to the overseeing pastor or elder.

Article IX: Finances

Section 1 Finance Committee

The Finance Committee shall be formed annually to review compensation for the pastoral staff and recommend compensation adjustments. The Finance Committee is also responsible for recommending salary packages for new pastors and to recommend whether or not to provide additional compensation to pastors leaving the church. All recommendations shall be approved by the Combined Board through Finance Committee recommendations (motions).

The Finance Committee shall be composed of three elders, three CB deacons and three trustees. The chairperson of the Finance Committee shall be the chairperson of the Board of Trustees. The representatives from each board are determined by their respective chairperson.

Section 2 Staff Support

All paid staff shall be given regular and adequate financial support.

The Board of Trustees shall determine compensation for all paid staff hired in the areas of church facilities, finances, and pastoral office support. The Combined Board shall determine compensation for all pastors through Finance Committee recommendations.

Information on compensation of paid staff shall be available to any partner upon request to the Board of Trustees. No employee of the church or of any entity under the control of the church shall be present for discussions or votes affecting that employee's compensation.

Section 3 Ministries

The Combined Board shall, as it deems necessary, set annual ministry budgets. No board, ministry, department, program, institution, etc. of the partnership shall obligate itself in any indebtedness or engage in any fund-raising activity without the consent (majority vote) of the Combined Board.

Section 4 Accountability

The leadership of each ministry, department, program, institution, etc. of the partnership that has been granted a budget shall conduct its own financial affairs but shall be accountable to the Board of Trustees. The Board of Trustees shall provide for the annual auditing of the financial records of each budgeted ministry, department, etc.

Article X: Amendments

Section 1 Prerogatives

- a. The Combined Board, with a two-thirds vote, is empowered to propose an amendment to these Bylaws.
- b. Partners, with two-thirds vote at any partnership meeting, may propose an amendment to these Bylaws.

Section 2 Proper Notice

A proposed amendment and the date and place of the partnership meeting at which the proposed amendment shall be voted upon shall be posted and publicly made known to the partners at least two Sundays immediately preceding the partnership meeting. Public announcement of the vote must be made on the two Sundays immediately preceding the business meeting.

Section 3 Required Vote

An amendment to these Bylaws requires a two-thirds vote at a partnership meeting.

Article XI: SGT Statement on Marriage, Gender and Sexuality

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Genesis 1:26-27). Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

We believe that the term "marriage" has only one meaning: the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as delineated in Scripture (Genesis 2:18-25). We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. (1 Corinthians 6:18; 7:2-5; Hebrews 13:4). We believe that God has commanded that no one should engage in intimate sexual activity except for a man and a woman who are joined together in marriage to one another.

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pederasty, transgender, and the use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God. (Matthew 15:18-20; 1 Corinthians 6:9-10).

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ. (Acts 3:19-21; Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11).

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31.) Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle.

Employment

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle (SGT) as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to its partners, congregants and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by the Statement of Faith and Article XI in this Constitution and Bylaws concerning Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality. Furthermore, since Smithtown Christian School (SCS) is a ministry of Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle, those employed by SCS in any capacity or serving as volunteers must also agree to and abide by the Statement of Faith and Article XI in this Constitution and Bylaws. (Matthews 5:16; Philippians 2:14-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:22.)

Marriages

Because God has ordained marriage and defined it as the covenant relationship between a man, a woman, and Himself, Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle will only recognize marriages between a biological man and a biological woman. Further, the pastors and staff of Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle shall only participate in weddings and solemnize marriages between one man and one woman. Finally, the facilities and property of Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle shall only host weddings between one man and one woman.

Facility Use

Facility use will not be permitted to persons or groups holding, advancing, or advocating beliefs or practices that conflict with the church's faith or moral teachings, which are summarized in, among other places, the Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle Constitution and Bylaws. Additionally, church facilities may not be used for activities that contradict, or are deemed inconsistent with, the church's faith or moral teachings.

Therefore, in no event shall persons or groups who hold, advance, or advocate beliefs, or advance, advocate, or engage in practices that contradict Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle's faith, use any church facility, nor may church facilities be used in any way that contradicts Smithtown Gospel Tabernacle's faith. This policy applies to all church facilities, regardless of whether the facilities are connected to the church's sanctuary, because the church sees all its property as holy and set apart to worship God. Further, these guidelines on facility usage apply equally to any proposed use of the facilities connected with Smithtown Christian School. (Colossians 3:17.)

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