



CONSTITUTION/BY-LAWS

(Revision 7/31/22)

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Introduction

The constitution outlines most of the necessary practical operations of the church. It deals with the principles, offices, accountabilities, and procedures of congregational life. Its functional nature makes it all the more important to the life of the church. Among numerous other topics, it details our church's purpose, membership process, offices, meetings, and methodology for conflict resolution, giving our ministry as a congregation necessary practical guidance.

Preamble

Since it pleased Almighty God, by His Holy Spirit, to call certain of His servants to unite here under the name Harlan Baptist Church for the worship of the one true God and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ; and...

Whereas we, the members of Harlan Baptist Church, having searched the Scriptures under the guidance of His Spirit, have recognized the need to constitute ourselves to more closely conform to His will for the Church in this age and prepare ourselves for greater efforts in His name;

Now therefore we, the members of Harlan Baptist Church, do hereby organize ourselves in accord with the laws of the state of Kentucky and adopt this Constitution as our articles of governance, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of and bring glory to Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Bible and articulated in the standards set forth in the Statement of Faith (2000 Baptist Faith & Message or BF&M) and Covenant (2010) of this church.

Article 1 - 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 commandments through:

- Worshipping Him through Jesus Christ as defined or indicated by Scripture;
- Equipping the saints through Bible instruction and study;

- Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching, 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 communion;
- Encouraging Biblical, accountable fellowship among believers; and
- Serving other individuals, families, and churches by providing for physical, emotional, and spiritual needs in the name of Jesus Christ.

Article 2 - Our Church Covenant

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

(2) We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love, to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge and holiness; to work and pray for the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel to all nations.

(3) We also engage to maintain family and personal devotions; to educate and nurture our children in the Christian faith; to seek the salvation of our family, friends, and acquaintances; to walk carefully in the world, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our conduct; to avoid all gossip, backbiting, and excessive anger; to seek God's help in abstaining from all drugs, food, drink, and practices that bring unwarranted harm to the body or jeopardize our own or another's faith.

(4) We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to admonish and entreat one another as occasion may require; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and

mindful of the guidelines of our Savior to secure it without delay; to rejoice at each other's happiness and endeavor with tenderness and sympathy to bear each other's burdens and sorrows.

(5) We moreover engage that when we move from this place, we will, if possible, unite with a church where we can carry out the articles of this confession and the spirit of this covenant.

Article 3 - Membership

Section 1 - General Statement on Membership

To join Harlan Baptist Church (HBC) means that the individual and the corporate body enter into a unique commitment to one another. Church membership is a mutual relationship with both the individual and corporate body having specific responsibilities.

When someone joins Harlan Baptist Church, the church family commits to teach that person the Word of God (II Tim. 3:15; 4:1-4; I Pet. 2:2; Eph. 5:26); to provide opportunities for growth, nurturing, and service (Eph. 4:12-14; II Tim. 1:6; I Cor. 12:4-7); to provide a framework for building fellowship and godly relationships (Eph. 4:16; I Cor. 12:12-27; Rom. 12:3-21); to carry out responsibilities of reproof, rebuking, exhorting, caring, and disciplining (Eph. 4:14-16; II Tim. 3:16-17; I Thess. 5:14; Gal. 6:1-5; Matt. 18:15-17); and to broaden the believer's concern and perspective on the non-Christian world (Matt. 28:18-20; Rom. 1:14-17; Php. 1:27-28).

The church member commits to developing in personal growth and sanctification (Rom. 6:19; Eph. 4:15; I Pet. 2:2); to be faithful in attendance and participation (Heb. 10:24-25); to support the ministries of the church through giving and service (I Cor. 16:1-2; II Cor. 9:6-8; I Pet. 4:10); to seek to preserve the unity of the church (Eph. 4:3); and to maintaining a good testimony toward unbelievers (I Thess. 2:11-12; 4:11-12).

It is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend all members' meetings and vote on the election of elders and deacons, on decisions regarding the admittance and excommunication of members, modification of the Doctrinal Statement and these By-laws, on the adoption of an annual budget, and on any other matters that the elders may submit to a vote.

Section 2 - Membership Requirement

An individual may present himself/herself for membership (1) during a time of public commitment *or* (2) by enrolling in and completing the new members class *or* (3) by presenting himself/herself to the pastoral staff for membership in HBC. Membership is considered to take place by one of the following ways:

- A. **Profession of Faith and Baptism** Any person professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as his/her savior and Lord, and wishing to unite with this church, will be baptized by immersion in keeping with the New Testament practice.
- B. **Letters of Recommendation** A member of a Baptist church of like faith and order may be received as a member of this church pending receipt of a letter stating that the person is a member in good standing of the dismissing church.
- C. **Statement** A person coming by the statement that said person is a member of a church of like faith and order, professing their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and having been baptized by immersion according to the scriptures, shall explain the reason for coming by statement indicating his/her conversion experience.
- D. **Admission from Other Denominations** A person of another denomination wishing to unite with this church shall be asked to reaffirm his/her personal faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and request to be baptized into the fellowship of the church. If a person from another denomination was baptized by immersion and accepts the doctrine of salvation as set forth in our statement of faith, he/she can be accepted into the membership of this church without requiring baptism.
- E. **Restoration after Exclusion** Excluded members by reason of church discipline may be restored to the full fellowship of the church after confessing to the church their errors and showing evidence of a changed heart, when approved by a simple majority vote of the church. The membership process for new members is not required for those coming by restoration.

Section 3 - Rights and Responsibilities of Members

- A. All persons uniting with the church shall be given a copy of the church covenant, constitution, by-laws, and the church's statement of faith ("Baptist Faith and Message," 2000).
- B. Every member eighteen years of age and older is entitled to vote at all elections and on all matters submitted to the church in any church business meeting. The member must be present to vote.
- C. Every member eighteen years of age and older is eligible for consideration for the elective offices of the church unless otherwise stated in these by-laws.

- D. It is the responsibility of the members of this church to sincerely serve and sacrificially attend, practice biblical stewardship, participate in the various Bible study and worship services of the church; to support and pray for each other as members reach out to persons who are not saved; and to exemplify a Christ-like spirit in public and private life. In other words, all members are expected to live according to the church covenant, as best they can, by God's grace.

Section 4 - Termination of Membership

Members will be removed from membership at Harlan Baptist Church as follows:

- A. By granting a letter of dismissal to another church of like faith or practice.
- B. By erasure in the event of death.
- C. By erasure in the event of transfer to a church not of like faith and practice.
- D. By exclusion via two-thirds majority vote of the congregation. (See Article 4, Section 3-B on Church Discipline, p. 10)

Article 4 - Church Discipline

The discipline of members shall be a responsibility of the church under such rules and procedures as the church may from time to time establish on the basis of Scripture. All such proceedings shall be guided by a spirit of prayer mingled with Christian kindness, forbearance, and holy firmness under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Section 1 - General Policy

All members of the Body of Christ have an individual responsibility to live righteously and to encourage righteous behavior in other believers. Interpersonal accountability is a Christian obligation that extends beyond the membership of the local church. As Gal. 6:1-5 instructs, this process begins with self-examination and a spirit of humility sensitive to one's own faults. Believers are instructed to be aware of their own sins, to be penitent, and to be quick to seek reconciliation with offended individuals (Matt. 5:23-25; 7:1-5). It is recognized that Harlan Baptist Church members have a special relationship one to the other. Consequently, Harlan Baptist Church members have the

privilege of experiencing the full expression of love and care for the local body as outlined in Scripture and as detailed below.

Church discipline is regarded as a serious and clear directive in Scripture. The purpose of such discipline should be:

- *For the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined* (see Prov. 15: 5; 29: 15; I Cor. 4: 14; Eph. 6: 4; I Tim. 3: 4–5; Heb. 12: 1–11; Ps. 119: 115; 141: 5; Pro. 17: 10; 25: 12; 27: 5; Eccles. 7: 5; Matt. 7: 26–27; 18: 15–17; Luke 17: 3; Acts 2: 40; I Cor. 5: 5; Gal. 6: 1–5; II Thess. 3: 6, 14–15; I Tim. 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 Pro. 13: 20; Rom. 15: 14; I Cor. 5: 11; 15: 33; Col. 3: 16; I Thess. 5: 14 [Note: This is written to the whole church, not just to leaders.]; I Tim. 5: 20; Titus 1: 11; Heb. 10: 24–25);
- *For the purity of the church as a whole* (see I Cor. 5: 6–7; II Cor. 13: 10; Eph. 5: 27; II John 10; Jude 24; Rev. 21: 2);
- *For the good of our corporate witness to non-Christians* (see Prov. 28: 7; Matt. 5: 13–16; John 13: 35; Acts 5: 1–14; Eph. 5: 11; I Tim. 3: 7; II Pet. 2: 2; I John 3: 10); and
- *Supremely for the glory of God by reflecting His holy character* (see Deut. 5: 11; I Kings 11: 2; II Chr. 19: 2; Ezra 6: 21; Neh. 9: 2; Is. 52: 11; Ezek. 36: 20; Matt. 5: 16; John 15: 8; 18: 17, 25; Rom. 2: 24; 15: 5–6; II Cor. 6: 14–7: 1; Eph. 1: 4; 5: 27; I Pet. 2: 12).

Discipline is exercised with compassion for the erring member and a sincere desire to seek that person's repentance, reconciliation, and (if necessary) restoration to the fellowship of the local church (Matt. 18:12-14). Discipline does not entitle the church or any of its leaders to abuse their authority over the members of the church (1 Pet. 5:1-3). Specific guidelines are followed that identify the grounds for church discipline and the process of such discipline.

The members of Harlan Baptist Church belong to a spiritual body of local believers who identify with a common purpose and mission. There is a mutual accountability that each member has, one to the other, to encourage and provoke holy living (Heb. 10:23-25). Church discipline begins with individual accountability that is a responsibility of every member. Members are encouraged to take this responsibility seriously.

Scripture is clear that the motives of those dealing with the erring member must be pure before our Savior, His Church, and the world.

- A. They are to avoid vengeance and arrogant presumption (Gal. 6:1).
- B. They are not to be motivated by hostility or anger but by a loving concern for the erring member (2 Thess. 3:15).
- C. They are to approach the erring member with heartfelt sorrow and sincere concern (1 Cor. 5:2; 2 Cor. 2:4).
- D. They are to be ready to grant restoration to the erring member when repentance occurs (Luke 17:1-10; 2 Cor. 2:5-8).

Section 2 - Offenses Applicable to Church Discipline

Individual accountability is an ongoing expression of believers and is always the first step in dealing with an erring member. No member is above or immune from accountability (1 Tim. 5:19-22). Church discipline is not God's method for making the church sinless. Scripture defines certain deviations from the truth as grounds for formal disciplinary action. Sin that damages the church, weakens its testimony or promotes disunity constitutes an offense that necessitates formal disciplinary action.

These sins can be understood in the following categories:

- A. **False teaching** constitutes a deliberate, persistent program of teaching that intentionally rejects the foundational doctrines of Scripture (Titus 3:10; Rev. 2:14).
- B. **Apostasy** constitutes a public denial of the essential truths of God's Word, most especially those related to the gospel and Jesus Christ. These essential truths are reflected in the doctrinal statement of our church, which is the "Baptist Faith and Message," 2000 (Gal. 2:11-14; 1 John 2:19).
- C. **Divisiveness** constitutes behavior that undermines the unity of Harlan Baptist Church either between members or against God's established authority in the church (Php. 4:2-3; 1 Thess. 5:14; Heb. 13:17).
- D. **Immorality** is constituted scripturally as behavior that is deemed immoral and brings shame on the testimony of Christ and the local church (1 Cor. 5:11; 6:9-11). This category includes sexual immorality and sexual deviancy (1 Thess. 4:3-8). While sexual behavior may or may not be known publicly, these sins internally pollute the church and disrupt its mission. Scripture denounces sexual impurity. These sins include adultery, homosexuality, and every other kind of sexual deviancy or impurity that Scripture calls fornication ("porneia"). This behavior will not be tolerated among the membership of Harlan Baptist Church (Rom. 1:26-27).

Section 3 - Procedures in Membership Accountability

Church discipline is to be handled prayerfully, carefully, justly, and only for offenses verified by at least two witnesses. Below are the steps of accountability and discipline that follow the guidelines given in Matt. 18:15-20. It is also important to understand who qualifies as a witness and what their function is in the disciplinary process. Biblically, a witness is a person who bears testimony of another's wrongdoing based on firsthand knowledge. A person is not constituted a witness who bears testimony based on hearsay, gossip, or secondhand knowledge (Deut. 19:15-19). The Bible condemns false witnesses (Ex. 20:13). Accusations not substantiated by two or three witnesses must be left to the One who knows all things and judges righteously (Num. 35:30; Ps. 51:3-4). It is the function of a witness to insure that the offense is clearly and impartially presented and that nothing is left unsaid. The witnesses also keep each other's motivations and actions accountable before God (Matt. 18:20).

- A. **First Step:** Arrange a private meeting with the offender. Humbly confront the person with the nature of the offense. If the person repents, the matter is closed (Matt. 18:15; Luke 17:3). Scripture does not specify the number of times that an offender should be confronted on an individual basis. Scripture is clear that believers should be longsuffering and have an unrelenting desire for that person's repentance (1 Cor. 13:4-8a; 1 Pet. 4:8). If there is no repentance and the offense is of the nature categorized above as "Offenses Applicable to Church Discipline," then there is a responsibility to move to the next step in the process.
- B. **Second Step:** Set up another private meeting, this time with one or two other witnesses present (Matt. 18:16). This step should never be taken in haste but only after there is prayerful conviction that step one has not availed. If repentance occurs, the offender should seek forgiveness from the circle of offense—and no more. If there is no repentance, the circle of knowledge must be broadened at this point to include the elders for their consideration in order that the third step might be taken.
- C. **Third Step:** At this point, the matter must be brought by the elders to the members of Harlan Baptist Church in a closed session (Matt. 18:17). The entire membership has a responsibility, as opportunity provides, to call the offender to repentance. An equitable period of time will be established by the elders in order to optimize the fullest effect of the witness of the entire membership, to allow for the work of the Lord, and to provide more than ample time for repentance. Should there be repentance, the entire body should be quick to respond with forgiveness, grace, and love (2 Cor.

2:5-8). While repentance and forgiveness are instantaneous, restoration to serve will be monitored by the church for the benefit and development of the person. If there is no repentance, the church will meet to take action on the final step.

- D. **Fourth Step:** As defined in Matt. 18:17, the unrepentant offender will be excluded from the membership of the church by a two-thirds majority vote of members present at a regular or specially called members' meeting. By way of application, this constitutes a removal from church membership and fellowship resulting in a recognition that the unrepentant offender is outside the realm of God's blessings (1 Cor. 5:1-13). Common ground for intimate friendship has been removed. The entire congregation has an ongoing responsibility to act in unison, calling the person to repentance with all contact so as not to undermine the scriptural process or the severe temporal consequences of the person's obstinate behavior. It is sincerely hoped there will be repentance and reconciliation as a result of the consistent and loving application of this heart-wrenching but biblical action.

The action of the church in matters of discipline carries the highest conceivable authority and is both final and binding as clearly stated in Matt. 18:18-20. There can be no appeal to any court as a result of this action (1 Cor. 6:1-2), and a member may not resign his/her membership in order to avoid church discipline. Should a member seek to join another church in order to avoid church discipline no letter will be granted.

Section 4 - Integrity of Knowledge

In all matters of church discipline, if and when members become aware of the offense and the disciplinary action being brought against the unrepentant member, the members are expected, without exception, to hold the knowledge with integrity, avoiding gossip and the defamation of character (Eph. 4:31-32; James 4:11). Church disciplinary matters are internal affairs and must not be paraded before the world.

Article 5 - Meetings

Section 1 – Worship Meetings

Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day, and may be held throughout the week as the church determines. The Lord's Supper shall be observed at least once a month or as determined by the church body.

Section 2 – Members' Meetings

A. Attendance and Conduct.

All members should regard their presence at a duly called congregational meeting with the same seriousness with which they would regard their attendance at a stated worship service. The Lord is present in power at the gatherings together of the church and therefore all meetings should be carried out in a spirit of worship and unity. Every member's meeting shall begin and end with prayer. In addition, at each member's meeting the covenant shall be recited together as a reminder of the member's commitment to the Lord, one another, and standards of behavior.

B. Frequency and Time.

There shall be a regular members' meeting at least every quarter, at an agreed upon time and date by the elders. Notice of all members' meetings shall be given at least two weeks prior to the meeting. At the last member's meeting of the calendar year a budget shall be adopted for the next year. Special members' meetings may be called as required by the elders, or at the written request, submitted to the elders, of five percent of the voting membership. The date, time, and purpose of any special meeting shall be announced at all public services of the church within two weeks preceding the meeting. In the event of a written request from the members, the elders shall call a special meeting to be held within one month of their receipt of the request.

C. Moderator.

The chairman of the elders shall preside as moderator at all members' meetings of the church. In case of his absence, one of the other elders shall preside. 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.

D. 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 members present; however, it should be our goal to prayerfully discern the mind of God so that in all matters of church business it may be said of us, as was said of that members' meeting in Acts 6, "that this thing pleased the whole multitude."

E. Voting Eligibility.

Any member of the church eighteen years of age or over, in good and regular standing, shall have the right to vote on any matter brought before the congregation.

F. Elections.

At any regular or special members' meeting, officers may be elected and positions filled as needed, so long as all relevant constitutional requirements have been met.

Article 6 - Church Government

Section 1 – General Statements

A. The Biblical offices in the church are elders (pastors/overseers) and deacons. In addition to these offices and in deference to the non-profit corporation laws of the state of Kentucky, our church will also recognize the administrative offices of secretary and treasurer, whose responsibilities will be outlined in these By-Laws. All officers must be members of Harlan Baptist for at least one year prior to taking office or assuming their responsibilities except for preaching elders or staff elders. No one may hold more than one administrative office at the same time.

B. Any officer of the church who is excluded from the membership of Harlan Baptist Church due to unrepentant sin will also be removed from the office that he or she holds.

C. Congregationalism and Elder Leadership - Because of the fundamental equality of believers, each member plays an important role in the mission of Harlan Baptist. Harlan Baptist members are called to a shared life together, involving fellowship, discipline, and care. Although the entire church does not have responsibility for the governance of the church, each member contributes greatly to the health or demise of Harlan Baptist. The leadership of elders in no way contradicts the prerogatives and liberties given to all who are in Christ. (Among other authority enumerated in Article 3, Section 1) Harlan Baptist members participate, under the leadership of the elders, in the joyful welcoming of new members and the excommunication of unfaithful members. The congregation is involved in the evaluation and election of Elder and Deacon candidates (Acts 6:3-6) and has a responsibility to bring charges to the Elders against a leader in serious sin (1 Tim. 5:19-20). All believers are responsible to reject false teachers and unbiblical leadership (Gal. 1:1-2; 2 Tim. 4:3), so the congregation establishes and maintains a doctrinal statement of commonly held truths, the Baptist Faith and Message 2000. All believers have the right to approach God freely through Christ and to study the Scriptures for themselves. All believers are gifted by the Holy Spirit for active ministry in the church. Of course, the congregation must also recognize the value and role of elders in the church. We should pray for our leaders, maintain the unity of the Spirit with them, and joyfully submit to their biblical leadership.

No church polity will work without the necessary qualifying character on the part of the Elders and the correspondent faith-filled submission of the congregation. Within the general equality of all believers, God orders and gives leaders to his church. The congregation's submission to Christ finds expression in its submission to godly elders (1 Thess. 5:12-13; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:5). All ministry to the church is ultimately Christ's own ministry and, as gifts from God, elders are an extension of Christ's ministry to his people. Jesus is the apostle (Heb. 3:1), the prophet (Matt. 13:57), the teacher (Matt. 10:24-25), the shepherd (John 10:11; 1 Pet. 5:4), the evangelist (Luke 4:18), the preacher (Matt. 4:17), and the servant (Mark 10:45). All leaders in the church carry on Jesus' own ministry. This is a voluntary submission which must not be coerced and which assumes that elders are serving as faithful examples and are faithfully leading the congregation in obedience to God's Word. God's Word circumscribes the elders' authority. Only Scripture can bind the conscience of the Christian, and leaders forfeit their authority when they deviate from God's Word. Biblical texts that specifically address the notion of authority with respect to the congregation and its leaders affirm elder leadership and congregational submission.

1. Elders rule/govern/manage: 1 Tim. 3:4-5; 5:17; 1 Thess. 5:12; Rom. 12:8
2. Elders lead: Heb. 13:7, 17, 24
3. Elders exercise oversight: Acts 20:28; Phil. 1:1; Titus 1:7; 1 Pet. 5:2
4. The congregation respects: 1 Thess. 5:12
5. The congregation esteems: 1 Thess. 5:13
6. The congregation obeys: Heb. 13:17
7. The congregation submits: Heb. 13:17
8. The congregation imitates: Heb. 13:7; 1 Cor. 11:1; 2 Thess. 3:7, 9

Section 2 – Elders

A. Oversight of the ministry, resources, and facilities of the church shall be vested in a Council of Elders, which shall be comprised of a minimum of three men who satisfy the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. If an insufficient number of qualified men are available then the church shall seek to place itself under the leadership of a singular preaching elder (Titus 1:5) until a qualified plurality of three or more is possible. Plurality being the biblical requirement, the church shall seek to raise up biblically qualified men with urgency.

B. Elders shall be selected as follows: The Council of Elders *may* at any regular Members' Meeting present to the church a list of nominees to the office of Elder. For a period of at least three months, the church shall consider whether such nominees are qualified for the office. If any Member believes one or more of the nominees to be unqualified, that Member shall express such concern to the Elders, who may, after investigating the evidence brought forth, remove names from the list of nominees. No name shall be added to the list of nominees which was not included on the initial list. When a period of three months has elapsed, the Elders shall at the next regular Members' Meeting present a final list of nominees to the church, who shall vote Yea or Nay on each of the nominees in turn. The Moderator and his delegates shall count the votes, and any nominee having the approval of at least three-quarters of the Members present and voting on his nomination shall be an Elder, which men the church shall in due haste publicly recognize and set apart as such.

C. At least once in every year, the Elders shall at any regular Members' Meeting solicit from the congregation recommendations for the office of Elder, which recommendations shall be given to the Elders in private, and not publicly. The Elders shall give due consideration to any recommendation received.

D. In accordance with 1 Timothy 2:12 and 3:2, women shall not serve as Elders.

E. No Elder shall hold the office of Deacon during his tenure.

F. The Council of Elders shall choose their Chairman and other Officers. In compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of Kentucky, the Council of Elders shall serve as the Board of Directors of the Corporation, and the Chairman of the Elders shall serve as the president of the corporation.

G. The Elders shall, in keeping with the principles set forth in the Scriptures, especially Acts 6:1-6; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 5:17; Titus 1:5-9; James 5:14; and 1 Peter 5:1-4, undertake the responsibility of shepherding God's flock by devoting themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. They shall meet together on a regular basis for the purpose of prayer, edification, and planning. They shall have particular authority to plan and oversee worship services;

1. To oversee the ordinances, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper;
2. To examine and instruct prospective members;
3. To oversee the process of church discipline;

4. To examine and recommend candidates for all offices and positions;
5. To oversee the work of the Deacons/Deaconesses and all other agents of the church;
6. To steward the finances of the church by planning and recommending an annual budget for congregational approval;
7. To hire, oversee, evaluate the performance of, and when necessary terminate paid church staff;
8. To ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share our fundamental convictions and are apt to teach.
9. To take any other action which shall be necessary and proper for faithfully overseeing and shepherding the church.
10. An Elder shall be removed from office upon the vote of three-fourths of the Members present and voting on the question at any Members' Meeting. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17 and those of the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 5:17-21.

Section 3. Preaching Elder/Lead Pastor

Primary responsibility for preaching and teaching the Scriptures in public meetings of the church may be vested in a preaching Elder, or Lead Pastor.

A preaching Elder shall be selected as follows:

1. In the event that a suitably qualified preaching Elder is not already present within the congregation, the Elders shall assemble a search committee consisting of the Elders and at least three members of the congregation nominated by the congregation. To be considered for the committee, persons must be in agreement with HBC's statement of faith, purpose, structure, and direction as established by the church.
2. The Elders shall at any regular Members' Meeting present to the church the name of one nominee to the position of preaching Elder. For a period of at least two weeks, the church shall consider the nominee's gifts in preaching and teaching, and his commitment to minister personally to the members of this church. If any Member believes the nominee to be unqualified, that Member shall express such concern to the Elders. When a period of two weeks has elapsed, the Elders shall at the next Members' Meeting present the nominee for preaching Elder to the church, who shall vote Yea or Nay on his selection as such. The Moderator and his delegates shall count the votes, and if the nominee receives the approval of at least three-quarters of the Members present and voting on the question, he shall be a Member of the church, an Elder, and a preaching Elder, whom the church shall in due haste publicly recognize as such.
3. A preaching Elder shall meet all the qualifications and hold all the rights and responsibilities of a Member of the church. He shall satisfy all the qualifications and hold

all the duties and responsibilities of an Elder. In terms of formal authority, there shall be no distinction between an Elder and a preaching Elder.

4. A preaching Elder shall be removed from office upon the vote of two-thirds of the Members present and voting on the question at any Members' Meeting. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17 and those of the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 5:17-21.

Section 4. Staff Elders/ Associate Pastors

Other particular pastoral responsibilities may be vested in one or more staff Elders, or Associate Pastors.

A. A Staff Elder shall be selected as follows: The Elders shall at any regular Members' Meeting present to the church the name of one nominee to the position of staff Elder. For a period of at least two weeks, the church shall consider the nominee's gifts in the particular area of service to which he is being called, and his commitment to minister personally to the members of this church. If any Member believes the nominee to be unqualified, that Member shall express such concern to the Elders. When a period of two weeks has elapsed, the Elders shall at the next Members' Meeting present the nominee for staff Elder to the church, who shall vote Yea or Nay on his selection as such. The Moderator and his delegates shall count the votes, and if the nominee receives the approval of at least three-quarters of the Members present and voting on the question, he shall be a Member of the church, an Elder, and a staff Elder, whom the church shall in due haste publicly recognize as such.

B. A staff Elder shall meet all the qualifications and hold all the rights and responsibilities of a Member of the church. He shall satisfy all the qualifications and hold all the duties and responsibilities of an Elder. In terms of formal authority, there shall be no distinction between an Elder and a staff Elder.

C. A staff Elder shall be removed from office upon the vote of two-thirds of the Members present and voting on the question at any Members' Meeting. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of the Lord Jesus in Matthew 18:15-17 and those of the Apostle Paul in 1 Timothy 5:17-21.

Section 5 – Deacons

Particular service to the church shall be provided by Deacons/Deaconesses, the number of which shall vary as the church has need, as determined each year by the elders, and who shall satisfy the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. The church may recognize Deacons/Deaconesses to take responsibility:

- For seeing that the sick, the sorrowing, the aged, and the infirm receive spiritual and physical comfort;

- For leading the hospitality ministries of the church;
 - For attending to the normal care and maintenance of church properties;
 - For determining need and disbursing of benevolence funds, and for reporting from time to time on the use of such funds to both the Elders and the church;
 - For attending to the accommodations for public worship;
 - For assisting in distributing the elements during the Lord's Supper; and
 - For serving in other specific capacities as the church has need.
1. At the request of the council of Elders, deacons shall attend any Elder's meeting for the purpose to report on ministry activity. The deacons and elders shall meet jointly once a quarter. Each diaconate position may serve a particular need of the church, and shall be created or dissolved upon the recommendation of the Elders and the subsequent agreement of a majority of the Members present and voting on the question at any Members' Meeting.
 2. Deacons/Deaconesses shall be selected as follows: The Council of Elders shall at any regular Members' Meeting present to the church a list of nominees to the office of deacon/deaconess. For a period of at least one month, the church shall consider whether such nominees are qualified for the office. If any Member believes one or more of the nominees to be unqualified, that Member shall express such concern to the Elders, who may, after investigating the evidence brought forth, remove names from the list of nominees. No name shall be added to the list of nominees which was not included on the initial list. When a period of one month has elapsed, the Elders shall at the next regular Members' Meeting present a final list of nominees to the church, who shall vote Yea or Nay on each of the nominees in turn. The Moderator and his delegates shall count the votes, and any nominee having the approval of two-thirds of the Members present and voting on his nomination shall be a Deacon/Deaconess, which men or women the church shall in due haste publicly recognize and set apart as such.
 3. At least once in every year, the Elders shall at any regular Members' Meeting solicit from the congregation recommendations for new diaconate positions and for qualified persons to fill new or vacant positions, which recommendations shall be given to the Elders in private, and not publicly. The Elders shall give due consideration to any recommendation received.
 4. Deacons/Deaconesses shall be reaffirmed by vote of the church triennially.
 5. In keeping with the principles set forth in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, and 1 Peter 5 that authority is to be vested in the Elders, Deacons/Deaconesses shall not exercise a ministry of spiritual authority, but shall support the Elders' ministry of the Word, work to maintain the unity of the church, and care for the physical needs of the church.
 6. No person or group shall solicit money on behalf of the church or any of its ministries without the approval of the Elders.
 7. A Deacon/Deaconess may be removed from office by a decision of the Elders, or upon the recommendation of the Elders and the subsequent agreement of a majority of the Members present and voting on the question at any Members' Meeting.

8. In the event a diaconate position becomes vacant, the Elders may appoint a person to fill that position and assume its responsibilities, until such time as some person can be duly recognized by the church as a Deacon/Deaconess.

Section 6 – Clerk

The Elders will appoint a clerk who will record the minutes of all regular and special members' meetings. The clerk will serve a one year term. For the purpose of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the state of Kentucky, the clerk will serve as the secretary of the corporation, but nevertheless, subject to the authority of the elders.

Section 7 – Treasurer

The Elders will appoint a treasurer who will be sure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as designated by the elders. The treasurer shall not be an elder. The treasurer will also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any agents of the church. The treasurer will render to the elders, the deacons, and the church annually an account of all transactions as treasurer and of the financial condition of the church. For the purpose of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the state of Kentucky, the treasurer will serve as the treasurer of the corporation, but nevertheless, subject to the authority of the elders

Section 8 - Committees or Ministry Teams

The church will establish and maintain all the committees or ministry teams necessary to assist the church in fulfilling its mission and developing its ministry. Committees will be organized as the need arises. The congregation or elders may recognize the need. Members of all committees are to be appointed by the elders. The elders will appoint new members to fill vacancies when they occur and will appoint new members to fill vacancies caused by rotation. Each committee will meet as often as necessary to fulfill its responsibility. Each committee will choose its own officers. One of the elders will serve as an ex-officio member of each committee. Each committee chairman will determine the time of each meeting, and it will be his responsibility to notify each member of the time and place of every meeting. A committee will be abolished when

their area of need, as determined by the elders, no longer exists. Committees will be either standing committees or temporary committees.

A- Standing Committee

A standing committee is one whose area of responsibility is continuous (e.g. stewardship committee). The membership of all standing committees will be divisible by three. At the formation of a standing committee, one-third of the members will be appointed for three years, one-third of the members will be appointed for two years, and one-third of the members will be appointed for one year. No member of a standing committee will serve longer than three successive years and must remain off that committee for a period of one year prior to the reappointment.

B- Temporary Committee

A temporary committee is one whose area of responsibility is for specific, limited-in-time, need (e.g. search committee). The number of members on a temporary committee will be determined by the elders. Should a vacancy arise on a temporary committee, the elders may or may not appoint a new member at its own discretion.

Article 7 – Church Employees

In addition to staff elders/associate pastors , the church may employ additional personnel. The moneys for such personnel must be approved by the elders in conjunction with the help of the stewardship team/committee. The elders in conjunction with the help of the stewardship team shall be responsible for the hiring and firing of all such personnel as well as determining all staff needs, employment, salaries, benefits, other compensation, policies, job descriptions, personnel services, and legal requirements.

Article 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., Matt. 18:15-20, I Cor. 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 may adopt policies and procedures to accomplish these requirements and aspirations as deemed necessary.

In the event of a division of this church, from which may God in His mercy save us, the property of this church shall belong to that group of such division as represents the largest portion of the church membership before recognizing a division therein provided such group is loyal to these by-laws and statements of faith; otherwise, it shall belong to the group remaining loyal to these by-laws and statements of faith though it may not be the largest group in such division. Should any controversy arise as to whether such loyalty exists, the question shall be submitted to an impartial third party selected by the elders, and their decision shall be final.

Article 9 - Amendments

The Statement of Faith and Church Covenant may be amended by a three-fourths vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous members' meeting, and shall have been announced from the pulpit at the morning church services two successive Sundays prior to such vote.

This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous members' meeting, and shall have been announced from the pulpit at morning church services two successive Sundays prior to such a vote.

The revised version of this constitution shall be made available to all church members upon request.

Article 10 - Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality

(Added 07/2016)

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. (Gen 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. (Gen 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 Cor 6:18; 7:2-5; Heb 13:4.) We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

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

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of Harlan Baptist Church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the Harlan Baptist Church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by Harlan Baptist Church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by this Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality. (Matt 5:16; Phil 2:14-16; 1 Thess 5:22.)

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; Rom 10:9-10; 1 Cor 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 Harlan Baptist Church.

The statement of faith does not exhaust the extent of our beliefs. The Bible itself, as the inspired and infallible Word of God that speaks with final authority concerning truth, morality, and the proper conduct of mankind, is the sole and final source of all that we believe. For purposes of Harlan Baptist Church's faith, doctrine, practice, policy, and discipline, our elders/pastors are Harlan Baptist Church's final interpretive authority on the Bible's meaning and application.

Article 11 - Church Facility Use Policy

The church's facilities were provided through God's benevolence and by the sacrificial generosity of church members. The church desires that its facilities be used for the fellowship of the Body of Christ and to bring God glory. Although the facilities are not generally open to the public, we make our facilities available to approved non-members as a witness to our faith, in a spirit of Christian charity, and as a means of demonstrating the Gospel of Jesus Christ in practice.

However, 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 church's constitution and bylaws. Nor may church facilities be used for activities that contradict, or are deemed inconsistent with, the church's faith or moral teachings. The elders, or the church's official designee, is the final decision-maker concerning use of church facilities.

This restricted facility use policy is necessary for two important reasons. First, the church may not in good conscience materially cooperate in activities or beliefs that are contrary to its faith. Allowing its facilities to be used for purposes that contradict the church's beliefs would be material cooperation with that activity, and would be a grave violation of the church's faith and religious practice. (2 Cor 6:14; 1 Thess 5:22.) Second, it is very important that the church present a consistent message to the community, and that the church staff and members conscientiously maintain that message as part of their witness to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Allowing facilities to be used by groups or persons who express beliefs or engage in practices contrary to the church's faith would have a severe, negative impact on the message that the church strives to promote. It could also cause confusion and scandal to church members and the community because they may reasonable perceive that by allowing use of our facilities, the church agrees with the beliefs or practices of the persons or groups using its facilities.

Therefore, in no event shall persons or groups who hold, advance, or advocate beliefs, or advance, advocate, or engage in practices that contradict the church's faith use any church facility. Nor may church facilities be used in any way that contradicts the church'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 of its property as holy and set apart to worship God. (Col 3:17.)

Approved Users and Priority of Use

The elders, or the church's official designee, must approve all uses of church facilities.

Generally, priority shall be given to church members, their immediate families, and organized groups that are part of the ministry, organization, or sponsored activities of the church. Church facilities and equipment will be made available to non-members or outside groups meeting the following qualifications:

Church Facility Use Policy Appendix

1. Groups or persons requesting facility use must affirm that their beliefs and practices and planned uses of the facilities are consistent with the church's faith and practice.
2. The group or person seeking facility use must submit a signed "Harlan Baptist Church Facility Reservation Request and Agreement" form.
3. The group or person seeking facility use must be willing to take responsibility for the facilities and equipment used and must agree to abide by the church's rules of conduct for facility use, as stated below and as described in any additional instructions by church staff.

Facility Use Hours

Facilities are available between the hours of 10:00 a.m. and 10:00 p.m. Use outside these hours may be approved by the elders, or the church's official designee.

Scheduling Events

Facility use requests shall be made to the elders, or the church's official designee, by submitting the "Harlan Baptist Church Facility Reservation Request and Agreement" form. The event will be reserved and placed on the church calendar only when the elders, or the church's official designee, approves the use.

Fees

Use of church facilities is subject to a use and maintenance fee, as established by the church's Stewardship Committee, to pay for the upkeep of church facilities. Church members are not required to pay a fee for usage because maintenance of the facilities are derived from member tithes and offerings. Use of church facilities is also subject to a clean-up fee, as established by the church's Stewardship Committee, to pay for cleaning of church facilities after use.

Facility Use Guidelines

1. Alcohol Policy: No alcohol may be served in church facilities.
2. Smoking Policy: Smoking in any indoor church facilities is prohibited.
3. Groups are restricted to only those areas of the facility that the group has reserved.
4. Food and/or beverages in the sanctuary are prohibited.
5. Church equipment, such as tables and chairs, must be returned to original placement, unless arranged otherwise prior to the event.
6. All lights must be turned off and doors locked upon departure.
7. Clean-up shall be the responsibility of the church. Normal clean-up shall be covered by the initial clean-up fee. However, the church reserves the right to further invoice in the event extraordinary measures are required in cleaning after a particular use.
8. Abusive or foul language, violent behavior, and drug or alcohol abuse are strictly prohibited on church premises. Any person exhibiting such behavior will be required to leave the premises.
9. Any person or group must sign the "Harlan Baptist Church Facility Reservation Request and Agreement" form prior to reservation of church facilities.
10. Any person or group must sign the "Harlan Baptist Church Facility Use and Indemnity and Hold Harmless Agreement" form prior to reservation of church facilities.