

CONSTITUTION  
OF  
LATHAM BIBLE BAPTIST CHURCH

495 Watervliet-Shaker Road (Route 155)  
Latham, New York 12110  
Phone: (518) 785-5916

George P. Whitman, Pastor Emeritus

Sunday School	9:30 AM	Evening Service	6:00 PM
Morning Service	10:45 AM	Wednesday Prayer	7:00 PM

Church Incorporated 1964

Constitution Revised 1985

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Constitution of Latham Bible Baptist Church  
Latham, New York

We, the members of the Latham Bible Baptist Church, do hereby adopt the following constitution and by-laws, which are based on Biblical doctrine and practices. This constitution is simply a systematic review of the truths found in God's Word concerning His churches. Its purpose is to ever keep before this congregation the doctrines, methods, procedures, and organizations as clearly taught in the New Testament. With such a guide we shall, by God's grace, endeavor to practice New Testament Christianity in all its phases.

**Article I: Name of Church**

The name of this organization shall be known as the Latham Bible Baptist Church of Latham, New York. The church began services on January 12, 1961. It was organized on December 14, 1963, and is incorporated under the laws of the State of New York.

**Article II: Purpose of Church**

This church, believing in the Bible as the inspired Word of God and as the sole authority for faith and practice, declares its purposes:

**Section 1: To preach and teach the entire will of God as revealed in God's Holy Word**

- To maintain regular services for public worship.
- A.
  - B. To proclaim earnestly the Gospel message and to urge its personal acceptance, both privately and publicly.
  - C. To promote systematic Bible study and teaching for Christian service and soul-winning.
  - D. To cooperate heartily, by prayer, giving, and service, in the effort of seeing the Gospel of Jesus Christ preached throughout the world.
  - E. To pray for one another that we may live according to the will of God as revealed in His Word.
  - F. To promote Christian friendship and fellowship.
  - G. To observe the two ordinances, Believers' Baptism and the Lord's Table, as established by Jesus Christ.

**Section 2: To fulfill the Great Commission given by the Lord to His Church in Matthew 28:19-20, which is three-fold**

- To win souls to Jesus Christ.
- A.
  - B. To baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.
  - C. To teach them to observe all things as revealed in the Word of God.

### **Section 3: To contend for the faith in the midst of apostasy (Jude 3)**

- To teach and preach Bible truths generally held by Baptists through the
- A. years.  
Consider the acrostic of the word BAPTISTS:  
B – Biblical Authority – II Timothy 3:16-17  
    The sufficiency and supremacy of the Bible in all things pertaining to faith and practice.  
A – Autonomy of the Local Church – I Timothy 3:15  
P – Priesthood of Every Believer – I Peter 2:5, 9  
T – Two Ordinances Only as Valid – Acts 2:41-42  
    Believers' Baptism and the Lord's Table  
I – Individual Soul Liberty of Every Person – I John 2:27  
S – Saved Church Membership – Acts 2:41, 47  
T – Two Scriptural Church Offices – Philippians 1:1  
    Pastor and Deacons  
S – Separation of Church and State – Matthew 22:21
- B. This church will give special emphasis to the need of following the New Testament Bible doctrine, fellowship, discipline, and organization; the need of holy living by every believer; and the need of exposing the religious apostasy, which is ever engulfing and diluting Christianity. By apostasy is meant the abandonment of New Testament precepts and practices. This church is never to cooperate or unite with forces of apostasy in any way or form whatever. I Corinthians 6
- C. This church is not a place for mere intellectual discussion, nor for the discussion of all sorts of problems, save as the Bible and the principles it teaches have application to these problems. It must never lower its standards to those of the community and of the world. II Timothy 3:23, Titus 3:9

## **Article III: Form of Church Government**

This church is an independent Baptist church, and as such is autonomous with regard to all decisions and relationships. The government of this church is vested in the body of regenerate, immersed believers who compose its membership. As a self-governing independent organization, the church shall exercise the right to rule in all church matters, in accordance with the New Testament, and the corporation of the State of New York, and is amenable by no outside control or influence.

## **Article IV: Church Associations**

As a New Testament church cannot “join” anything outside itself, but only affiliate therewith on the grounds of fellowship, this church shall seek fellowship only with other churches holding the same convictions and beliefs as set forth in the Statement of Faith (Article XIII), and only as long as such churches remain true to the principles and standards of the Word of God. This church shall not affiliate with any group or church in the National Council of Churches, the World Council of Churches, nor with any other group that is apostate or interferes with the sovereignty of the local church. This church presently declares itself in fellowship with the General Association of Regular Baptist Churches and the Empire State Fellowship of Regular Baptist Churches.

## **Article V: Church Membership**

### **Section 1: Purposes and Privileges of Membership**

- A. To prayerfully follow the Scriptural procedure concerning church membership as outlined in Acts 2:40-47 and Matthew 28:19-20, where the Gospel of Jesus Christ was proclaimed; salvation was by faith; believers were baptized and added to the church membership, whereupon they enjoyed in the church fellowship, the Lord’s Table, continual growth, and service.
- B. To provide a logical nucleus for electing loyal and spiritual leadership. Only members have a voice and participation in the direction of the work; i.e., the right to legally vote and initiate business. Every member who has reached the age of sixteen (16) has the right to vote except on incorporate matters where each voting member must be twenty-one (21).
- C. To determine those who agree with the doctrines and practices of the church and who desire to actively participate in positions of leadership, service, and ministry in the church. Only members can hold positions, i.e., deacon, teacher, choir member. *Exception: see Section 7-C.*
- D. To guarantee to the person the right to a fair hearing in case of charges or attempts at dismissal (see Section 5).

## **Section 2: Qualifications for Membership**

The membership shall consist of those who have professed faith in the Lord

- A. Jesus Christ as their own personal Savior, giving evidence in their lives of being a “new creation” in Christ (II Corinthians 5:17), have been baptized by immersion, and have declared themselves in accord with the principles, practices, doctrine, and covenant of this church.
  - B. Marriage is a relationship established by God for mankind (Genesis 2) and is not to be lightly treated. The following guidelines are established for those who have broken this marital relationship:
    - 1. Membership shall not be restricted from divorced people, or divorced people who have remarried before their salvation.
    - 2. Persons who have been saved, and subsequently divorced and remarried, or who were divorced before their salvation and remarried after their salvation while the former partner is living, shall be permitted membership only after exhibiting a penitent attitude and recognizing the Scriptural error of their way (Galatians 6:1).
    - 3. These regulations shall not be in force if the divorced party has deceased. The pastor and deacons are charged with the responsibility of discreet judgment in borderline cases.
    - 4. Much prayer and great caution will be exercised in the selection of divorced people for teaching and appointed positions.
- Genesis 2:23, 24  
Exodus 20:14, 17  
Deuteronomy 24:1-4, 13-22  
Malachi 2:14-16  
Matthew 19:3-8  
Mark 10:2-12  
Luke 16:18  
Romans 7: 2-3  
I Corinthians 7:39  
I Timothy 3:12

## **Section 3: Methods of Admission to Membership**

Each candidate for church membership shall publicly confess Christ as

- A. Savior, and indicate his desire for church membership by responding to the invitation at the close of any church service, or speaking to the pastor or deacons.
- B. Each candidate shall read the constitution, Statement of Faith, and by-laws, shall meet with the pastor for at least one session of membership instruction, and shall be examined by the pastor and deacons with regard to his experience of salvation and qualifications.

- C. Having received satisfactory evidence of his salvation, the deacons shall recommend the candidate for membership in the church in one of the following ways:
1. Upon *baptism* by immersion.
  2. Upon *statement of faith*, having been already immersed.
  3. Upon *letter of recommendation*. A believer of worthy Christian character who has formerly been saved and Scripturally baptized into a New Testament Bible-believing church, who is in accord with the views of faith and practice of this church, may be received upon promise of a letter.
  4. Upon *desire for restoration*. Any person who has lost his membership for any reason and has shown fruit of repentance, may be restored to membership upon recommendation of pastor and deacons and vote of the church.

#### **Section 4: Duties of Membership**

- Each member shall be expected to conduct himself/herself in daily life so as
- A. to give evidence of being possessed of the Spirit of God, and being in agreement with the Statement of Faith and Church Covenant.
  - B. Each member should attend the services of the church, including Sunday evening and Wednesday evening, and participate regularly in giving of his/her means as the Lord may prosper him.
  - C. Each member is expected to volunteer his/her services to serve within the limits of his/her ability, especially in the areas of Bible teaching, general helping, music, and evangelism.
  - D. Each member should honor, esteem, and love his pastor; pray for him fervently and daily; submit to him in Scriptural exercise of his Biblical authority; carefully heed his pulpit ministry; and manifest a regard for his reputation.
  - E. Each member shall cultivate and cherish brotherly love; visit and sympathize with the afflicted; watch out for each other's reputation; affectionately admonish one another of their faults (privately, not in gossip); and strive for their spirituality, unity, and prosperity.

## **Section 5: Discipline of Membership**

- The pastor and deacons shall constitute the discipline committee of the
- A. church.
  - B. Our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ states the Church's duty to exercise discipline, excluding from its fellowship any member who persists in sin and disobedience to God's Word. His command to exercise discipline in the church is as definite as His commands to baptize and commemorate His death by the exercise of the Lord's Table (Matthew 18:16-18). The discipline of sinning members of the church is necessary for the spiritual health and blessing of the church. It is indispensable to building truly Christian, spiritual, and victorious congregations. To surrender this duty and privilege means weakness and defeat; sin and the world will slip in and take over; the Holy Spirit will be grieved and quenched.
  - C. In case of personal differences between members of the church, the pastor and deacons shall recommend that the parties endeavor to settle their differences in the manner laid down by the Savior in Matthew 18:15-16.
  - D. Discipline of the membership shall be in the hands of the church as outlined in Matthew 18. No member shall be expelled until every effort has been made, including if physically possible, personal visits to reclaim him or her for Christ and the church.
  - E. Where charges are made against a member, the accused shall be notified personally, or by letter, of the nature of the charge, and shall be summoned to appear before the pastor and deacons to answer the charges. At least two weeks notice of such a meeting shall be given to the party involved. If the accused does not appear in response to the summons, unless a satisfactory reason is given for such non-appearance, the pastor and deacons shall recommend to the church the exclusion of such a member.

If the accused appears before the pastor and deacons, there shall be a full and fair hearing of the case, and pastor and deacons can acquit the accused if a majority of those present decide that the accused is innocent of the charges.

If, on the other hand, a majority of the deacons present vote that sufficient evidence exists, they shall recommend that the case be heard by the church.

- F. Anyone against whom charges have been made may appeal to the church for a hearing of the case before the church.
- G. If the accused has an accuser, both shall be required to appear before the pastor and deacons.
- H. The deacons are directed to move promptly in the safeguarding of the peace and purity of the church, when anyone is obstructing the work in any way.
- I. All charges must be in writing. May love and contriteness of spirit accompany all disciplinary action. Galatians 6:1, Ephesians 4:32
- J. Examples of actions requiring Biblical discipline are:

1. one brother sinning against another – Matthew 18:15-17
2. one guilty of fornication, covetousness, idolatry, railings (slander), drunkenness, extortion (swindling, robbery) – I Corinthians 5:1-13
3. one who blasphemes – I Timothy 1:20
4. one guilty of heresy – Titus 3:10
5. one who is rebellious – II Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15
6. one who causes divisions – Romans 16:17

## **Section 6: Termination of Membership**

- By *death*. The names of members who have departed from the Church
- A. Militant to the Church Triumphant shall be listed as dropped from the roll.
  - B. By *transfer of membership*. A letter of commendation to any other church of like faith and order shall be granted to any member in good and regular standing. Such a letter shall only be sent to a requesting church, and shall indicate standing in the church to date. Church action is required. Any person wishing to unite with a church other than one of like faith and order upon request of that church shall be granted a letter of dismissal.
  - C. By *voluntary withdrawal*. If a member of the church desires that his name be removed from the membership roll of this church, his request may be presented to the pastor.  
If a member of the church joins any other church without request for a letter, his membership in this church will automatically cease.
  - D. By *disciplinary action* of the deacons' committee. Church action is required (see Section 5).

## **Section 7: Special Membership Provisions**

- Inactive membership*. During the last quarter of each year, the pastor and
- A. deacons shall review the membership roll. Any member who has been habitually absent from the services of the church without due cause, and who is negligent to spiritual duties, and who does not contribute or communicate with the church, may be placed on an inactive membership list. His or her name shall only be removed from the active membership list by vote of the church, upon recommendation of the deacons. The individual shall be informed of this action. The action shall be implemented only after faithful efforts to reclaim the member. Restoration to active membership shall be by vote of the church, upon recommendation by pastor and deacons, only after there is satisfactory evidence of a renewed spiritual walk. An inactive member shall not have the privilege of voting in any of the church business meetings or holding office or positions of service until he or she has been restored.
  - B. *Non-resident members*. Non-resident members, such as missionaries, armed forces personnel, evangelists, or those seeking a New Testament Bible believing church of like faith and practice elsewhere, who desire to remain a voting member shall communicate with the church at least twice a year.

- C. *Provisional certification for service and college students.* If a student attending an area college (10 months or less) is a member of an independent, fundamental, Bible-believing church in another area, and is in regular attendance at the services of this church, he may become provisionally certified for service in our church. He must apply for certification and agree to the same standards and qualifications as members. He will not be allowed to vote or hold office, but all other privileges will be his while in attendance at this church during his college years. College students who make their home permanently in this area, married students, and students who do not have a home church as required above are urged to request regular membership in this church. The import of this status is that the student will then be able to hold positions of service, sing in the choir, etc.

## **Article VI: Church Ordinances**

### **Section 1: Baptism**

Those professing saving faith in Jesus Christ as personal Savior shall by the pastor (or in his absence, by some person designated by the church) be immersed in water in accordance with the Scriptural teaching. Immersion shall be a prerequisite to church membership (Acts 2:41, 42; 8:37). This church shall recognize only “believer’s baptism” as valid.

### **Section 2: The Lord’s Supper**

The Lord’s Supper shall normally be served to the assembled church by the pastor and deacons on the first Sunday of each month or/and at the discretion of the pastor. Since this ordinance is the Lord’s Table, none who are His shall be barred, but the pastor shall frequently state the Scriptural order from Acts 2:41-47, which places baptism as a prerequisite to communion, and shall explain the meaning of the ordinances.

## **Article VII: The Leadership of the Church**

### **Section 1: Offices and Positions**

The Biblical offices of the church shall be as follows (Philippians 1:1):

- A.
  - 1. Pastor (elder, bishop, overseer) – I Timothy 3:1-7
  - 2. Deacons – I Timothy 3:8-13
- B. Appointed positions shall be as follows:
  - 1. Church clerk
  - 2. Church treasurer
  - 3. Financial secretary
  - 4. Bible school superintendent
  - 5. Missionary chairman
  - 6. Other positions may be appointed as the need arises.

I Corinthians 12:4-6; 14:28

- C. Teaching, helping, and serving positions. (Romans 12:3:8)  
**Note:** Normally a member shall not hold more than 3 positions or offices in the church at any one time. The leadership load shall be spread to as many as possible. (I Peter 4:10-11)

## **Section 2: Qualifications for All Leadership of the Church, Bible School, and Subsidiary Organizations**

- A. Spiritual life. Only those persons who profess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and whose life gives evidence of having been genuinely born again by the Holy Spirit, may hold a place of leadership in the church.
- B. Church membership. Since all believers should Biblically identify themselves in membership with a New Testament Bible preaching church, all persons holding a place of leadership in this church must be members of this church.
- C. Exemplary life. All leaders and workers in this church are expected by God's enabling grace, to live a consistent and separated life. (Colossians 3:17, II Corinthians 6:17, Romans 12:1, 2)

All officers shall be spiritually mature, of unquestioned Christian character, loyal to the Word of God, dedicated and devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ, and to the spiritual and material welfare of this church. Their moral conduct shall be beyond reproach and free of carnal indulgences and practices such as:

Gossip	I Corinthians 12:20
Use of intoxicating beverages	Ephesians 5:18
Use of tobacco in all forms	I Corinthians 6:20
Use of narcotic drugs	

and other worldly practices which reflect against one's Christian testimony. In the light I Timothy 3, the home and family relationships must be considered, as well as individual qualifications.

- D. Faithful and conscientious ministry. All officers shall normally assume their duties of the first Sunday after the annual business meeting. Retiring officers shall hold office until the terms of newly elected officers begin. The duties of appointed positions shall begin the Sunday after their appointment is approved by the church. All officers, leaders, and workers shall be faithful and punctual in attendance and participation, both in the regular services and business meetings of the church, and in regular performing of their duties.
- E. Loyalty. All the leadership of the church is expected to be loyal to the Bible as the supreme authority in matters of faith and practice (II Timothy 3:15-17), to the doctrinal statement of this church, and to the majority will of the church congregation in its decisions and policies. Any leader unable or

unwilling to fulfill the duties of his office or position shall resign. If any officer refuses to subscribe to the Statement of Faith, the Constitution, and the Church Covenant annually, his resignation shall be required by the deacons in writing. If it is not received within one month, the office shall be declared vacant by vote of the church. Appointed positions shall not require a vote of the church.

### Section 3: Pastors

#### Senior Pastor

##### A.

##### 1. Definition of the term “Pastor”

i. Three titles in the Bible refer to the ministry of one and the same person, and suggest a Biblical concept of a New Testament “pastor”:

1. Elder (presbuteros): among Christians, those mature men who with dignity preside over the assembly. (Acts 14:23, 20:17; I Timothy 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5; I Peter 5:1, 5)
2. Bishop (episkopos): the superintendent, head, the overseer of any Christian church. (Acts 20:28; Philippians 1:1; I Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:7)
3. Pastor (posmen): the herdsman or shepherd, whose duties include tending, guiding, nourishing, cherishing, and guarding the flock. (John 21:16; Ephesians 4:11; Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2)

ii. The pastors of the New Testament churches were men with the “Shepherd Heart”. Their gift was sharing the love of the Chief Shepherd as they expressed deep concern for the needs of men individually. The term has come to represent the most cherished designation a servant of God would desire in his ministry to a local church. Thus the pastor not only presides over the assembly and superintends the overall program of the church, but tenderly guides, feeds, and cares for his flock of sheep. The term “pastor” gives depth of meaning to the ministry, and is broad enough to include the total functional ministry of the church.

2. Qualifications of the Pastor I Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:4-9

3. Authority of the Pastor

Although there is no “priestly or sacramental authority” granted to the pastor in the New Testament, since all Christians are priests unto God, there is a certain leadership authority accorded him. (I Thessalonians 5:12, 13; I Timothy 3:5, 5:17-19; Hebrews 13:7, 17)

The authority of the office grows out of the responsibility of the office. It is not ecclesiastical authority, but acknowledged as

necessary for decisive proclamation of the Word, and progressive growth of the congregation; it is given by the Word of God.

In keeping with such Scriptures as Acts 20:28; Hebrews 7:7, 17; I Thessalonians 5:12-13 and I Timothy 3:5, 5:17-19, let it be remembered that a pastor is pastor of every function, committee, and activity of the church. He shall be an *ex officio* member of all committees and organizations.

The pastor's divine call to the ministry, the gifts he has received from God, his ordination after careful and prayerful examination, and the church's call to the pastor to serve in a specific office of leadership, all combine to imply that certain prerogatives and acknowledged authority go with the office, but it is not a personal authority. Christ is the authority, and the ministry is to be performed in His name. The ministry is to be a ministry of Christ as He ministers through His servants by the wisdom and power of the Holy Spirit.

Where and when a pastor ceases to follow Christ, or if he preaches any message other than the clear teachings of the Scriptures, he has no spiritual right or authority, and should not be followed.

#### 4. Calling of a Pastor

i. As often as may be necessary in consequence of death, resignation, or removal of the pastor, the church shall without unnecessary delay, elect another to the pastorate. Careful, prayerful, and serious deliberation shall prevail, as it is the work and ministry of the Holy Spirit to call men into positions of full-time ministry, and to be involved in the placing of preachers in God's chosen field of service for them. (Acts 13:1-4)

ii. The deacons shall serve as the pulpit committee - A candidate for the pastorate shall be a Baptist minister, and shall be carefully examined by the pulpit committee as to his salvation, doctrine, Christian conduct, and call to the ministry. If he has served in other churches, his ministry there shall be explored. He shall be required to state his acceptance of and adherence to the Statement of Faith, Constitution, and the Covenant of the Church. Any differences, which he holds concerning these documents, should be submitted in writing to the pulpit committee. He shall also state in writing any differences which he holds relating to groups and associations with which this church is in fellowship.

iii. When the deacons' committee agrees upon one candidate, they shall make whatever arrangements necessary

to bring the candidate to the church to be heard. When the committee then sees fit, it shall present his name to the church to vote upon his call. It shall be the policy of the church to hear and vote upon his call. It shall be the policy of the church to hear and vote on only one candidate at a time. Public notice shall be given from the pulpit two Sunday services prior to holding such an election, and, if possible, the church clerk shall notify each active voting member of such election by mail. The vote shall be by ballot, with no absentee or write-in balloting permitted. Meetings for the consideration shall consist of not less than twenty-five (25) percent of the member entitled to vote sixteen (16) years of age or over. A three-fourths majority vote will be necessary for the passage of any resolution.

iv. If the candidate is rejected, or if he refuses the call, the committee shall seek another candidate in the same manner.

v. The prospective pastor shall be extended the courtesy of a written call and agreement, giving details of church-pastoral relationship, including salary, housing and car allowance, insurance, vacation, benefits, etc., after these matters have been discussed with the pastor and mutually approved.

vi. The deacons shall, in the absence of a regular pastor, provide for pulpit supply for all services.

#### 5. Duties of the Pastor - I and II Timothy; Titus

i. To preach the Word, “feed the flock of God”, “reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all long suffering and doctrine..., and to do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of the ministry.” (II Timothy 4:1-5; I Timothy 4:12-16)

ii. To pastor the flock by ministering to the people in sickness, distress, and trial, by praying, by caring for those weak in the faith, by officiating at occasions that normally fall to the pastor of a church such as weddings, memorial services, and the like.

iii. To preside over the gatherings of the church, to see that order is kept to act as leader in public services, to administer the ordinances with the help of the deacons, to represent the congregation in pronouncing its decisions and in general to see that “all things are done decently and in order.” (I Corinthians 14:40)

iv. To protect the name and Biblical position of the church by not allowing false doctrine to be taught and by abstaining from affiliation with all apostate and doctrinally liberal organizations. (Acts 20:28-31; Jude 3)

#### 6. Term of Office of Pastor

- i. A pastor's duration of office will be indefinite, but may be terminated at any time, by voluntary resignation, by death, or dismissal by the church.
- ii. The relationship between pastor and church may be dissolved by the resignation of the pastor. He shall give forty-five (45) days notice, unless earlier termination is mutually agreed. In case of dismissal of the pastor, he shall be granted four weeks' severance pay, and his ministry shall immediately terminate.
- iii. Action by the church to terminate the pastoral relationship should be taken only after much prayer and *only* for the most serious reasons, i.e., *immorality, dishonesty, or heresy*. A meeting for such action may be initiated only within the committee of deacons, who shall receive charges in writing. A duly called meeting of the church shall be held by mailing a letter to each voting member two weeks prior to the meeting, stating its purpose, and signed by a majority of the deacons' committee. The meeting shall be at the church. The quorum shall be twenty five (25) percent of all active membership; seventy-five (75) percent of said quorum must be in agreement by secret ballot for the pastor's dismissal.
- iv. The pastor will be willing to sign the following resolution agreeing with the church, and reaffirm it at each annual corporate meeting: "I am in agreement with the Statement of Faith, Constitution, and by-laws last adopted by our church, and will earnestly live up to the church covenant."

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signed \_\_\_\_\_

B. Associate Pastor(s)

- 1. Calling of Associate Pastors. The church may call associate pastors as deemed necessary.
- 2. Qualifications of Associate Pastors. Associate pastors shall meet the same Scriptural qualifications as the pastor, as outlined in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:4-9.
- 3. Duties of Associate Pastors. The duties of the associate pastors shall be as determined by the pastor. Such duties shall appear in writing.
- 4. Term of Office of Associate Pastors. The term of office of associate pastor shall be the same as that of the pastor, defined in Article VII, Section 3.-A.-6.

## Section 4: Deacons

### Definition of the term “deacon”

#### A.

1. In the New Testament, diaconos (servant) and diacona (service) are frequently used in a general sense. Diaconos (servant – deacon) is even used in speaking of the ministry of Christ in Romans 15:8. All work and ministry which the members of a church do for one another (including the work of pastors, evangelists, deacons, ushers, trustees, etc.) is a ministry or diacona (Ephesians 4:12; II Timothy 4:5). However, “deacon” or diaconos also is used to designate a particular ministry.
2. The deacon, in a technical sense, is one who serves – a ministering servant. He is responsible for the temporal, secular, and social cares of the church under the overall authority of the pastor. (Acts 6:1-7; Philippians 1:1; I Timothy 3:8-13)

#### B. Qualifications of a Deacon

The Christian character and qualifications of a Deacon are listed in Acts 6:1-7 and I Timothy 3:8-13. The seven in the Jerusalem church were of “honest report, full of the Holy Spirit and of wisdom”. These characteristics should be true of all who serve the Lord.

#### C. Election of Deacons

1. Term of office and number. The deacons shall be elected from among the membership of the church. A deacon must be 21 years of age or over. There shall be a minimum of three deacons; one to serve one year, one to serve two years, and one to serve for three years. Thereafter, one to be elected annually to serve for three years. More may be added to the committee, as the needs of the congregation expand, such number to be determined by the pastor and deacons’ committee. Any deacons, over a multiple of three (3, 6, 9, 12, etc), shall be elected for only one year.

Example: If the deacons are to equal 4, and 2 have unexpired terms, and 2 are to be chosen, one deacon shall be elected for 3 years, and the deacon nominee with the second highest number of votes shall be elected for 1 year.

In the case of a vacancy during the year, a deacon may be appointed by the pastor and deacons’ committee to fill the vacancy until the next annual election. During the times when the fiscal year of the church is being changed and during these times only, the terms of the deacons remaining on the board and those who are newly elected are to be extended by a period of time corresponding to that necessitated by the shifting to the new fiscal year.

2. Procedure of election. The deacons shall be nominated in the following manner, so that all members have equal opportunity to

nominate. Four weeks previous to the annual corporate meeting, the pastor shall prepare and mail to each voting member on the roll, a letter stating the Scriptural qualifications for the office of deacon. Each active voting member of sixteen (16) years of age and over shall then prepare a list of those men whom the member believes so qualified. Any number of names may be listed. The member shall then sign the list and hand it to the pastor no later than two (2) Sundays previous to the corporate meeting. The pastor and deacons shall then determine the names appearing the greatest number of times, and unanimously approve those filling spiritual qualifications, and offer to the church no more than two such names, except in the case of a tie, for each deacon to be determined. Nominations may not be made from the floor at the time of the meeting. All lists will be filed with the clerk and kept for one year. All voting will be by ballot by active members, sixteen (16) years of age and over. In the event there are not three qualified men to fill the office of deacon, other men or women may be elected to fill in as trustees as required by the State Corporation Law. Women shall never serve as deacons or pastor of this church.

3. In case a deacon is dismissed or put on the inactive membership of the church, his office as deacon and any other responsibilities he may have shall cease.

#### D. Duties of the Deacons

1. The deaconship is dishonored when it is regarded as a post of honor rather than of ministry. Service carries with it honor, but in the church, as elsewhere, service goes before honor, and real honor comes only from service. Avoid thinking of the deacons' committee as a board of directors, ruling elders, or managing directors.
2. The deacons and the pastor. It is the essential nature of the deacons' office that it shall shield the pastor and protect him so that he may fulfill his distinct and peculiar function of prayer and ministry of the Word of God (Acts 6:24). Discerning deacons will always find their highest usefulness in such an intelligent and understanding support of the pastor as will set him free for his sacred ministry. Every pastor must have some discerning spiritual men on whom he can lean. When he is weary in toil, when he faces difficult problems, when the battle goes hard, he needs this inner group of prayerful deacons who know, love, and understand. These deacons immeasurably enrich the pastor, and, in return, receive grace for grace.
3. The deacons shall:
  - i. Aid the pastor in superintending the temporal affairs of the church, caring for the material and secular affairs (i.e., grounds and building and upkeep, financial matters, janitorial needs, social needs, etc.)

- ii. Assist the pastor in the preparation and distribution of the elements at the Lord's Table, and in the administration of Believer's Baptism.
- iii. Actively participate in the ministry of visitation, evangelism, and soul-winning. In no way can the deaconship be more truly vindicated and honored than in perennial soul-winning effort. Examples: deacons Stephen and Phillip in Acts 6-8.
- iv. Advise the church in all matters of church membership and disciplinary action as outlined in Article V.
- v. Be responsible for the ministry of visiting and caring for the widows, the needy, and sick of the congregation and the community.
- vi. Act as the missionary committee and concern themselves with the ministry of world-wide missions at home and abroad. As well as praying for missions, they should by example and precept help lead the congregation in a program of consistent, sacrificial giving to missions.
- vii. Be responsible for administering the details of the church's educational, recreational, and social programs.
- viii. Trustee responsibilities of deacons. In agreement with the provisions of the "Act of Incorporation" and the laws of the state of New York, the deacons shall act as trustees representing the church as its agents. All elected deacons shall serve as trustees. One member of the deacons shall be elected at the annual corporate meeting to act in the capacity as "chairman of trustees" for corporate business and matters pertaining to the state.

## **Section 5: Appointed Office Positions**

### Determination of Appointed Positions

A.

1. Whereas in Acts 6:2, 3 the people of the congregation elected "seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom" to "serve tables" (eg. Receive collections, distribute to needy, administer the details, keep accurate accounts, disperse the funds) and whereas the apostles in turn "appointed" (Acts 6:3) out of the seven men certain ones to care for certain jobs, the following procedure will be used for determining who fills the office positions:

The positions of church clerk, treasurer, financial secretary, Sunday School superintendent, missionary chairman, etc., shall be appointed by the pastor at the first deacons' meeting after the annual corporate election for the approval of the deacons, subject to the approval of the church at a special business meeting. If possible, these positions will be filled by deacons. All persons other than deacons appointed

to these positions may, upon request, meet with the deacons in an advisory capacity, but are not part of the deacons' committee. The church clerk shall always be a deacon. The pastor may in certain cases ask the deacons to vote and determine who will fill a position.

## B. Qualifications

1. All appointed to a specific position must possess, in some degree, natural gifts for the job and meet the spiritual qualifications listed in Article VII, Section 2. All appointments to positions terminate at the special business meeting following the annual meeting of the church, which is called no later than four weeks from the date of the annual meeting, for the purpose of approval by the church body of newly appointed officers. Appointments must be reinstated or new appointments made each year. New positions may be established as the need arises, recommended by the pastor, and approved by the deacons. It will be understood that holding a position one year does not mean the same person will hold the same position the next year. Jobs will be circulated.

## C. Duties of Appointed Positions

### 1. Church Clerk

- i. The church clerk shall have charge of the official correspondence and shall keep a record of all minutes of the meetings in a bound book. The clerk shall perform such other duties as properly belong to the office, making an annual report to the church. The clerk shall keep in the bound book a record of the membership, of baptisms, and of the reception and dismissal of members.
- ii. The clerk shall provide the financial secretary and the treasurer promptly with a transcript of the minutes of the church business meetings in which authority is granted for the disbursement or transfer of funds.
- iii. The clerk shall certify annually to the bank the persons authorized to have access to the safety deposit boxes and to sign the checks for disbursement of funds.
- iv. The clerk shall keep all records, files, and/or other papers belonging to the church in the church office, and shall be sure that all documents are complete to the date of retirement or removal from the position.
- v. The clerk shall be the official church historian.
- vi. The clerk shall write all letters pertaining to the church membership whenever necessary.

### 2. Financial Secretary

- i. It shall be the duty of the financial secretary, together with one or more of the deacons, to count and record in a permanent record, all monies received in the offerings of the church. This shall be done following each service of the church.

- ii. Records shall be kept in accordance with written instructions issued by the auditing committee and approved by the deacons' committee.
- iii. The financial secretary shall be responsible for depositing all funds in the bank, including monies received from subsidiary organizations within the church or from individuals.
- iv. The financial secretary shall provide the treasurer with a record of all monies received and deposited, specifying the distribution into the various funds and by special offerings. He shall provide an annual report of total giving to the church.
- v. The chairman of the deacons shall assume the duties of the financial secretary in the absence of the latter, except that he may not assume the duties of the treasurer as outlines in Section 5.C.3 simultaneously.
- vi. The financial secretary shall keep a record of individual giving according to such system as established by the deacons.

### 3. Church Treasurer

- i. The treasurer shall be responsible for the accurate recording of all financial transactions in permanent records and shall provide printed reports monthly and annually for the deacon's committee and the congregation.
- ii. The treasurer shall pay all bills of the church that have been approved by the congregation in the annual budget. He shall be responsible for the writing, signing, recording, and mailing of all checks. The chairman of the deacons shall assume the responsibility of signing checks in the absence of the treasurer, except he shall not perform the duties of the financial secretary as outlined in Section 5.C.2 simultaneously.
- iii. The treasurer shall keep the books and records and report the financial transactions in accordance with written instructions issued by the auditing committee and approved by the deacons' committee.
- iv. The treasurer shall be responsible to keep all expenditures within the limits of the annual budget in each area of the budget, except when authorized to exceed limit by vote of the church upon recommendation of the deacons or Article X, Section 3.
- v. The treasurer shall submit the records to a special auditing committee or certified public accountant as designated by the deacons' committee. This shall be done prior to the annual meeting.

### 4. Sunday School Superintendent and Departmental Superintendents

- i. The superintendent shall have general supervision over the Sunday School, teachers, and positions. He shall carry out the program established by the pastor and deacons and shall report annually to the church.
- ii. The pastor and Sunday School superintendent, after conferring with departmental superintendents, will appoint all teachers, helpers, and other positions for the Sunday bible school and training hour, in consultation with the deacons in special cases.
- iii. Only the pastor and deacons shall approve curriculum materials. Superintendents may make recommendations as to changes. Teachers will use only such materials which are approved.

## **Section 6: Teachers, Helpers, Workers for the Family Hour, and Subsidiary Organizations**

A. The following “Leadership Standard of Agreement” (in addition to the leadership qualifications of Article VII, Section 2) shall be agreed to by all prospective teachers, helpers, and workers, and each shall be willing to reaffirm it annually:

- 1. Faithful Attendance to all the public services of the church. If leaders fail to show consistent interest in the church, it naturally follows that the interest of their students will also lag.
- 2. Strict adherence to the church’s policy concerning personal separation from worldly amusements and evidences of worldliness, such as the use of tobacco, gambling, dancing, and drinking alcoholic beverages of any kind, gossiping and other practices which reflect against one’s Christian testimony.
- 3. Giving the tithe as commanded in Scripture, except where the individual has no control of his funds.
- 4. Loyalty to the doctrinal statement, policies, decisions, and the entire program of Latham Bible Baptist Church. It is expected that if the time comes when such a person in leadership can no longer give such loyalty, he will voluntarily resign.
- 5. Faithful and punctual attendance to Sunday School (15 minutes early for teachers to greet pupils). Ample notice must be given to the responsible superintendent if a teacher is ill and absolutely unable to teach.
- 6. Faithful attendance to the weekly teachers’ meeting if a teacher helper, or superintendant.
- 7. A regular weekly time of visitation will be attempted on behalf of Sunday School class or family training hour group.

NOTE: It is understood that the pastor and deacons are charged with the responsibility of interpreting the spirit of, and acceptable variations

from, this standard as it applies to the leadership for the benefit of the individual and of this church and Bible school as a whole  
Colossians 3:17                      II Corinthians 6:17

- B. The pastor shall carefully examine each candidate for an office, or appointed or serving positions (the Sunday School superintendents the same for teachers), as to the person's spiritual and natural qualifications before any responsibilities are assumed.  
A leadership questionnaire form may be used at the discretion of the pastor and deacons. All shall agree to and be willing to affirm annually the following statement

I hearby declare myself to be in full agreement with the Statement of Faith, the church constitution, and by-laws last adopted by the Latham Bible Baptist Church, and will earnestly live up to the "Leadership Standard of Agreement" and the covenant of faith, and will be willing to reaffirm this position once a year.

Date \_\_\_\_\_ Signed \_\_\_\_\_

- C. A Hospitality Sunshine Committee shall be appointed each year and approved by the deacons to care for some of the secular, material, and other miscellaneous details of the church. (Romans 16:1,2; Philippians 4:3)  
The committee shall normally consist of five ladies and serve for a term of one year. Their duties shall be to:
1. Act as the hospitality committee, arranging for the meals and housing with families of the congregation for guest speakers and missionaries.
  2. Act as the sunshine and flower committee, visiting the sick, the bereaved, and shut-ins.
  3. Be responsible in part for the kitchen aspect for social activities of the church (fellowship suppers, etc.)
  4. Lead the way and set the example in winning others to Christ.

## **Article VIII: Church Missionary Policy**

### **Section 1**

The Lord's commissioning order to the church makes it imperative that a vigorous and balanced worldwide program of missionary endeavor be supported. The local church is the biblical center of missionary activity. It is responsible for:

Missionary cultivation	Acts 13:1-4
Missionary commissioning	Philippians 4:14-18
Missionary care	Acts 14:23-28
Missionary control	Acts 15:25-28

## **Section 2**

It shall be the policy of this church to support only missions engaged principally in evangelization and the establishing of New Testament Bible churches. They shall be in hearty agreement with our Confession of Faith, both in doctrine and practice, and be Baptist in policy (to be qualified only by recommendation of pastor and deacons to the church for approval).

Percentage of giving shall be designated in the annual missionary budget for regular monthly commitments. Other special offerings for missionaries can be so designated by approval of the deacons by the Sunday School or missionary groups. These offerings will be dispersed through the church treasurer.

## **Section 3**

The missionary committee shall consist of the pastor, deacons, and missionary chairman, and shall be responsible for recommending to the church missionaries for a vote of support, and suggesting projects for the missionaries. The deacons may establish a smaller committee to plan and operate the annual missionary conference.

## **Section 4: Selection of a Candidate as an Approved Missionary to the Church**

- To become an approved missionary of the church, a person must be an
- A. active member of an Independent Baptist church, in good standing.
  - B. A person must be an acceptable candidate for the mission field be a regularly recognized and properly functioning mission board
    - a. It must be a board that practices believer's baptism by immersion in all its works.
    - b. It must be a board that guarantees that the personal support given by our church will go to said missionary.
    - c. It must be a board that is not in fellowship with the World Council of Churches, the National Council of Churches, or other groups which are all-inclusive and not in conformity with our policy and doctrines.
    - d. It must be a board whose doctrine is in conformity with that of our church doctrinal statement.
  - C. The candidate for the mission field will normally present his work to the church congregation and appear before the missionary committee in person for testimony and questioning. The candidate must ascribe to the statement of faith of our church, and declare himself in sympathy with the stand of the church and its ministry.
  - D. Those whom the missionary committee feels led to recommend to the church for support, will be voted on at any regular or special business meeting of the church. A three-fourths vote of the members present shall be required to make a person an approved missionary of the church.

## **Section 5: Support of a Missionary (Philippians 4:14-18)**

- The support will begin immediately while the missionary is doing
- A. deputational work before going to the field.
  - B. No missionary shall be regularly supported by the church whose full support has already been guaranteed by any individual or group.
  - C. The church reserves the right to request explanation of a missionary 's first year of service on the field, and request recall of the missionary by the missions board if such action is deemed necessary. Furthermore, if these actions are unsatisfactory, the church reserves the right to dismiss him as our missionary and to discontinue his support if it seems imperative. A majority vote by secret ballot of the members present at any regularly called business meeting of the church shall be necessary to make such a decision.
  - D. The approval and support of any regularly chosen missionary shall cease at once if such missionary transfers to another missionary organization, transfers to independent work, resigns, or is dismissed. To reinstate such a missionary, the usual procedure for new missionaries shall be followed. A missionary who changes his field of service or the type of his ministry shall send official notification to the church stating the reason why and any other particulars, otherwise his support shall cease.

## **Article IX: Business Meetings**

### **Section 1: Annual Business Meeting**

The fiscal year of the Latham Bible Baptist Church and all of its ministries shall begin on July 1, and end on June 30 of the following calendar year. There shall be an annual meeting of the church on the third Tuesday (or such day as is available) of July, to elect deacons, hear annual reports, and transact other business. The annual budget will be presented and approved.

### **Section 2: Annual Corporate Meeting**

The corporate business meeting shall be held following the annual business meeting. It shall be held in accordance with the laws of the State of New York, relating to the conduct of Baptist Churches. The congregation shall by vote of those 21 years of age and over, pass a resolution declaring the deacons to be the trustees of the church. One of these deacons shall be elected as the “chairman of the trustees” for corporate business and matters pertaining to the state.

### **Section 3: Regular Business Meetings**

Regular business meetings may be called at any time to be held at any of the three regular services (Sunday AM, PM, Wed PM) providing public announcement has been made at three preceding public services. The church shall hear and act upon recommendations from the pastor and deacons, and vote on all expenditures for the church over and above the budget approved at the annual meeting

### **Section 4: Special Business Meetings**

Special business meetings may be called relating to the purpose of calling or dismissal of a pastor or missionary, and/or corporate business or discipline of a member. These meeting shall be given public announcement for two preceding Sundays. Such meetings may be called by the pastor, by the majority vote of the deacons, or by any ten unrelated members of the church, who request such a meeting of the clerk, provided the particular reason or reasons for the meeting are clearly stated in the notice. At such meetings, 25 per cent of the active voting members shall constitute a quorum. No other business shall be transacted in such a meeting.

### **Section 5: Monthly Financial Reports**

The treasurer shall submit a financial report to the church at the second Wednesday evening each month of the preceding months expenditures. A vote of acceptance will be recorded in the minutes.

### **Section 6: Deacons Meetings**

Regular monthly meeting will be held on the second Tuesday of the month, or a time agreeable to all the deacons and pastor(s). Any member of the church may attend the deacons’ meeting be request, except in instances involving personalities or

confidential matters. Special meetings may be called by the pastor and/or chairman of the deacon's committee.

### **Section 7: Order of Meetings**

In the conduct of business, rules contained in *Robert's Rules of Order* will

- A. govern all cases to which they apply.
- B. The pastor shall moderate all business meetings of the church. In the absences of the pastor, or when deemed necessary by the pastor, the chairman of the deacons shall moderate the meetings.
- C. All voting members of the church for pastor, deacons, for such matters listed under Article IX, Section 4, and controversial issues, shall by secret ballot at the church premises.
- D. The quorum for all normal business shall be twenty-five (25) percent of its active membership.
- E. All business sessions shall be opened and closed with prayer.
- F. The voting age for all business meetings, except the corporate meetings, is 16 years of age.

## **Article X: Church Financial Policy**

### **Section 1**

All monies are to be received and recorded by the financial secretary and appointed deacons. All monies shall be banked by the financial secretary and/or his designated assistants. All monies will be disbursed by the treasurer and/or his assistants. All checks must have two authorized signatures. See Article VII, Section 5-C, for definition of authorized signature.

### **Section 2**

A financial budget shall be presented at each annual meeting by the deacons proposing the estimated accounts for the Bible School, missions, and the general finances for the coming year.

### **Section 3**

The actual operation of the budget will be under the direction of the deacons, who may adjust the monthly budget category amounts within the allotted annual budget, up to \$500.00 per month. All other expenditures over budget will be taken to the church for approval by majority vote.

### **Section 4**

The deacons shall have no authority to sell, lease, give away, or dispose of in any manner, church property to exceed five hundred dollars (500.00) without the express will of the church given by majority vote at a regularly called business meeting, nor shall mortgage or encumber the same in debt to exceed the same amount without corporate action of the church.

### **Section 5**

The financial books shall be audited at the close of each year by a special committee or auditing firm, and a report thereof submitted at the annual meeting

### **Section 6: Designated Funds**

- All benevolent money designated by the donor to a specific individual or
- A. orthodox cause shall be applied as designated. Any money designated for a missionary, missionary agency, or other cause **not** in agreement with our statement of faith or constitution shall be kindly refused and returned to the donor.
  - B. Designated gifts to any missionary regularly supported from the funds of the church shall be considered as over and above such support of the missionary. Such donation of gifts should be considered over and above his tithe, which is considered the “storehouse”
  - C. At the end of each quarter, the deacons shall review balances of designated funds, and re-allocate any surplus funds (i.e. funds which are left after making

designated expenditures) to other budget needs. All other designated funds which remain after three months shall be returned to the donors, if the need no longer exists.

### **Section 7**

Special offering will be taken from time to time as the needs arise. The receipts from these will be forwarded or give, as the case may be, to the person or cause for which the special offering was taken.

### **Section 8**

The use of the church building shall be under the direction of the pastor and deacons, or if question, by vote of the church.

### **Section 9**

Emergency expenditures relating to grounds and building, etc., shall be at the discretion of the deacons.

## **Article XI: Dissolution**

In the event of the dissolution of this church (or corporation), all of its debts shall be fully satisfied. None of its assets or holdings shall be divided among the members, or other individuals, but shall be irrevocably designated by corporate vote, prior to dissolution, to such nonprofit religious corporations as are in agreement with the letter and spirit of the articles of faith adopted by this church.

## **Article XII: Amendments**

This constitution may not be altered or amended except that said alteration or amendment be presented in writing, and signed by its author at a regular called business meeting; action to be taken at the next regular business session. Amendment shall be mailed to church membership not later than two weeks preceding business meeting in which action is to be taken. Announcement of amendment shall be made at both Sunday services immediately preceding said meeting. Alteration or amendment subject to a three-quarter affirmative vote, a quorum being present.

NOTE: Article XIII, (Statement of Faith), and Article V, Section 2-A, (Membership Requirements) shall not be amended.

## Article XIII: Confession of Faith

### 1. Holy Scriptures

We believe that the Holy Bible, as originally written, was verbally inspired by God, and the product of Spirit-controlled men, and therefore has truth without admixture of error for its matter. We believe that it is the true center of Christian union, and the only infallible rule for all human conduct, creeds, and opinions.

II Timothy 3:16

II Peter 1:19

### 2. God

We believe that there is only one living and true God, infinite in every excellence; that in the unity of the Godhead there are three distinct Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; yet one in substance, and equal in every divine perfection.

Exodus 20:2-3

I Corinthians 8:6

I John 5:7

We believe in the absolute deity of the Son, the Lord Jesus Christ; that He was divine as no other man can be, being God of very God, existing from all eternity, co-equal with the Father and the Holy Spirit; that He never ceased to be God for one instant; and that His humiliation did not consist in laying aside His deity; that as man He was miraculously begotten of the Holy Ghost and born of the virgin Mary.

John 1:1-2

I John 5:20

Matthew 1:20

Luke 1:26-28

We believe that the Holy Spirit is a Divine Person, equal with the Father and Son, and of the same substance and nature; that He convicts of sin, righteousness and judgement, bears witness to the truth, is the Agent of the new birth; and that He seals, endues, guides, teaches, witnesses to, sanctifies, and helps the believer, indwelling every true child of God

II Corinthians 13:14

John 14:16-17

Romans 8:14-27

### 3. Satan

We believe in the distinct personality of Satan, that he is the unholy god of this age, author of all powers of darkness and sin, and is destined to the judgement of an eternal justice in the Lake of Fire.

Matthew 4:1-3

II Corinthians 4:4

Revelations 20:10

### 4. Creation

We believe that God created the heavens and the earth, including all life, "each after its own kind" by direct creation, in accordance with the Genesis account, and not by the process of evolution

Genesis 1:2  
John 1:3

Colossians 1:16-17

5. Fall of Man

We believe that man, in the person of the first Adam, was created in innocence, but by voluntary transgression fell into sin, this plunging the whole race into condemnation and death, so that now all mankind is born in sin, and shaped in iniquity, and become willful sinners with the first expression of personal choice, and so are without excuse before God.

Genesis 3

Romans 5:10-19

6. Salvation by Grace

We believe that faith in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ is the only condition of salvation from sin, and this salvation is wholly by grace; that no works, however good, make that salvation more secure.

Acts 16:31

Ephesians 2:8-9

Titus 3:5-7

Romans 10:9-13

7. Redemption from Sin

We believe that the only escape from the condemnation of sin is through the redemption wrought by Jesus Christ, Who, by the appointment of the Father, freely took upon Him the form and likeness of man, yet without sin, and honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and by His death made a full and vicarious atonement for our sins; that His atonement consisted not in setting us an example by His death as a martyr, but was voluntary substitution of Himself in the sinners' place, the just dying for the unjust; Christ the Lord bearing our sin in His own body on the tree; that, having risen from the dead, He is now exalted in Heaven, and uniting in His wonderful Person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfection, He is in every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate and an all-sufficient Savior.

John 1:1-3;14

John 3:7,16

Romans 3:24-25

Matthew 18:11

Philippians 2:7

Hebrews 10:4-14

Hebrews 2:4

Acts 16:30-33

Acts 15:11

Ephesians 2:8

Isaiah 53:4-7

I John 4:10

I Corinthians 15:3

II Corinthians 5:21

8. The Church

We believe that the church universal is a New Testament institution, unknown to the Old Testament prophets; established by Jesus Christ, Who is its sole Head; revealed through the Holy Spirit; His "body" for service, and His "bride" for glory. It began with the New Testament saints, and will be consummated at the coming of Christ in the Rapture

Ephesians 1:22-23

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

Matthew 16:18  
Acts 2:41,47, 15:41  
I Corinthians 12:12-28

Acts 1:8, 2:1-13  
Romans 16:26  
Ephesians 3:21, 5:23-33

We believe that the church universal is manifest through the local church which is a congregation of immersed believers, associated by the covenant of faith and the fellowship of the Gospel; observing the ordinances of Christ; governed by His laws exercising the gifts, rights and privileges invested in it by His Word; that its officers are bishops (pastors or elders) and deacons; that it has absolute right of self-government directed by the Holy Spirit, and it is answerable only to Christ; and that in all matters of membership, policy, government, discipline, and benevolence, the will of the local church is final.

Matthew 18:15-17  
I Corinthians 7:17, 11:16

I Corinthians 1:2, 6:4-5  
I Timothy 3:1-15

#### 9. Ordinances

We believe that there are two (2) ordinances: baptism and the Lord's Supper.

Baptism is the immersion of the believer in water, and is properly called "believer's baptism." It sets forth, in a beautiful and solemn way, our faith in a crucified buried, and risen Savior, with the effects of that faith in our lives as it produces death to sin and resurrection to a new life. Baptism is a prerequisite to the privileges of church relation.

The Lord's Supper is the commemoration of our Lord's death "until he comes," and our continual fellowship with Him; it should be preceded by careful self-examination.

Acts 8:36-39  
I Corinthians 11:23-32

Romans 6:3-5

#### 10. Righteous and Wicked

We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked; that only such as through faith are justified in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and sanctified by the Spirit of God, are truly righteous in God's esteem; while all such who continue in impenitence and unbelief are in the His sight wicked, and under the curse; and that this distinction holds among men both during life, and death, in the everlasting conscious suffering of the lost in literal Hell.

Romans 6:17-23  
Colossians 1:5  
John 14:2-3

Matthew 25:41  
Revelations 21:8  
Revelations 20:10

#### 11. The Return of Christ

We believe in the imminent, bodily, personal, premillennial return of Jesus Christ; that He will come before the seven-year tribulation period to catch away His Church, coming only into the air; and that He will come with His Church at the close of the tribulation to judge the living nations and to set up His Kingdom on earth.

I Thessalonians 4:13-18

Matthew 25:31-46

Revelations 19:11-21

## 12. The Resurrection

We believe in the resurrection of the bodies of the dead; that the believers asleep in Jesus will be raised at the coming of Christ for His Church, and will be caught up with transformed saints to meet the Lord in the air; and that the wicked dead will be raised at the close of the millennial kingdom, and stand in their bodies at the Great White Throne of Judgment to receive their final doom.

John 5:21-30

I Thessalonians 4:15

Revelations 7:9-17

Revelations 20:11-15

## 13. Civil Government

We believe that civil government is of divine appointment for the interest and good order of human society; that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored and obeyed, except in the things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, Who is the only Lord of the conscience and the coming Prince of the kings of the earth.

Romans 13:1-7

II Samuel 23:3

Exodus 18:21-22

Acts 23:5

Matthew 22:21

Acts 5:20; 4:19-20

Daniel 3:17-18

## **Latham Bible Baptist Church Covenant**

Having received the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Savior, and on the public testimony of our faith in Him, having been immersed, we do now covenant with each other as one body in Christ by the aid of the Holy Spirit, the following:

- To walk together in Christian love;
- To strive for the advancement of the church knowledge, holiness and comfort;
- To promote its spirituality and prosperity;
- To sustain scriptural worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines;
- To give the church sacred pre-eminence over all institutions of human origin;
- 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 through all nations.

We also engage

- To maintain family and secret devotions;
- To educate our children in the Lord;
- To seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances;
- To walk circumspectly in the world;
- To be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our manner of living;
- To avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger;
- To abstain from the sale and use of intoxicating drinks as a beverage;
- To be zealous in our efforts to maintain a testimony for the cause of Christ

We further engage

- To watch over one another in brotherly love;
- To remember each other in prayer;
- To aid each other 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, mindful of the rules of our Savior, to secure it without delay.

Moreover, we engage that, when we remove from this place, we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church where we can live out the spirit of this covenant and principles and practices of the New Testament.