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Church Bylaws

Revised and Approved by Church Vote on

November 23, 2014

Last Amended by Church Vote on

May 22, 2022

Clerical Amendment on

March 16, 2023

Amendments/Addendums

Elder Request 3/16/23 – (Clerical Amendment)

- **Amendment to Preamble (Paragraph 1) - Changed the name of Johnston Baptist Association to Triangle East Baptist Association (Church Vote not needed for clerical change)**

Approved 5/22/22 by in-person member vote:

Addendums to Article 5:

- **Section 5.2 (Matters of Human Sexuality) – Added a. Gender and Sexual Identity (points a, b, & c)**
- **Section 5.3 (Marriage & Divorce) – Added points a & b**
- **Section 5.4 (Family and Church Relationships) – Added point a**

REPEAL OF CONFLICTING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES - Upon adoption of these Bylaws, all previously adopted policies and procedures in conflict with these Bylaws are repealed.

Approved 8/23/2020 by in-person member vote: Article 12 – Electronic Voting/Teleconferencing

Electronic voting, ~~or any other kind of absentee or proxy voting,~~ is not allowed for church-wide votes unless the elders determine there is an emergency or public health event where a majority of the congregation cannot meet. ~~However, for those meetings in-person, only~~ Only those who are present at the church-wide business meeting are entitled to vote on any motions presented at the in-person meeting.

**BYLAWS
FOR
HOCUTT BAPTIST CHURCH
OF
CLAYTON, NORTH CAROLINA**

PREAMBLE

As a Bible-believing church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, the congregation at Hocutt Baptist Church (herein also referred to as “the church” or “Hocutt Baptist”) has established these bylaws for the preservation and security of the principles of our faith. These bylaws seek to establish procedures for the orderly administration of the church. Hocutt Baptist exists as an autonomous, elder-led body of believers. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation, which are common among Baptist churches. Insofar as is practical and so long as doctrinal unity remains intact, this church will cooperate with and support the Triangle East Baptist Association, the North Carolina Baptist State Convention, and the Southern Baptist Convention.

With the 2014 revisions to this document, two previous governing documents of the church – the church constitution and the church bylaws - were combined in one document, now referred to as the church bylaws.

ARTICLE 1 – CHURCH NAME

This congregation of Christian believers shall be known as the Hocutt Baptist Church. The church is headquartered in the town of Clayton, North Carolina in Johnston County.

ARTICLE 2 – CHURCH PURPOSES

SECTION 2.1 - PRIMARY PURPOSES

Being led by the Holy Spirit under the Lordship of Jesus Christ, we the members of Hocutt Baptist seek to glorify God by “Growing Biblically, Connecting Locally, and Reaching Globally”. In doing so, our purposes are to worship God in Spirit and in Truth; evangelize the lost; enjoy Christian fellowship together; minister to those in need; and disciple members to a greater Christian maturity.

Worship God - Hebrews 12:28-29

True worship is single-minded, unhindered, unqualified concentration on God the Father, Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, and the Holy Spirit as our Comforter and Guide, resulting in praise and exultation of the God.

Evangelize the Lost - Matthew 28:18-20

Evangelism is the purposeful participation of individual believers and the church in God’s plan of salvation for sinful man. This means we are to “go” and “tell” the good news of Jesus Christ to lost people around the world. The Gospel message should be central to all activities of the church.

Fellowship Together - Acts 2:44-47

Pure Christian fellowship is a powerful testimony to the unsaved world. Fellowship shows the power of a resurrected Savior. Fellowship binds and holds Christ’s church together.

Minister to Those in Need - Matthew 20:25-28

Ministry is having the heart of a servant. It is seeking to identify oneself with Jesus. When we do this as a church, we will meet the needs of all people, no matter where they are or what their condition. The church will please God only when it seeks to serve. Jesus said, "I have come not to be served, but to serve." The church should have the same attitude.

Disciple Members - Matthew 28:18-20

As followers of Jesus Christ, we are also disciple-makers and as such, should live our lives in a state of continual learning and growing. The church needs to keep obeying that which Jesus commanded. His ideas, words, and commands are what the church should teach to every member and prospective member.

Activities of the church in carrying out its mission may include, but are not limited to: holding regular and specially called worship services and meetings; establishing new ministries; planting new churches; purchasing and constructing buildings for worship and educational activities; sending and receiving Christian missionaries; administering benevolence assistance within the church and the community; and supporting like-minded Christian ministries.

SECTION 2.2 - NONPROFIT TAX-EXEMPT PROVISIONS

Hocutt Baptist is organized as a church exclusively for the charitable, religious, and educational purposes set forth in *Section 501(c)(3)* of the Internal Revenue Code. As such, no part of the church's earnings shall inure to the benefit of any church member, church leader, or other individual, except to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payment and distribution in furtherance of the purposes set forth in these bylaws. Church members have no contract, property, or civil legal rights in the property or other ministry affairs of the church.

ARTICLE 3 – CHURCH POLITY

Hocutt Baptist Church is committed to being Biblical in all aspects of its administration and worship. As such, the Bible is the standard that controls all church matters. For the purposes of interpreting Scripture, the church will rely on the word-for-word translations of Scripture that most closely match the original text. If interpretations differ based on the use of two word-for-word translations of Scripture, the New American Standard Version of the Bible shall be used as the official text to resolve interpretation issues. The church elders shall be the final authority on the correct interpretation of Scripture for Hocutt Baptist Church.

As we seek to follow and obey Jesus Christ, our Lord, we affirm that the Bible sets apart two positions in the church to be ordained, the pastors/elders to lead and the deacons to serve the church and assist the elders. Therefore, in all matters of church administration, the elders shall lead, the deacons shall serve and assist, and the congregation shall support and participate in the work of the church in carrying out its purposes.

This congregation shall function not as a pure democracy, but as a body under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ and the direction of the church elders. Determinations of the internal affairs of this church are ecclesiastical matters and shall be determined exclusively by the church's own rules and procedures. The church elders shall oversee and/or conduct all aspects of the church.

ARTICLE 4 - CHURCH ORDINANCES

As a constant memorial to our Christian faith and worship, our church will periodically observe the two New Testament church ordinances: the ordinance of baptism and the ordinance of communion (also called the Lord's Supper).

ARTICLE 5 – STATEMENT OF FAITH

SECTION 5.1 - GENERAL STATEMENT

As a member church of the Southern Baptist Convention, we affirm the “Baptist Faith and Message” as adopted in June 2000 by the Convention. This Statement of Faith addresses most aspects of the Christian worldview, including specific belief statements about the Scriptures, God, Man, Salvation, God's Purpose of Grace, the Church, Baptism, the Lord's Supper, the Lord's Day, the Kingdom, Last Things, Evangelism and Missions, Education, Stewardship, Cooperation, the Social Order, Peace and War, Religious Liberty, and the Family. A copy of the “Baptist Faith and Message” can be obtained by visiting the church office or the Southern Baptist Convention website at www.sbc.net.

Because some doctrinal issues are more problematic to the church in our modern society, the church has also adopted some specific statements of faith as summarized below to more completely express the church's stance of certain issues of our day.

SECTION 5.2 - MATTERS OF HUMAN SEXUALITY

We believe that the only true Scriptural (Biblical) marriage is the joining of one man and one woman. (Genesis 2:24; Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:10; Ephesians 5:22-23). We believe that God has commanded that Christians are not to engage in any intimate sexual activity outside of the Biblical marriage covenant. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex. (Genesis 2:24; Genesis 19:5, 13; Leviticus 18:1-30; Romans 1:26-32; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 6:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4). We also believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance. While the church understands that people genuinely struggle with issues of sexual perversion and we are definitely willing to help those who come to the church seeking freedom from these strongholds, there must be restrictions on who we accept into our membership to preserve the purity and witness of the church. Anyone who is openly engaged in sexually immoral activities and refuses to repent is not eligible for church membership and is subject to immediate termination of church membership if already a member. The church shall not host or conduct ceremonies, or in any other way recognize as legitimate, any marriage other than the joining of one man and one woman.

a. GENDER AND SEXUAL IDENTITY

- a. We believe that God loves all people and that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, truth, and dignity and no one is beyond the redemption of the Gospel. 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 the Hocutt Baptist Church (HBC). We do not believe that calling people to repentance and faith in Jesus Christ constitutes hateful or harassing behavior.
- b. God is the creator of all things and the author of human life. God created man and woman in His image and likeness, with equal dignity and value, but with distinction in design and function. Mankind, comprising male and female together, uniquely reflects the image of God on earth. A person's gender (birth sex) is determined at conception at the chromosomal level. Attempting to alter one's gender (birth sex) is contrary to God's design, distorts His image that we bear before the world, and is ultimately detrimental to the person's well-being. HBC will only recognize the two genders listed as male and female as recorded in scripture.
- c. Therefore, in any HBC church related service or function, on campus property or at any remote physical and digital location which individuals will be separated into gender groups (such as camp or small groups) children, students, and adults will be assigned to the gender group of their birth sex, male with male and female with female. If someone identifies in a gender role that is not of his/her birth sex, neither the church or any of its agents will recognize the individuals' designation as it is contrary to scripture.

SECTION 5.3 – MARRIAGE AND DIVORCE

We believe that the idea and institution of marriage originated with God, not man. God ordained marriage at the beginning of human history and the Lord Jesus affirmed God's purposes in marriage in His teachings (Genesis 2:18-24; Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:6-9). When understood and practiced properly, Christian marriage is a blessing from God, a refuge of peace and contentment, where God brings together a man and a woman in complete dedication to each other until death separates them. Even more importantly, God has set apart marriage as an illustration of how He joins true believers (the church) to the Lord Jesus Christ in faith and He does so forever (Ephesians 5:25-33). As such, we believe that God takes the marriage vows very seriously and that He hates divorce (Malachi 2:16). However, because of the hardness of the human heart, Scripture allows for divorce in very specific and unfortunate cases (Matthew 19:3-9; 1 Corinthians 7:10-16). Divorce should be a last resort after all attempts at reconciliation of the marriage have been exhausted. As a church, we should promote healthy and lifelong marriages at every opportunity because healthy marriages honor God. We should also strongly discourage divorce, while at the same time being careful not to hold divorced persons in a state of condemnation where God has already offered forgiveness (Romans 8:1).

- a. Because God is the creator of man and woman and the author of marriage, only God can define the marriage relationship. Marriage is a lifelong covenant between one man and one woman, created and ordained by God. In Scripture, the marriage between a husband and wife is a sacred covenant that God designed to reflect His relationship of sacrificial love and faithfulness to His bride, the church. A husband is to sacrificially love his wife as Christ loved the church. He is to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, is to respect her husband and to serve with him as his helper.
- b. Faithful, lifelong marriages are one of the ways we witness to the world and give glory to our God. The permanence of the marital bond mirrors God's unfailing faithfulness. Furthermore, the Scripture also elevates celibate singleness as another way to reflect the eternal reality of undistracted devotion to the Lord. Scripture also allows and provides acceptance and support for single-parent families. Sexual intimacy is a gift from God for the purposes of procreation and for mutual enjoyment of the husband and wife, all within the confines of the marriage covenant. Due to the sacredness of this God-ordained covenant, any sexual or marital deviations to God's design for marriage is sinful and ultimately detrimental to a person's well-being. These include but are not limited to pre-marital sex, extra-marital sex, pornography, polygamy, and homosexuality.

SECTION 5.4 – FAMILY AND CHURCH RELATIONSHIPS

We believe that men and women are spiritually equal in their position before God (Galatians 3:28), but that God has ordained distinct and separate spiritual functions for men and women in the home and in the church. The husband is called by God to be the spiritual leader of the home, and men are set apart in Scripture to be the leaders (pastors, elders) and servant-leaders (deacons) of the church (Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:18; 1 Timothy 2:8-15; 1 Timothy 3:4-5,12). Accordingly, only men are eligible for licensure and ordination by the church and only men shall serve in the ordained positions of pastor, elder, and deacon at Hocutt Baptist Church. However, the church recognizes that women have played a vital role in the life of the church, both historically and in modern times. Women are encouraged to faithfully serve alongside the men of the church, especially their own husbands, to fulfill the purposes of the church and to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

- a. God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, guardianship, or adoption. Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral

values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Furthermore, it is the parent's responsibility to share the good news of salvation with their children and to model how to share it with others. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

Scripture References for the above sections 5.2, 5.3, 5.4: (Gen. 1:26-28, 2:15-25; Ex. 20:12; Deut. 6:4-9; Psalm 127, 128, 139; Prov. 6:20-22, 31:10-31; Ecc. 9:9; Song 4, 5:10-16; Mal. 2:14-16; Matt. 5:31-32, 19:4-6, 22:23-30; Mk. 10:6-16; Jn. 3:16; Rom. 1:18-32, 1 Cor. 6:9-7:16, 7:25-35; Eph. 5:21-6:4; 1 Tim. 5:8; 2 Tim. 1:3-5; Heb. 13:4; 1 Pet. 3:1-7)

SECTION 5.5 – ABORTION AND EUTHANSIA

We believe that human life begins at conception and that the unborn child is a living human being (Psalm 139:13-14). Abortion constitutes the unjustified, unexcused taking of an unborn human life. Therefore, we believe that to kill a baby in the womb, immediately before birth, or after the birth is murder. Life is precious to God beginning with conception and continuing throughout eternity. We believe that death is a natural conclusion to one's physical life and was never meant to be the result of another's hand or by one's own hand. Understanding that God created men and women in His own image (Genesis 1:27) predetermines respect for the sanctity of life. The Bible says, "Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His saints" (Psalm 116:15). In the final analysis as Christians, we should believe in and promote the sanctity of life and the protection of the unborn and others who cannot speak for themselves.

SECTION 5.6 - RESOLUTION OF LEGAL DISPUTES BETWEEN BELIEVERS

We believe 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 community in conformity with the Biblical injunctions of 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, Matthew 5:23-24, and Matthew 18:15-20. As such, all matters of legal disputes between church members at Hocutt shall be settled by Biblically-based methods and/or Christian mediation. If individual efforts fail to resolve an interpersonal legal dispute or claim, the matter shall be taken to church elders for arbitration. The church elders shall establish and adopt procedures for binding arbitration, which may include contracting the services of a professional Christian arbitrator. These procedures can be updated as needed and approved and adopted by a majority vote of acting church elders. Any church member who does not agree to enter into binding arbitration or who does not adhere to the results of binding arbitration, and subsequently sues the church, the church staff, or another member is subject to immediate termination of church membership. In cases where insurance policies exist and are applicable to a claim, we believe that a Christian may seek compensation for injuries from another Christian's insurance company as long as the claim is pursued without malice or slander (Ephesians 4:31-32).

SECTION 5.7 – AUTHORITY OF STATEMENTS OF FAITH

The belief statements provided in Sections 5.2 through 5.6 of this Article are meant to further develop, not contradict, the church's general statement of faith referenced in Section 5.1 above. The general statement of faith combined with the specific belief statements outlined in Sections 5.2 through 5.6 constitute the official Statement of Faith of Hocutt Baptist Church. This official Statement of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our faith. We rely on the Bible itself as the sole and final authority of all that we believe as Christians. However, we do believe that our Statement of Faith as outlined in these bylaws accurately represent the teachings of the Bible and is therefore binding upon all church members. All teaching within the church and all literature used by the church shall be in agreement with the church's Statement of Faith. Anyone in the church that is teaching or preaching beliefs that are contrary to the church's Statement of Faith is subject to church disciplinary action in accordance with Section 6.4 of these bylaws. The church elders are the final authority in determining whether certain teachings are heretical deviations from the church's core beliefs and/or Statement of Faith.

ARTICLE 6 - MEMBERSHIP

SECTION 6.1 - GENERAL

Hocutt Baptist is a sovereign and autonomous Baptist church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains unto itself the right of exclusive self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of this church. As an elder-led church, the Senior Pastor and church elders handle the majority of the day-to-day decisions of the church and therefore oversee all church matters including the granting and terminating of membership within the church.

The membership reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be members of this church and the conditions of such membership. The membership of this church shall be composed of persons who have given evidence of spiritual regeneration, who have been baptized by immersion, who have completed all required Church Covenant/New Member classes, who agree to abide by the church bylaws and Statement of Faith, who have been received by a two-thirds majority vote of the church, and who remain in good standing within the church. The church elders shall oversee the membership of the church to ensure that all candidates for membership meet the applicable qualifications and to administer church discipline when an existing member falls short of the expectations for membership.

Membership in this church does not afford the members with any property, contractual, or civil rights based on principles of democratic government. Although the general public is invited to all of the church's worship services, the church property remains private property. The Senior Pastor and the church elders have the authority to suspend or revoke the right of any person, including a member, to enter or remain on the church property. If after being notified of such a suspension or revocation, the person enters or remains on church property, the person may, at the discretion of the Senior Pastor or church elders, be treated as a trespasser.

SECTION 6.2 - CANDIDACY

Any person may offer himself or herself as a candidate for membership in this church. All such candidates shall be presented to the church for consideration of membership at any regular worship service or church meeting in the following ways:

- By trusting in Jesus Christ as your personal Savior and Lord and being baptized by immersion;
- Or, by transferring your letter of membership from another Baptist church;
- Or, by statement from a church of like faith where you first trusted in Christ and were baptized by immersion;
- Or, by baptism if you have put your trust in Christ for salvation but have not been baptized by immersion;
- And, by completing all required Church Covenant/New Member classes being offered at the time of membership application.

A two-thirds vote of the eligible members present at any church service or meeting shall be required to elect such candidate(s) to membership. Should there be any dissent as to a specific candidate, such dissent shall be referred to the church elders for investigation within thirty (30) days of candidate's initial presentation before the church. If no congregational dissent is expressed within the 30-day vetting period (or after the church elders have fully investigated and resolved any matters brought to their attention) and once candidate has completed all requirements for membership, the church elders shall certify the membership in the official church records. In some cases, final approval/certification of a prospective member may be delayed until the church elders have seen evidence of a changed life (spiritual regeneration). The elders, or their designees, shall notify each candidate of the final results of their membership consideration within 30 days of the final elder certification.

Any person offering themselves as a candidate for membership in this church is subject to a public information background check. If, at any time, it is discovered that a member or prospective member has a criminal record or other deviant history that could, in the sole discretion of the church elders, put the safety of the congregation at risk, the church elders have the authority to immediately revoke or deny membership status to such person. Accordingly, the church elders could also deny such person access to all church property in accordance with Section 6.1 above.

SECTION 6.3 - CHURCH COVENANT/NEW MEMBER CLASSES

Prior to achieving full membership status within the church, each prospective member must complete a series of Church Covenant or New Member classes. These classes will be designed to communicate the church's core beliefs and the expectations of members at Hocutt Baptist Church so that each participant can make an informed decision with regards to their prospective membership. The church elders will determine the specific content and length of the Church Covenant/New Member classes. The content or length or number of these classes can be changed at any time by a majority vote of the elders. Any person who has not completed the Church Covenant/New Member classes is not eligible to vote on any issues presented at a regular or specially called business meeting, nor is he/she eligible to hold office or lead any ministry activities within the church.

SECTION 6.4 - CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Any member of the church or member of the church staff who consistently neglects his/her duties or is guilty of conduct that is contrary to Biblical principles, and/or is dishonoring to the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, and/or is otherwise damaging to the church body as a whole by his/her actions shall be subject to church discipline in accordance with Scriptural teachings set forth in Matthew 5:23-24; Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11; Galatians 6:1-2; and Titus 3:9-11. The principles set forth in 1 Timothy 5:17-21 should also be followed for church discipline involving a pastor or elder.

The purposes and benefits of church discipline are as follows:

- (1) repentance, restoration, and spiritual growth of the individual being disciplined;
- (2) instruction in righteousness for other Christians;
- (3) purity of the church as a whole;
- (4) corporate witness of the church to non-Christians; and
- (5) ultimately to glorify God by reflecting His holy character.

Church discipline always starts with the individuals directly involved (and only those directly involved) in the conflict or controversy seeking to reconcile their differences between themselves or to lead a sinning brother or sister to repentance before the Lord. However, Scripture provides two additional steps in the church discipline process to give a sinning brother or sister every opportunity to repent and be restored to full fellowship within the church (Matthew 18:15-17) before their membership within the church is terminated. All individuals involved in the disciplinary process are obligated by Scripture to first examine their own hearts and to act in a spirit of humility with the primary goal of restoration of the sinning brother/sister (Galatians 6:1).

Step 1: In accordance with Matthew 18:15-17, a member who becomes aware the sinful actions of another member should first go alone to the offending party in an effort to restore their brother/sister. However, it is never proper for a man to meet alone with a woman who is not his wife. Men should seek to restore other men, and likewise, women should seek to restore other women in this first step.

Step 2: If the first step in the church discipline process does not bring about repentance and restoration, the offended party should go again to the offending party but this time with one or two other believers.

Step 3: If restoration cannot be achieved independently through the first two steps outlined above, the offended party should contact the church elders for assistance in reconciling the matter. The elders will make the final decision on how to resolve the issue and whether or not the sin is grievous or public enough to bring before the entire congregation. Once the church elders address the issue and find that a church member is sinning and refusing to repent, the sinning member is subject to immediate termination of church membership.

The church elders represent the church in matters of church discipline and have the full authority to terminate the membership of a person who has been made aware of their sinful behavior and yet refuses to repent. At their discretion, the church elders may establish a church discipline committee to represent them and the church in individual cases of church discipline, but the final decision authority remains with the church elders.

SECTION 6.5 - TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

Church membership shall be terminated in one of the following ways:

- (1) upon death of the member;
- (2) upon receipt of a letter of member transfer to another church;
- (3) upon written request of the individual member;
- (4) upon learning that a member has joined the membership of another church;
- (5) upon completion of the church discipline process (in accordance with Section 6.4 above) without achieving restoration/repentance from a member who is openly sinning or is consistently acting in ways contrary to the church's Statement of Faith; or
- (6) upon determination by the church elders (in accordance with Section 6.6 below) that a member has become inactive (i.e., more than six months absence without valid excuse).

Any individual whose membership in the church was previously terminated may apply for membership again at a later date, but they must go through all the membership steps required for new members including taking the current Church Covenant/New Member classes. An individual whose membership was terminated because of open sinful behavior or behavior in contradiction with the church's Statement of Faith may be considered again for membership only when evidence of repentance and regeneration are apparent in his/her life. Representatives from the active elder fellowship, or their delegates, will interview any former member who was terminated from the church because of sinful behavior but later seeks to join the church membership again to make a determination of their current spiritual state. The Senior Pastor/elders will notify the church of the evidences of repentance when the former member is presented again before the church as a candidate for membership.

SECTION 6.6 - ACTIVE MEMBERS LIST

At least once per year, the church elders, or their delegates, shall conduct a review of the church's membership list to determine which members have become inactive and to update the active members list. A member shall be deemed inactive if there is no record of giving or attendance at any church event for a period of six months or more, unless there is a valid reason for such inactivity. Examples of excused inactivity include but are not limited to: military service, college attendance, missionary service, and those who are physically unable to attend. The church elders shall have sole authority to determine whether an excuse for inactivity is valid or not. No notice of termination is required for an inactive member, however, the church elders may decide, at their discretion, to contact the inactive member(s) to determine the reason for their absence. Additionally, any member who unites in membership with another church is subject to immediate termination of membership from Hocutt without notice. The church elders have full authority to remove from the church membership any member who becomes inactive or who grievously violates any provision of these bylaws.

The active church members list shall be the only official list of church members, and the persons on this official list are the only ones who retain the exclusive rights of church membership. The specific names on the current active members list will be kept in the church office and can be made available to church members upon request provided that seven days advance notice is given along with a written statement describing the purpose for the request. In their role as shepherds of the church, the church elders reserve the right to decline the release of membership records to anyone they suspect may use the materials for ignoble or unethical purposes. For purposes of maintaining the active members list, the church shall not be required to maintain or release any member information other than the names of active members. The church is not required to maintain an official “inactive” members list.

ARTICLE 7 - CHURCH LEADERSHIP

SECTION 7.1 - GENERAL

Hocutt Baptist Church seeks to be a New Testament Church committed to the teachings of the Bible. In our structure, we will be led by godly men who are qualified to serve as elders. The government of this church, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, shall be vested in the elders except in matters explicitly reserved to the members. The Senior Pastor and elders shall serve as the spiritual leaders of the church and shall have both the responsibility and the authority to run the day-to-day operations of the church. The associate pastors shall have the responsibility and authority to lead in their specific areas of ministry and shall be accountable to the church elders. The church deacons shall assist the elders in the overall ministry of the church, especially in the areas of administration and congregational care. The church elders may call on active church members to serve on various committees as needed to assist with the administrative and organizational tasks of the church. The church shall not install or retain anyone in church leadership who fails to adhere to or expresses disagreement with the church's Statement of Faith. The church elders can request at any time for those in church leadership positions to affirm their agreement with the church's Statement of Faith.

SECTION 7.2 - ELDERS

Under the Lordship of Jesus Christ and accountable to Him for the care of the local congregation, the church elders shall serve as leaders and shepherds of the congregation in accordance with the principles outlined in 1 Peter 5:1-4 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7. The qualifications of elders will be based upon the Scriptures that pertain to the office of elder, such as 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Likewise, the duties of elders will be based on Scriptures, which include 1 Timothy 5:17, Titus 1:9, and 1 Peter 5:1-2. The duties of elders specifically will be as follows:

1. Shepherd the flock. (1 Peter 5:1-2, Acts 20:35)
2. Lead by example. (1 Timothy 3:4-5, 5:17)
3. Teach and exhort. (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:9-16, John 21:17)
4. Refute those who contradict truth. (Acts 20:17, 28-31; 1 Thessalonians 5:12)
5. Manage the church of God. (1 Timothy 5:17)
6. Pray for the sick. (James 5:14-15)

The church elders will oversee the total spiritual and administrative ministry of the church including setting priorities and establishing/abolishing church ministries and programs based on their adherence to the church's purposes and vision. The elders shall have full authority to create or dissolve church ministries and programs at their discretion. As needed, the elders may establish various advisory committees to assist them in both administrative and ministry matters. They may also delegate leadership of certain activities to staff members or volunteers within the church's membership; however, the church elders maintain the overall authority and responsibility for the health and operation of the church.

The elders have the authority to recruit, hire, select, dismiss and have salaries set for all ministerial staff positions. They will also have authority to do the same for support/part-time staff positions. The church elders have the authority to establish, enforce, and rescind specific church policies and procedures by a majority vote of the active elders. All church policies and procedures shall be consistent with these bylaws. The elders may also assist the pastoral staff and deacons in the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. When the acting elders are considering a matter that creates a conflict of interest for a specific elder (e.g., staff salaries considerations), the elder with the conflict of interest should recuse himself from the final vote on the specific matter.

The elder fellowship will consist of both paid pastoral staff and unpaid congregational elders. Part-time staff shall not be eligible to serve as a church elder. The number of congregational elders serving the church will be no less than five, and there should always be a majority of congregational elders as compared to staff elders. In the event that staff elders begin to outnumber the congregational elders, the active elder fellowship shall determine if new congregation elders should be called or decide which of the associate pastoral staff will serve on the elder fellowship to keep a majority of congregational elders. The particular associate pastoral staff serving on the elder fellowship can be changed at any time by a majority vote of the elders. The total number of elders serving at any time will be unlimited and determined by the current elders. The acting elders will decide when additional congregational elders need to be called and begin service.

If additional elders are needed, the acting elders shall follow this process:

1. An Elder Nominating Committee shall be chosen from within the body of acting elders.
2. The congregation shall be given 30 days to prayerfully submit the names of male members of the church for consideration as elders.
3. The Elder Nominating Committee will consider the qualifications of the men whose names are submitted and decide which men should be informed of their potential call to serve of an elder.
4. Those men who are nominated by the church and initially approved by the Committee will be notified and given time to prayerfully consider their nomination and appraise their lives in light of the Scriptural qualifications for elders.
5. If the candidate feels led to continue with the nomination, he will be interviewed by the Elder Nominating Committee.
6. After careful review, the Committee will make final recommendations to the elder fellowship.
7. The elder fellowship will review the nominees and make a final selection of those who will be called to serve as elders. After this, the names of the prospective elders shall be brought before the members of the church, who will be given 30 days to show cause as to why any of the prospective elders should not serve. Consistent with Matthew 18:15, any member with such "cause" must first express his/her concern to the prospective elder. If a resolution cannot be achieved, then the matter should be taken to the acting elder fellowship.
8. At the end of the 30-day period, the prospective elder(s) will be presented to the church for affirmation by the members present and for a service of dedication. An affirmative vote of seventy-five (75) percent all members of the church that are present and entitled to vote at any specially called business meeting for that purpose and seventy-five (75) percent approval by the acting church elders is necessary for a confirmed calling.

An elder will serve an indefinite term. Congregational elders will serve without compensation. No elder can serve as a deacon concurrently. Not more than one member of a family of the church shall serve as elders together at any given time. An individual's service as an elder may be discontinued by his own decision, or by a seventy-five (75) percent decision of the other acting elders.

SECTION 7.3 - BOARD OF DIRECTORS

As an accommodation to legal relationships outside the church, a subgroup of the church elders shall also serve as the corporate Board of Directors for Hocutt Baptist Church. The Senior Pastor shall serve

as the Corporate President. By the end of January each year, the elders shall elect from the active elders a Corporate Vice President, a Corporate Secretary, and a Corporate Treasurer to serve for the fiscal year. The Corporate Vice President shall serve as Acting Corporate President and church spokesman in the absence of the Corporate President (Senior Pastor). The Corporate Secretary shall be responsible for maintaining all corporate records including the minutes of all meetings where corporate decisions are made. The Corporate Treasurer shall oversee the financial affairs of the church and ensure that the financial records are kept in proper order. The Corporate Treasurer, working in conjunction with the other church elders, shall ensure that adequate financial policies and procedures are in place at all times to protect the church and its members from real or perceived fraudulent financial activities. The church elders may also designate specific church members and/or committees each year or at any time during the year to serve key corporate functions, such as record keeping, check signing, auditing, property insurance evaluations, researching financial options, etc.

It shall be the function of the corporate officers (president, vice president, secretary, and treasurer) to affix their signatures to legal documents involving the sale, mortgaging, or purchase of property or any other legal documents where the signatures of the Board of Directors are required. The corporate officers may sign any legal documents or financial agreements on behalf of the church, and written consent by at least two of the corporate officials is required to take action on behalf of the church. In other words, when a legal document requires the signature of a representative of the church, the signature of two of the acting corporate officers shall be sufficient to meet the legal requirements, provided that the corporate officers are acting in good faith and in accordance with these bylaws.

The Board of Directors will hold in trust the property of the church. They shall act on behalf of the church in carrying out the following activities upon authorization by a majority vote of all members of the church that are present and entitled to vote at any specially called business meeting for that purpose (with the exception of buying and selling church real estate and/or property valuing \$10,000 or less, which does not require a vote by the church):

- to purchase, hold, lease, or otherwise acquire real and personal property;
- to sell, convey, alienate, transfer, lease, assign, exchange, or otherwise dispose of, and to mortgage, pledge, or otherwise encumber the real and personal property of the church;
- to borrow money and incur indebtedness for the purpose and use of the church;
- to cause to be executed, issued, and delivered for the indebtedness, in the name of the church, promissory notes, bonds, debentures, or other evidence of indebtedness;
- to secure repayment by deeds of trust, mortgages, or pledges;
- to accept real and personal property by will, gift, or bequest; and
- to exercise all powers necessary for the dissolution of the church corporation.

The Board of Directors, or their delegates, shall maintain an accurate and up-to-date church property book. The property book shall include a complete inventory of the church property, including a descriptive account of the church property and approximate value and location in the church at the time of inventory. The Board of Directors will be charged with the specific responsibility of making sure that the church has adequate insurance and liability coverage on all church property at all times.

SECTION 7.4 - SENIOR PASTOR

As a member of the elder fellowship, the Senior Pastor works in conjunction with the other church elders to lead and shepherd the congregation in accordance with the principles outlined in 1 Peter 5:1-4 and 1 Timothy 3:1-7. The Senior Pastor is responsible to the church to proclaim the Gospel of Jesus Christ, to preach the biblical revelation, to engage in pastoral care ministry, and to provide administrative leadership in all areas of church life. The Senior Pastor or another designated church elder will serve as an ex-officio member of all church committees and organizations and as moderator of all business meetings.

In the absence of a Senior Pastor, the elder fellowship shall be responsible for finding an Interim Pastor and for obtaining speakers for all church services. Interim Pastors will not be considered for a full time position. Within 30 days after the Senior Pastor's resignation or termination by elder or congregational vote, a Pastor Search Committee shall be established by the elders. The Pastor Search Committee shall consist of at least seven active, Spirit-led church members including at least two elders or deacons and representing a cross section of age groups and interests within the congregation. The Pastor Search Committee will be charged with finding the best qualified candidate for the position of Senior Pastor. Their recommendations shall be presented to the church elders, who will then decide whether or not to bring the candidate before the congregation for confirmation. In their search for God's man to serve as Senior Pastor, the committee shall prayerfully consider each prospective candidate's training, core beliefs, experience, emotional stability, family life, intellectual integrity, moral character, leadership skills, administrative abilities, religious background, ministry philosophy, and his ability to preach.

A Senior Pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs. His confirmation by the church shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least a two-week notice shall be given to the church body. The elders shall bring to the consideration of the church only one man at a time. Election shall be by secret written ballot. An affirmative vote of eighty-five (85) percent is required of all members of the church that are present and entitled to vote at any specially called business meeting for that purpose.

The Senior Pastor shall be called to serve for an indeterminate period. The relationship may be terminated by his resignation, by a seventy-five (75) percent decision of the other acting elders, or by a two-thirds (66.7 percent) or higher vote of all members of the church that are present and entitled to vote at any specially called business meeting for that purpose, provided that a two-week notice has been given the church congregation concerning such intention. A specially called business meeting calling for the termination of the Senior Pastor can only be called by the church elders. The vote shall be by secret written ballot. The church shall give ninety days pay in the case of termination by elder or congregational vote. The Senior Pastor shall give thirty days' notice of his resignation.

The Senior Pastor's salary and benefits package shall be determined at the time of his call by the acting church elders and shall be continued until changed by a vote of the church elders.

SECTION 7.5 - ASSOCIATE PASTORS

As recommended by the church elders, the church may call associate pastors to assist in the overall ministry activities of the church. Before calling any associate pastor, the church elders shall create a detailed job description for the position. An affirmative vote of eighty-five (85) percent is required of all members of the church that are present and entitled to vote at any specially called business meeting for that purpose.

All associate pastors will serve under the supervision of the elder fellowship and will be assigned specific ministry areas for which they shall have authority to make a variety of ministry decisions provided that these decisions are consistent with the church's overall vision, core beliefs, and the church bylaws. Ministry decisions that the associate pastors have authority to make under the supervision and guidance of the elder fellowship include, but are not limited to, selecting specific teaching/ministry materials within their ministry area, establishing/modifying/abolishing programs within their ministry area, selecting and calling on volunteers to serve in their ministry area, and dismissing any volunteers within their ministry area who are not effective or who do not share their vision and goals for ministry.

Associate pastors shall be called for an indeterminate period. The associate pastor relationship may be terminated by his resignation or by a dismissal vote of at least seventy-five (75) percent of the other

elders. In the case of termination, the church shall generally limit compensation to ninety days pay as determined on a case by case basis by the elder fellowship. However, under special circumstances, the elder fellowship may approve additional compensation for terminated or resigned staff. In the case of resignation, the associate pastor shall give thirty days' notice.

Each associate pastor candidate's salary and benefits package shall be determined at the time of his call by the elder fellowship, and shall be continued until changed by the church elders.

SECTION 7.6 - DEACONS

As recommended by the elder and deacon fellowships, church deacons shall be called and elected as needed from among those church members who have proven themselves to have Scriptural qualifications according to 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 and who have been active members of Hocutt Baptist Church for at least one year.

As needed, the Chairman of the Deacons shall appoint a Deacon Selection Committee from the active deacon fellowship. Members of the church shall be given the opportunity to submit names of prospective new deacons to the Deacon Selection Committee. This committee shall have the responsibility of selecting qualified nominees from the list of names submitted by the church or from their knowledge of other members of the church deemed morally and spiritually qualified. The committee will then contact the most qualified nominees to determine their interest in serving as a deacon. The Deacon Selection Committee will then interview the most qualified candidates who submit a completed deacon ministry questionnaire and agree to be interviewed. At their discretion, the church elders have the authority to block any nomination if they know of a reason that the nominee should not be called as a deacon. Once the new deacon nominees have been approved by the active deacon and elder fellowships, and have agreed to serve, the names of those nominees shall be presented to the church for affirmation by the members present and for a service of dedication.

Each new deacon shall commit to serve an initial one-year term and may serve for an indefinite period of time. All active deacons shall decide year-to-year whether or not to commit to an additional year of service. Any active deacon wishing to step down from active service should notify the Chairman of the Deacons by the end of August of their last year of service. A deacon may be asked to step down from the deacon fellowship if the deacon is not fulfilling his obligations to the church or is not performing his duties in accordance with the church's overall vision, core beliefs, and bylaws. Should a deacon who is asked to step down refuse, the matter shall be considered by the entire deacon fellowship and the deacon can be removed from service by a majority vote of the deacon fellowship. A deacon can also be removed by a majority vote of the elder fellowship.

The deacons shall, at all times, regard themselves as servants of the church, leading by their example. They shall assist the Senior Pastor in the observance of the ordinances, in serving the needs of the congregation, and in communicating, promoting, and defending the church's overall vision and core beliefs. They shall have charge over assisting people in need including the distribution of benevolence funds. Upon request by the church elders, the deacons may also assist in the administering of church discipline.

By the end of January each year, the deacons shall elect a chairman who, if possible, shall have served as an active deacon at least one year immediately preceding his election. They shall also elect a Vice-Chairman, a Clerk, and such officers and committees as are needed among the deacons that they may properly perform their duties as servant leaders of the church. Deacon officers may be re-elected after their first year of service, but the term of the Chairman of the Deacons shall be limited to two consecutive years before taking a break of at least four years.

ARTICLE 8 - CHURCH MEETINGS

SECTION 8.1 - WORSHIP SERVICES

Unless otherwise determined by the church elders, the church shall meet weekly for the purposes of preaching the Word of God, Christian fellowship, evangelism, discipleship, and the corporate worship of Almighty God. These meetings will be open for the entire membership of the church and for all people and shall be conducted under the direction of the Senior Pastor and church elders.

SECTION 8.2 - REGULAR BUSINESS MEETINGS

Regular business meetings and informational meetings shall be held as needed for the consideration of church business and for sharing ministry information with the membership. The frequency of these meetings shall be determined by the church elders. At a minimum, a church business meeting shall be held in the last quarter of the year to vote on the annual ministry action plan (church budget). To establish other regular business or informational meetings, the Senior Pastor or church elders will announce to the church from the pulpit and publicize the recurring dates of these meetings.

SECTION 8.3 - SPECIAL BUSINESS MEETINGS

A specially called business meeting is one that is not on the church calendar as a regularly occurring meeting. These meetings can be for any purpose for which the church congregation needs to come together to vote on an issue of church business. A special business meeting may be called by the Senior Pastor or church elders by giving notice of such a meeting and the purpose for which it is called to the church from the pulpit at least one Sunday and not less than one week prior to the proposed date.

SECTION 8.4 - NOTICE OF BUSINESS MEETING AGENDA ITEMS

Substantive matters to be presented at any church meeting and requiring church approval, such as the presentation of the annual ministry action plan (church budget), calling pastoral staff, buying or selling property, changes to the church bylaws, borrowing money, mortgaging property, etc. shall be announced from the pulpit and in writing (e.g., church bulletin announcement) at least two weeks prior to the meeting, unless extreme urgency renders such notice impractical. If two weeks written notice cannot be achieved, the Senior Pastor or church elders shall make every effort to give verbal notice of the substantive agenda items to the church from the pulpit at least one Sunday and not less than one week prior to the meeting date. Routine items may be discussed at any business meeting without prior announcement but should be reserved for after all substantive matters have been covered.

SECTION 8.5 - MATTERS REQUIRING CONGREGATION APPROVAL

The following matters require a vote by the congregation:

- (1) amendments or changes to the church bylaws,
- (2) confirmation of a Senior Pastor, associate pastors, church elders, and deacons,
- (3) the annual ministry action plan (church budget),
- (4) the buying and selling of church property valued at more than \$10,000,
- (5) borrowing money or mortgaging property, or
- (6) licensing or ordaining members to preach.

The church elders may decide to bring other matters before the church for a vote in seeking to determine a proper course of action for the church in a variety of ministry and administrative matters. However, these votes shall not be binding, but shall only serve to inform the elders in their decision-making. The church elders have the ultimate responsibility before God and the congregation to make Biblically-based decisions in all matters pertaining to the ministry and operation of the church.

SECTION 8.6 - APPROVAL OF BUSINESS ITEMS

Unless specified otherwise in these bylaws, approval of any item brought before the congregation in a church-wide meeting requires a quorum of members to be present and a simple majority vote of all eligible members that are present at the meeting. Unless specified otherwise in these bylaws, approval

of any item considered by the elders or the deacons or a church committee in one of their meetings also requires a quorum of active members and a simple majority vote. All business items may be approved by a show of hands or vocal response unless a vote by secret written ballot is required by the church bylaws or deemed appropriate by the church elders or meeting moderator.

SECTION 8.7 - QUORUM

The quorum for a church-wide business meeting consists of those who are present at any meeting that was properly called and for which, full notice was given. If full notice in accordance with these bylaws is not given for any business meeting, the quorum shall consist of at least 50 eligible voting members. An eligible voting member who is present for any motion presented during the meeting counts toward the quorum for all motions presented whether the individual member votes on all motions presented or chooses to abstain from specific motions. The church elders can decide to delay a vote on a specific issue until a later date if they determine that a representative number of eligible voters are not present at the meeting, as long as a quorum of elders are present at the meeting and the majority agree to do so.

A quorum for a meeting of church elders consists of a majority of the active elders, as long as there is also a majority of congregational elders among the elders present at the meeting. A quorum for a meeting of church board of directors, church deacons, or other church committees consists of a majority of the active directors, deacons or committee members.

SECTION 8.8 - VOTING ELIGIBILITY

All church members in good standing who have achieved full membership in accordance with Article 6 of these bylaws and are at least 16 years of age are eligible to vote on any business item presented to the church for approval/confirmation. Each member is only entitled to one vote per motion, and no member may vote on behalf of another member. Except as specifically allowed by these bylaws, voting by proxy or absentee ballot is not allowed, and this practice is never allowed for church-wide business meetings.

SECTION 8.9 - PARLIAMENTARY RULES

All church meetings should be carried out in an orderly manner. As such, motions for member action should be clearly stated prior to a call to vote, as should any subsequent amendments made to motions. The procedures for voting should be clearly explained prior to the final call to vote. Any voting members wishing to speak on a matter should be given an opportunity if they express such a desire. Individual voting members should be respectful of all in attendance and not dominate the discussion.

In the event a specific meeting becomes disorderly, the moderator may invoke parliamentary rules of procedures, such as *Robert's Rules of Order* or other similar procedures, in an attempt to restore order. The basics of the parliamentary rules of procedures should be explained to those in attendance. Anyone who fails to adhere to the parliamentary rules of procedures will disqualify themselves from voting on the topics at hand and may be asked to leave the meeting. The meeting moderator has full authority and sole discretion to order anyone present at a church meeting to leave the meeting room should the individual(s) become disruptive to the proceedings by their actions or their presence. If the moderator determines, in his sole discretion, that compliance with his order of removal is unsatisfactory, the moderator may revoke the disruptive person's right to remain on the premises in accordance with Section 6.1 of these bylaws and treat the person as a trespasser.

As needed, the church elders may adopt and update, by majority vote of the acting elders, detailed rules of procedures for church meetings. These church-specific rules should be made available to all active church members (e.g., copy available in the church office or posted on the church website).

SECTION 8.10 - FISCAL YEAR

The church fiscal year shall begin each year on January 1st and end on December 31st that same year.

ARTICLE 9- SELECTION OF LAY LEADERS AND WORKERS

SECTION 9.1 - GENERAL

All leadership of in the various church ministry areas shall consist of active members of this church. Attendance at the worship services, participation in leadership training programs, Christ-like character, faithfulness in spiritual growth and development, and support of the total church work shall be considered as primary qualifications for service in leadership positions.

Before selecting any person to any place of service, prayerful consideration shall be given to the applicable Scriptural qualifications, the individual's Christian maturity, their loyalty to the total church program and their past record of attendance, service, and giving.

No member should accept or be allowed to accept or remain in a teaching position within the church if they knowingly and vocally disagree or behave in a manner inconsistent with specific beliefs covered by the church's Statement of Faith in Article 5 of these bylaws. If a teacher in the church is suspected of teaching material that is contrary to the church's Statement of Faith, the matter should be taken to the church elders. The church elders, or their delegates, should investigate the matter to determine if the teacher is willfully teaching contrary to the church's statement of faith. In some cases, mutual communication and edification can resolve the matter. However, in other cases, the elders may ask the teacher to step down from his/her teaching position. The church elders have full authority to remove anyone from a position of leadership whom they believe is negatively affecting the overall ministry or reputation of the church.

SECTION 9.2 - MANNER OF SELECTION

The church elders will oversee the selection of individual church members to serve in the various ministry positions throughout the church. However, leaders within the specific ministry areas of the church will often recruit their own helpers subject to elder oversight. The elders, or their delegates, shall keep a list of all ministry positions within the church and assign leaders within each ministry to recruit the volunteers needed to effectively run the ministry. The associate pastors shall be the primary leaders in their area of ministry, but they can select other church members to help in the leadership of specific ministry areas.

In recruiting volunteers, the ministry leaders should clearly explain to all prospective volunteers the expectations of volunteers in the specific area of ministry. The ministry leader should also take into consideration the other ministry areas in which the prospective volunteer is already involved and be mindful not to overburden a specific volunteer. Once a volunteer is selected to serve in a specific ministry area, the ministry leader should share the volunteer's name with the church elders. The church elders reserve the right to deny a specific member a role as volunteer in a specific ministry area if they have reason to believe that the specific member is not a good fit for the ministry. The church elders also have the right to require any member to immediately stop volunteering in a specific ministry area if they determine that the ministry is being negatively affected by the presence of the specific person.

SECTION 9.3 - TERM OF SERVICE

With the exception of the pastors, elders, and deacons, church ministry leaders and volunteers shall commit to a one-year term or to the end of the normal ministry cycle (e.g., many church ministries run from September to August) if the volunteer is selected midyear. Unless specified otherwise in these bylaws, a person serving in any church position shall be eligible for immediate reselection at the end of their term. If a volunteer is asked to continue to serve in a specific ministry and agrees, they will serve another one-year cycle. There are no limits to the number of terms a specific volunteer can serve as long as he/she remains in good standing and continues to contribute to the goals of the ministry area. However, the ministry leader or church elders can ask a specific volunteer to step down at any time.

ARTICLE 10 - CHURCH STAFF

Each year in preparation of the annual church budget, the church elders shall determine the number of paid staff that is needed to effectively and efficiently operate the church. The total cost to the church of all paid staff in aggregate will be included as part of the annual church budget. The elders are also responsible for determining the duties, salary, and benefits for all paid staff, as well as, evaluating their performance and taking disciplinary action as needed. The church elders, or their delegates, will recruit, interview, and hire any non-pastoral staff that is needed for the operation of the church. The hiring of non-pastoral staff does not require a vote by the church; however, the addition of new staff positions that will cause the overall annual budget for paid staff to increase by more than five (5) percent should be approved by the church prior to hiring additional staff. A copy of the current job description for each staff member, including pastors and support staff, shall be kept on file with the Corporate Secretary and in the church office.

When hiring staff, the church reserves the right to discriminate on the basis of its religious beliefs and its Statement of Faith as defined in Article 5 of these bylaws.

ARTICLE 11- LICENSING AND ORDINATION OF MINISTERS

SECTION 11.1 - LICENSING

When a church member announces to the church that he feels a call to the ministry, the church, by a two-third majority vote, may license him as an acknowledgement of his call to the ministry and encouragement to make preparation for it. The Corporate Secretary may furnish the member with a copy of the minutes or a certificate of license as his credential. The Licensee should understand that state law shall govern the performance of his civil duties.

SECTION 11.2 - ORDAINING

In a sincere effort to be as responsible as possible in the matter of licensing and ordaining men to the ministry, and believing that any man truly called by God to this work will fulfill not only these conditions, but more, the church shall consider the following qualities and studies essential to full ordination:

1. Evidence of emotional stability, intellectual integrity and ability, religious maturity, aptness to teach and to lead others, and a strong moral character.
2. Evidence that the person intends, and is making plans for training.

Any member who satisfies the church with respect to his fulfillment of conditions above and who gives evidence of his call to the work of the ministry after having preached in the hearing of the church and after careful examination and unanimous recommendation by the church elders may be ordained to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ, provided that a two-third majority of the members present at any specially called business meeting agree. The church retains full authority and responsibility for the ordination of any member and the planning of the ordination service. In certain cases, in which a man has been called to a church and is actively engaged in the completion of his studies the church may, at its discretion, proceed with his ordination.

ARTICLE 12 – ELECTRONIC VOTING / TELECONFERENCING

Electronic voting is not allowed for church-wide votes unless the elders determine there is an emergency or public health event where a majority of the congregation cannot meet. However, for those meetings in-person, only those who are present at the church-wide business meeting are entitled to vote on any motions presented at the in-person meeting.

For meetings of the church board of directors, elders, deacons, or other church committees, electronic voting via electronic mail, text messaging, or similar means is allowed as long as the motion is clearly stated in the electronic request, the motion is sent to all directors, elders, deacons, or committee members, at least two-thirds of the acting members respond, the required affirmative number of votes is received back by electronic or other means, and the action is recorded in the group's official records. However, if a specific member of the voting group requests an in-person meeting to discuss the specific topic at hand and a majority of the voting group agree to the request, the vote on that specific motion must occur at a face-to-face meeting of the group. Any corporate action taken by the church board of directors without a meeting shall be evidenced by one or more written consents signed by each director before or after such action, describing the action taken, and included in the minutes or filed with the corporate records reflecting the action taken.

Members of the board of directors, elder fellowship, deacon fellowship, or a church committee may participate in a meeting and vote via telephone, internet conferencing, or other electronic means as long as all parties can hear and be heard. Members participating by remote means that can hear and be heard at the meeting are deemed as present at the meeting for quorum and voting purposes.

ARTICLE 13 - PROPERTY HOLDING

It is agreed that the securing and maintaining of real property, buildings, and equipment by this church shall be for the express purpose of providing facilities for public worship and for the engagement upon the missionary, educational, and benevolent interests of this church. Upon dissolution of the church, the acting elders (or their delegates) shall decide how the remaining assets and property of the church will be distributed either for the expressed purposes of the church or to other like-minded organizations that adhere to similar purposes and beliefs as those outlined in these bylaws.

ARTICLE 14 - CHURCH FINANCES

Hocutt Baptist Church shall receive monies or other properties transferred to it for the corporate and ministry purposes described in Article 2 of these bylaws. However, at their discretion, the church elders may decline any money or property of any kind that is determined to be offered for reasons that are contrary to the expressed purposes of the church. If a donation to the church is designated to a specific account or ministry, every effort shall be made to use the money for the designated purpose. However, such designations shall ultimately be deemed advisory rather than mandatory in nature, and the church elders have the sole authority to make the final determination of how all corporate monies are spent in keeping with purposes of the church and ensuring the stability of the church. No fiduciary obligation shall be created by any designated contribution made to the church other than to use the contribution for the general furtherance of any of the purposes stated in Article 2 of these bylaws.

Before the annual end-of-year business meeting, the church elders, or their delegates, shall prepare a church budget for the next fiscal year to present to the church for approval. During the fiscal year, a detailed report shall be maintained, and updated on a monthly basis, showing actual spending versus budgeted spending for each budgeted category. A record of the monthly budget reports shall be kept in the church office, either in written or electronic form. Upon a request made in accordance with Article

15 below, a church member may gain access to any monthly budget report dating back one year from the time of the request.

For each fiscal year, the church elders shall designate, in writing, individuals who have check-signing authority on behalf of the church. In general, these designated individuals should be trustworthy church staff or church members, who are available during normal business hours. The record of these designated individuals shall be kept on file in the church office.

ARTICLE 15 - CHURCH RECORDS

All church records necessary to demonstrate compliance with these bylaws or current church policies and procedures shall be kept in the church office under the authority and oversight of the Corporate Secretary. Church records shall be kept indefinitely in either paper or electronic format. Individual church members have a right to inspect church records dating back one year from the date of request provided that seven days advance notice is given along with a written statement describing the purpose for the request. The official church records should not be taken out of the church office, and the church elders may at their discretions restrict the methods of access to certain records to maintain the integrity of the records. In their role as shepherds of the church, the church elders reserve the right to decline the release of any church records to anyone they suspect may use the materials for ignoble or unethical purposes. If a records request is made by someone outside the church, the church elders shall decide by majority vote whether or not to release the records.

ARTICLE 16 - INDEMNIFICATION

SECTION 16.1 - EXPENSES SUBJECT TO INDEMNIFICATION

The church may indemnify any person who was or is a party or is threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending or completed action, suit, or proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative, or investigative, including all appeals (other than an action by or in the right of the church) by reason of the fact that the person is or was a pastor, elder, deacon, officer, employee, or agent of the church, against expenses, including attorneys' fees, judgements, fines, and amounts paid in settlement actually and reasonably incurred by him or her in connection with the action, suit, or proceeding; and if that person acted in good faith and in a manner he or she reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of the church and, with respect to any criminal action or proceeding, had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful. The termination of any action, suit, or proceeding by judgement, order, settlement, conviction, or on a plea of nolo contendere or its equivalent, shall not, of itself, create a presumption that the person did not act in good faith and in a manner that he or she reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interests of the church and, with respect to any criminal action or proceeding, had no reasonable cause to believe that his or her conduct was unlawful.

SECTION 16.2 - EXPENSES SUBJECT TO INDEMNIFICATION

To the extent that a pastor, elder, deacon, officer, employee, or agent has been successful on the merits or otherwise in defense of any action, suit, or proceeding referred to in this Article, or in defense of any claim, issue, or matter in that action, suit, or proceeding, he or she may be indemnified against expenses, including attorneys' fees, actually and reasonably incurred by him or her in connection with the action, suit, or proceeding.

SECTION 16.3 - LIMITATIONS OF INDEMNIFICATION

Any indemnification made under this Article, may be made by the church only as authorized in the specific case on a determination that indemnification of the pastor, elder, deacon, officer, employee, or agent is proper in the circumstances because he or she has met the applicable standard of conduct set forth in Section 16.1. The determination shall be made in one of the following ways:

- (a) by a majority vote of a quorum consisting of the church elders who were not and are not parties to or threatened with the action, suit, or proceeding;
- (b) by independent legal counsel in a written opinion if the required quorum of elders is not obtainable or if a majority vote of a quorum of disinterested elders so directs; or
- (c) by a majority vote of the members of the church.

SECTION 16.4 - TIMING OF INDEMNIFICATION

Expenses of each person seeking indemnification under this Article, may be paid by the church as they are incurred, in advance of the final disposition of the action, suit, or proceeding, as authorized by the church elders in the specific case, on receipt of an undertaking by or on behalf of the pastor, elder, deacon, officer, employee, or agent to repay the amount if it is ultimately determined that he or she is not qualified to be indemnified by the church.

SECTION 16.5 - EXTENT OF INDEMNIFICATION

The indemnification provided by this Article shall be deemed to be discretionary unless otherwise required as a matter of law or under any agreement or provided by insurance purchased by the church, both as to action of each person seeking indemnification under this Article in his or her official capacity and as to action in another capacity while holding that office, and may continue as to a person who has ceased to be a pastor, elder, deacon, officer, employee, or agent and may inure to the benefit of the heirs, executors, and administrators of that person.

SECTION 16.6 - INSURANCE

The church may purchase and maintain insurance on behalf of any person who is or was a pastor, elder, deacon, officer, employee, or agent of the church against any liability asserted against such person and incurred by him or her in that capacity, or arising out of his or her status in that capacity, whether or not the church would have the power to indemnify him or her against liability under the provisions of this Article.

ARTICLE 17 - AMENDMENTS

These bylaws may be amended, altered, or repealed by two-thirds vote of all members of the church that are present and entitled to vote at any regular or specially called business meeting; provided that such amendment, alteration, or repeal has been announced and offered in writing to the church (e.g., church bulletin announcement) at least two weeks prior to the time the vote is taken.

ARTICLE 18 - ADOPTION

The adoption of these bylaws shall affect a repeal of all previously adopted rules in conflict herewith. A copy of these bylaws shall at all times be kept by the Corporate Secretary, or his delegate, and another copy shall be kept in the church in a location readily accessible to any church member requesting a copy. All amendments to or additions thereof shall, after passage by the church, shall be fully documented, kept by the Corporate Secretary, or his delegate, and posted with the bylaws. The Corporate Secretary may authorize typographical or grammatical corrections of a non-substantive nature to the bylaws or amendments to the bylaw without a church vote as long as a complete record of these changes is kept with the revised documents.