



CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS OF THE HISTORIC PARSELLS CHURCH

Draft, revision 7, approved by the Church Council on June 6, 2017

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CONSTITUTION

Article I — Name.....	2
Article II — Purpose.....	2
Article III — Polity.....	2
Article IV — Doctrine.....	3
Article V — Membership (Partnership).....	4
Article VI — Dissolution.....	7
Article VII — Amendments.....	7

BYLAWS

Article I — The Head of the Church.....	8
Article II — The Pastor and the Pastor’s Cabinet.....	8
Article III — Corporate Officers.....	13
Article IV — Church Council.....	15
Article V — Deacons (the Diaconate).....	16
Article VI — Ministries of the Church.....	17
• Stewardship & Finance Ministry	
• Christian Education Ministry (Teaching Ministry)	
• Life Groups Ministry	
• Evangelism & Missions Ministry	
• Social Action Ministry	
Article VII — Teams & Task Forces.....	20
Article VIII — Meetings and Voting.....	21
Article IX — Church Staff.....	24
Article X — Auxiliary Ministries and Organizations.....	25
Article XI — Delegates and Representatives.....	26
Article XII — The Church Year.....	26
Article XIII — Church Finances.....	26
Article XIV — Use of Church Property.....	27
Article XV — Subsidiary Corporations.....	28
Article XVI — Amendments.....	28

CONSTITUTION OF THE HISTORIC PARSELLS CHURCH

Article I: NAME

The name of the church shall be The Historic Parsells Church of Rochester, NY, duly incorporated under the laws of the State of New York as the result of the merger in 2016 of Parsells Avenue Community Church (1975) and Christ Community Church of Rochester (2010).

Parsells Avenue Community Church had been created in 1975 as a result of the merger of Parsells Avenue Baptist Church (1895) and East Side Memorial Presbyterian Church [formed in 1939 by the merger of Memorial Presbyterian Church (1872) and East Side Presbyterian Church (1901)].

Article II: PURPOSE

The purpose of this church is to **BLESS the World**, as set forth in Matthew 28:18-20 (the Great Commission), Matthew 22:36-40 (the Great Commandment), and Acts 2:42-46 (the Great Community of Believers):

- 1) **BEGIN WITH PRAYER.** To exalt the Lord by praying in all circumstances, both individually and collectively as the body of Christ; by participating in public worship services together; and by maintaining personal devotions on a regular basis.
- 2) **LISTEN.** To take the time to hear the Word of God and hear the concerns and testimonies of others; to educate and equip people through the preaching and teaching of God's Word and through discipleship so they have a vital faith which allows them to lead a consistent Christian life and do effective Christian service.
- 3) **EAT.** To establish and maintain a sense of community, mutual concern, and helpfulness through fellowship and shared meals so people are fed both physically and spiritually, and are encouraged and supported by one another as members of the family of God.
- 4) **SHARE OUR STORIES.** To tell others about our personal faith journeys and thus be living testimonies of the transforming power of Jesus Christ; to evangelize, spreading the Gospel (the reconciling and redemptive message) of Jesus Christ throughout the world and advancing the Kingdom of God by expressing the love of Christ to all, urging the personal acceptance of Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and supporting national and international missions.
- 5) **SERVE.** To empower people for a ministry of social justice and mission work so they can support God's work with their time, talent, and treasure, and so they can serve unselfishly and in Jesus' name to meet the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of those in our church, our community, and our world.

Article III: POLITY

Recognizing Jesus Christ as the only Head of the Church (Ephesians 1:22-23; Colossians 1:18), this congregation seeks to ascertain and obey the will of our Lord in all matters of faith and practice. Authority to govern the affairs of this church being given to us by Christ, we hold that such authority is vested in the membership (also called partnership) of the congregation.

The membership (partnership), as a collective whole, is the highest decision-making body of this church, and via congregational meetings shall have final authority for decisions and actions affecting the welfare and functioning of the church. The Church Council, in turn, is given the responsibility by, and is accountable to, the membership (partnership) to oversee all aspects of this church.

The church shall be autonomous (self-governing) with respect to its internal organization and the regulation of its own affairs, and shall be subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body.

However, in carrying out the wider ministry for which Christ has made His church responsible, we adhere to membership in the RGR Network of Transforming American Baptists and the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. This church shall not resign or withdraw from any of these bodies except by a duly adopted change to this constitution; nor shall such action be taken until at least thirty days have elapsed following a consultation by the Church Council with the Executive Minister of the RGR Network.

This church shall also associate with the larger Christian fellowship through local and other councils of churches and with formal and informal agencies of cooperative Christianity as deemed appropriate.

Article IV: DOCTRINE

Section 1: Doctrinal Basis

The church accepts the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments (the Bible) as the inspired witness to God's revelatory actions in human history and as the authoritative basis for its doctrine and practice. This church is the sole interpreter of the Scriptures as they relate to the church and its members (partners). The constitution and bylaws and any amendments made hereto shall be the governing documents of this church but they should always be interpreted and applied in conformity with the Bible.

Section 2: Statement of Faith (based on Romans 8: 28, 38-39)

We believe there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, for we know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to God's purpose. We are convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor rulers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord. Amen.

Section 3: Church Ordinances

There are two ordinances of the church: Baptism and the Lord's Supper (also called Communion).

A. Believer's Baptism

The ordinance of baptism shall be administered to candidates who have professed faith in Jesus Christ and have indicated a commitment to follow Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, as set forth in Matthew 28:19.

1. Baptism shall be by immersion in water.
2. Since it signifies faith and repentance, the ceremony is reserved for only those who are old enough to make responsible decisions.
3. The ordinance of baptism shall be administered by the Pastor (or other ordained person), assisted by the Deacons and/or their designees.
4. Baptism shall be administered during any regular or special worship service.
5. This church DOES NOT perform infant baptism. However, a child *dedication* may be performed. See Constitution Article V, Section 6 (*Dedication of Children*).

Consult the *Policy and Operational Handbook* for details.

B. The Lord's Supper (Communion)

The ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be observed as the apostle Paul outlines in 1 Corinthians 11:23-26. The Lord's Supper is the symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the Body of Christ, through partaking of the bread and the cup, commemorate the sacrificial death of Jesus Christ and anticipate His second coming.

1. The Lord's Supper shall be administered on the first Sunday of each month, and on other occasions as determined by the Pastor and the Deacons.
2. The Communion table is the Lord's, not ours. Christ is the host. It is not our decision who will or will not be guests at the table. Communion is open to all believers present.
3. The Pastor, a member of the pastoral staff, a Deacon, or other designated church leader shall preside.

4. The elements of the Lord’s Supper shall be prepared and served by the Deacons and/or their designees.

Section 4: Marriage and Human Sexuality

As a local church, we believe that wedding ceremonies on church property are spiritual acts of worship. Marriage is a biblical institution established by God as clearly described in the Scriptures. Accordingly, this church, its pastors and staff will not participate in same sex unions or same sex marriages, nor shall its property or resources be used for such purposes.

Weddings on church property shall be officiated by one or more ordained ministers of the Gospel. The church may decline to make its facilities or ministers available for any wedding if it is determined that one or both of the parties are not biblically and/or legally qualified to marry. Such determinations may be made by the pastor and pastoral staff. No minister or employee of the church shall officiate at any marriage ceremony unless such marriage is consistent with this policy.

Article V: MEMBERSHIP (PARTNERSHIP)

Section 1: Admission of Members (Partners)

A person may be received into membership (also called partnership) with all of its benefits and duties by any one of the following methods, upon the recommendation of the Pastor and the Deacons (which may follow completion of an orientation class):

A. By Baptism.

Anyone who confesses Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and who is in substantial accord with the doctrine and practice of this church may be received into the membership (partnership) of this congregation following believer’s baptism by immersion.

B. By Letter of Transfer.

A person who is in substantial accord with the doctrine and practice of this church may be received into membership (partnership) by Letter of Transfer from any Christian church.

C. By Christian Experience.

A person of worthy character who has formerly been a member of a Christian church but who for a sufficient reason cannot present a Letter of Transfer from that church, and who is in substantial accord with the doctrine and practice of this church may be received into membership (partnership) upon satisfactory statement of Christian faith.

D. By Restoration.

Any person who has lost his or her membership (partnership) for any reason may be restored to membership (partnership) upon the recommendation of the Deacons Ministry.

E. By Confession of Faith.

Any person who because of reasons of health, disability, or good conscience cannot submit to baptism yet confesses Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and who is in substantial accord with the doctrine and practice of this church may be received into membership (partnership) upon public statement of faith and determination to serve Jesus Christ in this church.

Section 2: Dismissal of Members (Partners)

A person may be dismissed from membership (partnership) by any one of the following methods:

A. By Death.

B. By Letter of Transfer.

A Letter of Transfer to any other Christian church may be granted to any member (partner) requesting it, upon the recommendation of the Deacons. The name of the church to which membership is requested shall be named in the request and the letter shall be sent to the Pastor or Clerk of that church.

C. By Request.

A person may terminate his or her membership (partnership) by either written or verbal communication. This will go into effect upon receipt of such correspondence by the Deacons Ministry and/or the Church Council.

D. By Exclusion.

Should any member (partner) shame the name of Jesus by being guilty of immoral or unchristian conduct, the church may terminate his or her membership (partnership). Only after the person has had a hearing, upon due notice, before the Deacons, and after faithful efforts have been made to bring about repentance and reconciliation, should such action be taken. It is right and in harmony with the Scriptures, upon recommendation of the Deacons, to exclude from this church any person who persists in holding false or heretical doctrine, or who obviously and persistently lives inconsistently with his or her Christian profession, or who lives in violation of the law or public morals; or any person who persists in disturbing the unity and peace of this church, or is unwilling to settle differences with others in a Scriptural manner (Matthew 18:15-17; Romans 16:17; I Corinthians 5:11-13; II Thessalonians 3: 6, 11-15).

E. By Suspension.

When a person has manifested a lack of interest in the life of the church for one year by failure to attend services, to communicate or participate with the church, or to contribute to its support, though able to do so, his or her name shall, after proper notification and conference, be withdrawn from the regular membership (partnership) list and placed on an inactive list. After one year on this list, unless the person requests otherwise, his or her name may be dropped from the church rolls. The Pastor, the Clerk and the Deacons shall constitute a team authorized to take such action by a majority vote of the entire team. This action does not apply to those who, because of physical incapacity, limited means, military service, or other special circumstances, are unable to meet the ordinary requirements of membership (partnership). Any person whose name is on the inactive membership (partnership) list during the twelve-month grace period may be reinstated to active membership (partnership) by vote of the Deacons.

F. By Forfeit.

If a member (partner) voluntarily joins other members (partners) in breaking away from this church to form a separate congregation, membership (partnership) in The Historic Parsells Church is forfeited. The individual memberships (partnerships) may be terminated as a group by simple majority vote of the Church Council. If the person served as a church officer, that leadership position shall be terminated as directed by Bylaws Article VII, Section 4 (*Elections and Terms*), and the Church Council shall appoint someone to fill the remaining term of office.

Section 3: Rights and Responsibilities of Members (Partners)

A. Rights

1. Membership (partnership) in this church allows a person to vote on any matters requiring a congregational vote, provided the member (partner) is present and is 18 years of age or older. No proxy voting is allowed.
2. Each member (partner) of the church 18 years of age or older is eligible for consideration as a candidate for elected or appointed office in the church.

B. Responsibilities

Each member (partner) of The Historic Parsells Church is expected to:

- 1. Regularly attend worship services on Sunday, the Lord’s Day (Acts 20:7; Hebrews 10:25), unless prevented by illness, work schedule, military service, or geographical dislocation.
- 2. Strive to live a moral Christian life, pray daily, develop and use his or her spiritual gifts (1 Corinthians 12:4-11), and witness for Christ.
- 3. Contribute a portion of time, talent, and treasure (financial resources) to support the church and its ministries and missions. Tithing (proportionate giving) is a distinct and positive command in the Scriptures (Malachi 3:8-11) and each member (partner) is encouraged to systematically contribute part of his or her income according to the principles laid down in 1 Corinthians 16:2 and 2 Corinthians 9:7.
- 4. Commit to God in Jesus Christ through meaningful involvement in the church’s programs and activities to the extent he or she is able.
- 5. Practice reverence while in the Lord’s house; it is a holy place and reverence is conducive to true worship (Leviticus 19:30; Romans 12:1; Hebrews 10:19-22).
- 6. Recognize the necessity of submitting oneself to those who are in places of Scriptural authority (Hebrews 13:17) in matters relating to faith.
- 7. Express his or her opinions in discussions, and vote according to his or her own convictions.
- 8. Request a Letter of Transfer to some other Christian church when moving from this area and not expecting to return.

Section 4: Membership (Partnership) Classifications

A. Active Membership (Partnership)

Active members (partners) are individuals who are fully involved and engaged in the ongoing activities of the church (worship, Bible class, prayer service, small group fellowships, etc.) and who financially support the church. Active members 18 years and older can hold office and vote in congregational meetings (see Section 3A, above).

B. Affiliated Membership (Partnership)

Affiliated members (partners) are individuals who have relocated to the Rochester area, but who continue to maintain membership at their home church (examples include college students, armed services personnel, and other people of temporary residence in the Rochester area who maintain a legal residence elsewhere). They can fully participate and hold office (both elected and appointed) in The Historic Parsells Church, but shall not have voting privileges at congregational meetings. They may not be sent as delegates of this church, be granted a Letter of Transfer, or be ordained or licensed by this church; all of these rights remain with the members’ home church.

C. Friends of Parsells

Friends of Parsells are individuals with close association or ties to The Historic Parsells Church, but who choose not to be full or affiliated members (partners) of the church. They support the church through financial and physical means to help strengthen the life of the congregation. They cannot hold office or vote in congregational meetings.

D. Inactive Membership (Partnership)

Inactive members (partners) are individuals or families who are not involved in the activities of the church and/or who have not supported the church financially within a consecutive twelve-month period, although able to do so. See Section 2 of this Article (*Dismissal of Members*), above.

Section 5: New Member (Partner) Orientation

Prospective members (partners) of this church are encouraged to participate in the church's orientation class to ensure that they understand the doctrinal beliefs of The Historic Parsells Church and their responsibilities as members (partners) of this body.

Section 6: Clarification for Families

Each person must join this church on his or her own accord. If parents join, their children DO NOT automatically become members. If the children are of age to make a decision, they must join by a method outlined in Section 1 of this Article (*Admission of Members*). If the children are young, they must wait until they can be baptized. See Constitution Article IV, Section 3 (*Church Ordinances*).

Section 7: Dedication of Children

Parents who are members of this church and who desire publicly to acknowledge their child as a gift from God may have their child dedicated at a worship service at the discretion of the Pastor. This will also serve as a pledge on the part of the parents to bring the child up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord and for the congregation to provide watch-care for the child. Consult the *Policy and Operational Handbook* for details.

Article VI: DISSOLUTION

In the event this church body is dissolved, disbands, or ceases to function as a church for any reason, no officer of the church or church employee or any private individual shall be entitled to share in the distribution of any of the corporate assets, but the assets shall be distributed to such organization or organizations operated exclusively for charitable, educational, religious or scientific purposes and qualified as an exempt organization under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code as determined by the Church Council. A vote to dissolve or disband shall follow the guidelines listed under Bylaws Article VII, Section 1 (*Special Business Meetings*).

Article VII: AMENDMENTS

This Constitution may be amended at a regular or special business meeting upon two-thirds vote of those present and qualified to vote (assuming that there is a quorum present), provided that such amendments have been approved by the Church Council and that notice of such a meeting and the contents of the proposed amendments or alterations are announced during the worship service and/or published in the weekly church bulletin (or via any type of mass communication technologies) on the two consecutive Sundays immediately preceding the proposed meeting.

If any change in denominational affiliation is involved, the provisions in Constitution Article III (*Polity*) shall apply.

Bylaws which are not in conflict with this Constitution shall be adopted and/or amended according to the procedure described in Bylaws Article V (*Amendments*).

(Note that this Constitution needs a two-thirds vote to change; Bylaws only need a simple majority vote.)

BYLAWS OF THE HISTORIC PARSELLS CHURCH

Article I — THE HEAD OF THE CHURCH

Fundamental to the exercise of church government is the fact that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. However, as Head, He has ordained that individual churches should be blessed with the spiritual rule and ministry of pastors and office bearers. Therefore, it is the duty of the church to seek to discover those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the necessary gifts for leadership and to set them apart by united prayer and to submit to their rule and ministry.

All those who give leadership and serve in this church shall do so with the motivation "...that in everything He (Jesus Christ) might have the supremacy" (Colossians 1:18, NIV).

Article II — THE PASTOR AND THE PASTOR'S CABINET

Section 1: Qualifications

The Pastor shall be an ordained minister whose ordination is recognized by the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A. and shall have demonstrated a deep love for and commitment to the Lord Jesus Christ and the local church.

The Pastor should have the personal and ministerial qualifications for this office as set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Timothy 5:17; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-10.

The Senior Pastor and all other pastoral staff shall adhere to the "Covenant and Code of Ethics for Ministerial Leaders of the RGR Network of Transforming American Baptists."

Section 2: Responsibilities

The Pastor shall be called by the church to provide full-time or part-time work to "shepherd the flock" (Micah 7:14; Acts 20:28; John 21:16; 1 Peter 5:2) and direct the church in its mission to BLESS the world for the honor and glory of God, based on the exercise of the Pastor's own distinctive gifts of ministry as required by the church. The Pastor's responsibilities include, but are not limited to, the following. The Pastor:

- A. Leads the congregation by the guidance of the Holy Spirit.
- B. Proclaims the Gospel to believers to foster their spiritual growth, and to unbelievers to win them to faith in Jesus Christ.
- C. Builds up the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:12, NIV).
- D. Cares for the flock, directing a caring ministry to those with physical, spiritual, and emotional needs.
- E. Meets with potential members.
- F. Participates in meetings of the Church Council, congregation, and other groups as he or she may in wise discretion determine.
- G. Gives and accepts guidance, being accountable to the Church Council for the faithful discharge of his or her duties, and receiving direction and feedback from the Deacons in regards to pastoral issues and pastoral decisions affecting the church.
- H. Employs and supervises the staff.
- I. Represents the church in the community and in the denomination(s).
- J. Sets aside time for self and family (1 Timothy 3:4-5).
- K. Makes arrangements for absences.
- L. Reports to the Church Council and congregation on a regular basis.

Section 3: Establishment of Relationship

A. Pastor Search Team

When the pastorate is vacant, the Church Council shall select a Pastor Search Team of three to twelve people, depending on the size of the congregation. The composition of this team should be representative of age, gender, organizational, ethnic and other diversities found in the congregation. The remaining pastoral staff, if any, shall serve in an advisory capacity to the Pastor Search Team.

It shall be the duty of this Team, after seeking the guidance of the Holy Spirit, to procure a prospective Pastor. In reviewing and examining candidates, the Team shall carefully consider the merits of each person under consideration regarding his or her personal qualifications; education; experience and ministerial record; theological views; spiritual discernment; concept of the church and ministry; abilities as a preacher, teacher, administrator, counselor, and leader of worship; as well as other abilities pertaining to the special needs of the church. The ministerial candidate must live under the unction of the Holy Spirit, be deeply in love with Christ and sufficiently demonstrate that he or she is following Christ. The candidate shall also be ordained, or seeking ordination, according to the ordination standards of the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.

The Pastor Search Team shall confer with the Executive Minister of the RGR Network of Transforming American Baptists on the qualifications and record of all candidates being considered for the pastorate of this church, taking advantage of his or her knowledge of pastoral leadership potential and the American Baptist Personnel Services.

B. Congregational Consideration

When a suitable person is found, the Pastor Search Team shall recommend him or her to the church for consideration. Only one candidate shall be presented to the church at one time.

The congregation shall be notified two weeks in advance of a candidate's appearance, which shall include preaching at a worship service. A special business meeting shall be held following the service for the purpose of considering the candidate. Notice of the special service and meeting shall be verbally announced during the regular worship service and/or published in the weekly church bulletin (or via any type of mass communication technologies) on the two consecutive Sundays immediately preceding the candidate's visit.

As directed by the Holy Spirit (Jeremiah 3:15; John 14:26), the congregation votes either to extend a call to the candidate asking him or her to become the Pastor of The Historic Parsells Church, or to release that candidate's name from consideration. If there is any question about a nominee, he or she may be given other invitations to be heard and consulted with by the Pastor Search Team before a final vote is taken concerning that candidate. A vote of two-thirds of the members (partners) present and qualified to vote shall be necessary to extend a call. The vote shall be by secret printed ballot. Absentee ballots and proxy votes shall not be allowed.

Once the newly-called Pastor has accepted the offer, the Pastor Search Team is disbanded with a special prayer.

The new Pastor shall automatically be considered a member (partner) of this church effective on the date his or her duties officially begin.

C. Pastoral Salary and Benefits

The Pastor Search Team shall have the authority to negotiate an employment contract with the Pastor nominee, specifying the duties and expectations of the office, as well as salary, benefits, and other related matters. Any such contract shall be contingent to the actual hiring of the nominee to the pastorate, and also shall be subject to the approval of the Church Council and the congregation before the contract has any binding legal powers or obligations whatsoever.

The salary and benefits of the Pastor shall be fixed at the time of the call by vote of the church and reviewed from time to time (at least yearly) by the Stewardship & Finance Ministry. Suggested changes

shall be voted upon by the Church Council (provided that the Pastor shall abstain from voting on matters relating to his or her compensation) and submitted to the congregation in the annual budget, or at any business meeting provided the usual two weeks' notice has been given.

Section 4: Continuance of Relationship

The pastoral relationship shall continue for an indefinite term, unless otherwise agreed upon at the time of the call, so long as such relationship is mutually satisfactory to the Pastor and the congregation.

Section 5: Dissolution of Relationship

A. Termination of Pastorate

A Pastor's services may be terminated in any of the following ways:

- 1. By the Pastor's Death.**
- 2. By Resignation.**

The Pastor shall be free to resign as he or she feels led by the Holy Spirit, but out of Christian courtesy he or she should give advance notice to the church. The resignation shall be accepted without being voted on by the church.

- 3. By Vote of the Church.**

The dismissal of the Pastor may be voted upon at a regular or special business meeting, notice of such meeting and its purpose having been verbally announced during the worship service and/or published in the weekly church bulletin (or via any type of mass communication technologies) on the two consecutive Sundays immediately preceding the proposed meeting. The Church Council Chairperson shall preside. A majority vote by secret ballot of the members (partners) present and qualified to vote at such a meeting, provided there be a quorum present, shall make valid the termination of the office.

B. Recommendation of Termination for Cause

The Pastor shall be subject to immediate suspension for a serious moral, ethical, or doctrinal deviation considered harmful to the discharge of the Pastor's duties and harmful to the church, provided that he or she is first given due notice and a hearing before the Deacons with evidence presented as to his or her guilt or innocence. Any such accusation shall be brought by at least two or three witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19). Misconduct includes violations of the "Covenant and Code of Ethics for Ministerial Leaders of the RGR Network of Transforming American Baptists."

If upon the examination by the Deacons, the majority of whom determine that the Pastor is unfit for further service to this church, he or she shall be suspended without pay and told to cease pastoral duties immediately. The Deacons shall then recommend the Church Council call for a special business meeting to vote on the Pastor's termination, announced with two weeks' notice and conducted in the manner outlined in the paragraph above entitled "*By Vote of the Church.*" The members (partners) of the church shall, by majority vote at the special business meeting, decide to dismiss or retain the services of the Pastor. If the Pastor is dismissed under these conditions, it will be considered a breach of contract and no further pay will be accorded the dismissed Pastor.

C. The Next Step

When the position of Pastor becomes vacant for any reason, the Executive Minister of the RGR Network of Transforming American Baptists should be notified as soon as possible. A Pastor Search Team shall be put into place, and an Interim Pastor shall be selected as outlined in Section 9 (*The Interim Pastor*), below. The Pastor Search Team, and/or the Deacons, may work to fill the vacant pulpit each Sunday until the Interim Pastor can be put into place.

Section 6: Protections Afforded the Pastor

- A. The Pastor should be protected against hostile attacks and unjust criticism. The Deacons and Church Council shall maintain open communication with the church body with respect to any accusations against the Pastor.
- B. The Pastor cannot be dismissed by any person or group in the church. Any dismissals or attempts thereof must be handled in accordance with these bylaws, and must be by congregational vote.
- C. In the event of prolonged illness or disability, the church will agree to continue the Pastor's financial support until disability insurance goes into effect.

Section 7: Licensing and Ordination

A. Qualification

Any member (partner) of this church, having felt the call of God to the ministry of the Gospel and giving evidence of such a call by his or her Christian life, experience, and devotion to the cause of Christ, may be ordained, licensed and/or commissioned as a minister of the Gospel after at least one year of being a member (partner). Ordination enables a person to perform such functions as conducting the ordinances (Baptism and Communion), presiding at weddings and funerals, and other ministerial services.

Procedures for licensing and ordination of candidates for pastoral ministry shall be those of the American Baptist Churches in the U.S.A.

B. Licensure

When a person announces that he or she feels called to the ministry of the Gospel, he or she shall first present himself or herself to the Pastor and the Deacons. The Pastor and Deacons may at their discretion present him or her to the church as an applicant for a license to preach or for recommendation as a candidate for the pastoral ministry.

Upon hearing his or her statement at any business meeting of the church, the congregation may, by majority vote of those members (partners) present and voting, approve his or her application and issue a certificate of licensure and encourage him or her to make preparation for the ministry.

C. Ordination

When a person seeks to be ordained, the Pastor and the Deacons shall determine if the person is worthy of ordination. If the response is favorable, the Pastor shall submit a written recommendation of congregational sponsorship of ordination to the Executive Minister of the RGR Network of Transforming American Baptists. The candidate and the church shall follow the procedures established by the RGR Network for the process of ordination.

The RGR Network's Ordination Review Committee shall examine and evaluate the candidate to determine his or her spiritual and educational qualifications for the Christian ministry. Once the process is complete, the Ordination Review Committee may recommend the candidate to the RGR Network's Permanent Council on Ordination, which shall have the final responsibility for assessing the calling and readiness of the candidate. If the vote of the Ordination Council is favorable, the church may proceed with ordination.

D. Missionary Commission

If a qualified member (partner) of the church has an interest to serve either as a home (national) or foreign (international) missionary, the Pastor, the Deacons and/or the Church Council may recommend the person to either the American Baptist Home Mission Societies or American Baptist International Ministries for commissioning as a missionary.

Section 8: The Pastor's Cabinet (Pastoral Staff)

A. Establishment of Relationship

The Senior Pastor shall hire additional members of the pastoral staff as deemed necessary, once the Church Council has given the approval for the position(s) to be created and filled. The appointment(s) shall be communicated to the church for confirmation. These may include assistant pastors, associate pastors, youth pastors, student ministers, evangelists, and/or prophets. The pastoral staff may serve the church on a part-time or full-time basis, and may be volunteers or paid employees depending upon the arrangements made at the time of the call or adjusted as conditions warrant.

B. Responsibilities

Those who are pastoral staff are directly responsible to the Senior Pastor and shall perform the various ministries of the church for which they are responsible. They shall also fill in for the Senior Pastor in his or her absence.

C. Dissolution of Relationship

Pastoral staff may be dismissed by the Senior Pastor, with input and recommendations from the Church Council as necessary.

For termination of the Senior Pastor, see Section 5 (*Dissolution of Relationship*), above.

Section 9: The Interim Pastor

A. Selection

If and when the pastorate is vacant, the senior most ranking ministerial assistant may assume the role of Interim Pastor, with the Church Council making the appointment. If that person declines the offer, another member of the pastoral staff may be asked.

If the church does not have any pastoral staff, the Pastor Search Team (if one is in place) or the Deacons shall consult the Executive Minister of the RGR Network of Transforming American Baptists for assistance in securing an Interim Pastor.

B. Responsibilities and Restrictions

The Interim Pastor will serve all of the functions of the Pastor, including preaching and teaching the Gospel; administering the ordinances; tending to the sick, broken, and the lost; and providing words of encouragement to the congregation.

The Interim Pastor will be subject to the following limitations:

1. The Interim Pastor shall not vote on the selection of the next Pastor.
2. The Interim Pastor shall not be a voting member of the Church Council or any Ministry Team.
3. If the Interim Pastor would like to be considered for the position of Pastor, he or she shall go through the same process to apply for the pastorate as any other candidate.

C. Compensation

The Interim Pastor will be entitled to an agreed upon salary set forth mutually by the Interim Pastor and Church Council.

Section 10: Family of the Pastor

The spouse, grown child, or relative of the Pastor cannot serve as an elected leader of the church unless a "Declaration of Conflict-of-Interest" is signed and that person recuses himself or herself from Church Council meetings, congregational meetings, and other meetings in which matters pertaining to the Pastor are being discussed.

The same guidelines apply to other pastoral staff.

Article III — CORPORATE OFFICERS

Section 1: Configuration & Terms of Office

There shall be three corporate officers: Church Council Chairperson, Church Clerk, and Treasurer (Chief Financial Officer).

Each officer shall be an active member (partner) of the church who is 18 years of age or older.

The corporate officers shall serve three-year staggered terms, so one of them is elected each year.

These three officers shall constitute the Executive Team (see Section 5, below).

Section 2: Church Council Chairperson

A. Responsibilities

The Council Chair:

1. Serves as the president of the corporation and presides at all meetings of the Church Council.
2. Serves as chairperson of the Executive Team.

B. Replacement

In the event the Council Chair is not available, a *chairperson pro tempore* shall be selected by the Council Chair ahead of time or shall be selected from among the Council members present to preside for the purpose of conducting business at that meeting only.

If the office of Council Chair becomes vacant before the next annual business meeting, a new Council Chair shall be elected at the next regular or special business meeting before other matters can be conducted at that regular or special meeting.

Section 3: Church Clerk

A. Responsibilities

The Church Clerk:

1. Keeps an accurate record of all meetings and transactions of the congregation (the corporation) and the Church Council.
2. Maintains, as far as is possible, an accurate membership list.
3. Conducts official correspondence when instructed to do so by the church, Church Council, or Pastor.
4. Gives legal notice of all meetings as required by the constitution and bylaws.
5. Preserves and files all letters, written reports, job descriptions, any policy and procedure manuals, and other documents pertaining to the Church.

6. Assists in the preparation of denominational reports and other inquiries pertaining to the records of the Church.
7. Chairs the Nominating Team.

B. Replacement and Assistance

To the extent approved by the Church Council, the church secretary or administrator or other staff may assist in the performance of these duties.

The Church Council shall find a replacement if the Clerk is temporarily unable or unavailable to perform his or her duties.

In the absence of the Clerk at a meeting of the Council or congregation, those present at a meeting shall select a clerk *pro tempore* to record the minutes.

C. Transition

Immediately after resignation, departure, or termination of the current Clerk, or the election of a new Clerk, the incumbent shall deliver to his or her successor all documents and records for which he or she has been responsible.

Section 4: Treasurer (Chief Financial Officer)

A. Responsibilities

The Treasurer shall have general oversight of any and all financial matters of the church. The Treasurer:

1. Has custody of all funds of the church and shall disburse funds as outlined by the adopted annual budget (or any amended budgets) or under the direction of the Pastor and/or Church Council.
2. Keeps a true and accurate record of all receipts, disbursements, and accounts as required in normal accounting practice and under law.
3. Coordinates the preparation of the annual budget.
4. Chairs the Finance Ministry.
5. Works in consultation with the Pastor to occasionally administer funds for meeting special humanitarian needs. Disbursement of funds to church members (partners) and others who are deemed worthy of assistance can be made when the Pastor and Treasurer agree on a legitimate need and determine there are enough discretionary funds available. Money may be given at the discretion of the Pastor and Treasurer without the necessity of making public its use, thus not embarrassing the needy. Under no circumstances should this confidentiality be breached. The Treasurer's reports may refer to the amount distributed, but not to whom and for what. Members (partners) of the church shall have the privilege of making needs known to the Pastor and Treasurer.

C. Replacement and Assistance

With approval from the Church Council, the Treasurer may delegate particular tasks to members of the Stewardship & Finance Ministry. In such cases, the Treasurer will remain responsible for adequately carrying out those tasks.

D. Transition

The Treasurer shall deliver immediately to his or her successor all checkbooks, records, and data pertaining to the church's finances.

Section 5: Executive Team

A. Configuration

The Executive Team shall consist of the three corporate officers (Council Chair, Clerk, and Treasurer) and the Pastor. The Pastor shall be recused from the Executive Team if a given matter involves him or her.

B. Responsibilities

It shall be the duty of the Executive Team to act upon matters concerning sensitive issues requiring immediate attention, with the discretion of the Pastor (unless the Pastor is the issue).

In emergency situations, where it is impractical to assemble the Church Council, the Executive Team may take such actions as are reasonable and prudent to facilitate the ministry and safety of the Church. The Executive Team shall be mindful of actions which are the prerogative of the congregation (as specified in Bylaws Article VII, Section 5, *Matters Requiring a Congregational Vote*),

Article IV — CHURCH COUNCIL

Section 1: Purpose

The Church Council shall be the governing board of the church, subject to the authority and accountability of the congregation (the members or partners of the church). The Church Council provides administrative leadership and oversight. It is given responsibility and authority by the congregation to work in conjunction with the Pastor and staff to carry out the vision, programs, and the regular business operations of The Historic Parsells Church.

The Church Council shall also be deemed to have been elected individually and collectively as the Board of Trustees, and to function as the designated trustees of The Historic Parsells Church in accordance with New York State Corporation Law when the need for trustees arises. If at such time there is a need to change the number of trustees, the provisions in Bylaws Article VI, Section 4 (*Elections and Terms*) shall apply.

Section 2: Configuration

- A.** The Church Council shall consist of between three and no more than eighteen people, depending on the size of the congregation and the church's ministry needs (in accordance with the provisions alluded to above).
- B.** The Council shall include the three corporate officers (as listed above, in Article III, *Corporate Officers*), the chairperson of each Ministry Team, along with other laity to equal the number agreed to by the church according to Part A above.
- C.** The Pastor shall be an *ex officio* (non-elected) member of the Council, with full voting rights, although he or she shall recuse himself or herself when matters pertaining to the Pastor are discussed.
- D.** A majority of the whole number of Church Council members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business at any meeting lawfully convened.

Section 3: Terms of Office

Each Council member shall serve a three-year term. The terms of office shall be staggered, so that one-third of them shall be elected each year.

Section 4: Responsibilities

The Church Council:

- A.** Meets regularly.
- B.** Takes care of business, managing the temporal affairs of the church.

- C. Coordinates all functions of the church.
- D. Calls for congregational meetings.
- E. Acts on behalf of the congregation.
- F. Oversees the fiscal affairs of the church.
- G. Oversees and maintains all church properties, inside and out; ensures there's insurance coverage; sells or purchases real property only as directed by congregational vote.
- H. Works with the Pastor in the employment of staff.
- I. Appoints teams and task forces.
- J. Appoints a Pastor Search Team when needed.
- K. Appoints delegates when necessary.

Article V — DEACONS (THE DIACONATE)

Section 1: Configuration

1. The number of Deacons shall be determined by the Pastor, commensurate with church growth. Deacons shall be nominated by the Pastor and affirmed by the congregation at the Annual Meeting.
2. The Deacons shall meet regularly. Special meetings may be called by the Pastor or the Chairperson, who shall notify the other members. A majority of the members shall constitute a quorum.
3. In order for the Deacons to focus on the spiritual aspects of the church, they shall be separate from the Church Council while still maintaining a relationship with that body (to ensure unity and continuity of the church's purpose and programs).

Section 2: Responsibilities

In accordance with the work and practice of the New Testament, Deacons are to be servants within the church. Deacons are the primary lay ministers of the congregation. The Deacons shall in every way assist in the work of the Pastor, including the following:

1. Provide spiritual leadership.
2. Assist in administering the ordinances.
3. Consider the admission and dismissal of members.
4. Provide counsel and support to the Pastor.
5. Exercise watch-care over the congregation.
6. Care for the sick, needy, and distressed.
7. Administer the Deacon's Burial Fund (if it exists).
8. Welcome guests.
9. Provide/arrange for pulpit supply.

10. Promote evangelism and missions.
11. Foster fellowship within the congregation.
12. Cooperate with the ministries and groups of the church.

Article VI — MINISTRIES OF THE CHURCH

Section 1: Categories and Conduct

A. Categories of Ministries

There shall be Ministry Teams to carry out the work of the church. The number and scope of Ministries may vary over time, but six are suggested with descriptions to follow:

- Stewardship & Finance Ministry
- Christian Education Ministry (Teaching Ministry)
- Life Groups Ministry
- Evangelism & Missions Ministry
- Social Action Ministry

The Church Council shall determine whether these standing Ministries need to be combined, expanded, or eliminated, based on the needs and size of the congregation.

B. Meetings and Reports

Each Ministry Team shall meet regularly as required to carry out its functions.

Each Ministry Team leader shall be a member of the Church Council. Each Ministry shall report its activities to the Church Council and shall make recommendations for any action that needs to be taken by the Council or congregation. Each Ministry shall also submit a report at each Annual Meeting.

C. Conduct

1. Unity of Purpose

Each Ministry Team shall heed the guidance and directives of the Pastor and Church Council to ensure the church is united in its purpose to BLESS the world.

2. Resignation

Any Ministry Team member may resign by informing the Pastor, the Ministry of which the person is a part, and/or the Church Council.

3. Accountability

Every person involved in a Ministry Team shall be accountable to each other and to the Pastor. This function shall be maintained in the spirit of Scripture (Matthew 18:15-19). A Ministry Team member may be removed from the position, for good and sufficient cause, by the Pastor and/or the Church Council.

Section 2: Stewardship & Finance Ministry

A. Configuration

1. The Treasurer shall chair the Stewardship & Finance Ministry.
2. The Stewardship & Finance Ministry shall include a Financial Secretary and the Counting Team, and others as needed.

3. The Ministry Team shall meet regularly. Special meetings may be called by the Treasurer, who shall notify the other members. A majority of the members shall constitute a quorum.

B. Responsibilities

The Stewardship & Finance Ministry shall:

1. Implement wise financial practices.
2. Supervise the Counting Team.
3. Assist in providing financial reports.
4. Assist the treasurer in budget preparation.
5. Teach about tithing.
6. Conduct stewardship campaigns.
7. Oversee all fund-raising efforts of the church.
8. Report to the Church Council and congregation on a regular basis.

Section 3: Christian Education Ministry (Teaching Ministry)

A. Configuration

1. The number of people on the Christian Education Ministry shall be determined by the size and scope of the programming.
2. The Ministry Team shall meet regularly. Special meetings may be called by the Pastor or the Chairperson, who shall notify the other members. A majority of the members shall constitute a quorum.
3. The Youth Pastor and the Minister of Christian Education shall be *ex officio* members of this Ministry Team, if those positions exist.

B. Responsibilities

The purpose of Christian Education is to bring children, young people and adults to a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ; to teach the Word of God and the principles of faith and Baptist polity; and to allow people to put their faith into practice so they can BLESS the world. To achieve these goals, the Christian Education Ministry shall:

1. Oversee all educational aspects.
2. Determine time, space, and materials for classes and activities.
3. Prepare a budget.
4. Recruit and equip teachers.
5. Supervise the Youth Ministry.
6. Coordinate child care.
7. Promote camps, conferences, and other events.
8. Report to the Church Council and congregation on a regular basis.

Section 4: Life Groups Ministry

A. Configuration

1. The number of people on the Life Groups Ministry shall be determined by congregational size.
2. The Ministry Team shall meet regularly. Special meetings may be called by the Chairperson, who shall notify the other members. A majority of the members shall constitute a quorum.

B. Responsibilities

The Life Groups Ministry shall:

1. Oversee the Life Groups.
2. Provide fellowship opportunities.
3. Coordinate events with the culinary volunteers.
4. Report to the Church Council and congregation on a regular basis.

Section 5: Evangelism & Missions Ministry

A. Configuration

1. The number of people on the Evangelism & Missions Ministry shall be based on the scope of the ministry.
2. The Ministry Team shall meet regularly. Special meetings may be called by the Chairperson, who shall notify the other members. A majority of the members shall constitute a quorum.

B. Responsibilities

In obedience to the Lord's command to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to every people, this church shall have an active Evangelism and Missions Ministry, which shall:

1. Coordinate the evangelistic mission of the church.
2. Promote American Baptist mission work.
3. Provide local mission opportunities.
4. Prepare a missions budget.
5. Seek out people to be ministers and missionaries.
6. Promote cooperation with other churches and organizations.
7. Report to the Church Council and congregation on a regular basis.

Section 6: Social Action Ministry

A. Configuration

1. The number of people on the Social Action Ministry shall be determined by the scope of the ministry.

2. The Ministry Team shall meet regularly. Special meetings may be called by the Chairperson, who shall notify the other members. A majority of the members shall constitute a quorum.

B. Responsibilities

In order for the church body to respond to human needs and put faith into action, this church shall have a Social Action Ministry, which shall:

1. Inform the church about social issues.
2. Address social concerns.
3. Provide opportunities to BLESS the world.
4. Equip people to be engaged citizens.
5. Report to the Church Council and congregation on a regular basis.

Article VII — TEAMS AND TASK FORCES

Section 1: Configuration

The Pastor and/or the Church Council may establish, maintain, or disband Teams and Task Forces as deemed appropriate to carry out a specific task or function.

The Pastor and/or the Church Council shall appoint a chairperson of the Team or Task Force. The Pastor and/or Council may appoint the members as well, or the chairperson may be authorized to select the members.

Each Team or Task Force shall be given a clear description of that group's mission. Each group will make and implement its decisions except in cases where such decisions are rightfully the business of the Church Council or the congregation.

Section 2: Meetings and Reports

Each Team or Task Force shall meet regularly as required to carry out its functions. Each group shall regularly report its decisions and activities to the Pastor and the Church Council.

Section 3: Conduct

1. Resignation

Any Team or Task Force member may resign by informing the group leader and/or chairperson of the Church Council.

2. Accountability

Every person involved in a Team or Task Force shall be accountable to each other and to the Church Council. This function shall be maintained in the spirit of Scripture (Matthew 18:15-19). A Team or Task Force member may be removed from the position, for good and sufficient cause, by the Pastor and/or the Church Council.

Section 4: Nominating Team

One of the teams worthy of mention is the Nominating Team. The Church Council shall appoint a Nominating Team when necessary, chaired by the Church Clerk.

During the year, as vacancies in offices may occur, the Team shall present nominations for filling those positions to the Church Council, which shall have authority to appoint persons to serve the remainder of the unexpired terms.

At least two months before the Annual Meeting, the Team shall begin to prepare a list of qualified persons to fill the various offices for which elections are held. Team members shall take into consideration every adult member (partner) of the church who is 18 years or older in regard to his or her qualifications; past experience; and faithfulness to Christ, the church and its ministries. After prayer and earnest consultation, the Team shall nominate one or more persons for each office to be voted upon. The Nominating Team shall personally contact those nominated to determine if they are able and willing to serve. All nominees shall be informed of the duties of the office for which they are nominated and shall give their consent to be nominated.

The Team may also be asked to nominate as many persons as required to serve as delegates, as specified in Bylaws Article X (*Delegates*).

The Team shall report the names to the Church Council for its review at least two weeks before submitting them to the congregation. This list of nominations shall be distributed to the congregation along with the Annual Meeting notice.

Before the Nominating Team's report (slate of officers) is voted upon at the Annual Meeting, additional nominations may be presented by those in attendance.

Article VIII — MEETINGS AND VOTING

Section 1: Meetings

A. Worship Assemblies

1. Sunday Worship

The church shall meet every Lord's Day (Sunday) for the public worship of Almighty God, conditions permitting, and at such other times as the Pastor, the Deacons, and/or the Church Council may determine. A change in the permanent time of Sunday worship shall be approved by the congregation (as specified in Section 5, *Matters Requiring a Congregational Vote*),

2. Communion

The Ordinance of the Lord's Supper (Communion) shall be observed on the first Sunday of each month, conditions permitting, and at such other times as the Pastor, the Deacons, and/or the Church Council may determine.

3. Baptism

The Ordinance of Baptism shall be conducted as determined by the Pastor.

4. Other services

Other occasional worship assemblies may be appointed by the Pastor at his or her discretion, by the Deacons, by the Church Council, or by vote of the church.

B. Christian Education Assemblies

The church shall meet regularly for Christian instruction (the study of the Bible and Christian faith) at times determined by the Pastor, the Christian Education Ministry, and/or the Church Council, conditions permitting. This may include Bible study assemblies and corporate religious education forums on Sunday mornings, midweek services for prayer and Bible study, and/or other sessions as needed.

C. Business Meetings

1. The Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting (known as the “State of the Church Address”) shall be held in January on a date and time determined by the Pastor and Church Council for the purpose of receiving annual reports, electing the officers of the church (and team members and delegates if necessary), approving a budget for the ensuing year, transacting any other business as is proper to come before this meeting, and discussing issues vital to the life and witness of the church.

The meeting shall be verbally announced during the worship service and published in the weekly church bulletin (or via any type of mass communication technologies) on the two consecutive Sundays immediately preceding the proposed meeting. The written notice should include the recommendations from the Nominating Team.

If the meeting has to be postponed (because of bad weather or some other reasonable cause), notice of the new date and time shall be given verbally during the worship service and/or published in the weekly church bulletin every Sunday until the meeting is held.

2. Regular Business Meetings

There shall be regular business meetings (congregational meetings) as necessary to update the members (partners) on the ministries, programs, and finances of the church, to discuss a given topic, and to transact routine business.

Notice of such a meeting shall be verbally announced during the worship service and/or published in the weekly church bulletin (or via any type of mass communication technologies) on the two consecutive Sundays immediately preceding the proposed meeting.

3. Special Business Meetings

Special business meetings (congregational meetings) may be called by the Pastor or the Church Council or by the written request of one-third of the active members (partners) of this church submitted to the Council Chair. The Church Clerk shall certify the number total of people on the membership roll to determine what constitutes one-third; then petitions may be circulated by those wishing to convene a special meeting.

Notice of such a meeting and its purpose shall be verbally announced during the worship service and/or published in the weekly church bulletin (or via any type of mass communication technologies) on the two consecutive Sundays immediately preceding the proposed meeting. At a special meeting, only such business as is included in the notice shall be transacted.

Section 2: Quorum

A quorum for the transaction of business shall consist of the voting members (partners) present at the meetings provided such meetings have been properly called (with the usual two-week notice). A quorum shall be required for the validity of all actions that require the vote or approval of the congregation.

Section 3: Voting

A. Qualifications of Voters

Eligible voters shall be active members (partners) of this church who are 18 years of age or older. Active members (partners) are defined as people who have participated in the life of the church (by being present at worship, Bible study, and/or other church functions) and who have financially contributed to the church in the months preceding the meeting.

B. Voting Procedures

Eligible voters must be present to vote. Voting by proxy is not allowed.

A simple majority vote of the eligible voters present shall be sufficient for a decision, unless otherwise specified. The calling of a Pastor and the changing of the constitution (but not bylaws) shall require a two-thirds vote of the eligible voters present.

If a matter is voted upon by written ballot, there shall be two election inspectors who shall declare the results of the ballots cast.

Section 4: Elections and Terms**A. Time**

The election of officers shall be held during the Annual Meeting of the church.

B. Procedure

In conjunction with the notice for the Annual Meeting, the Nominating Team shall present to the church the names of one or more persons for each office to be filled. At the time of the Annual Meeting it shall be the privilege of any member present and qualified to vote to place in nomination the name of any eligible person for any office not so nominated. A majority of the ballots cast is necessary for the election of any officer.

C. Vacancies

Vacancies occurring during the year may be filled for the unexpired term by the Church Council (from names recommended by the Nominating Team).

D. Termination of Elected Officers

The terms of elected church officers may be terminated for sufficient reason by a majority vote of the Church Council by those present and voting. Officers whose positions have been terminated shall be notified by the Church Clerk. Resignation and death will also end their terms of office.

E. Change in the Number of Councilmembers (Trustees)

The Church Council, deemed to act as the Board of Trustees of the corporation when need be, shall determine the number of positions needed on the Council (Board of Trustees) to effectively carry out its work.

The number of trustees of the corporation may be between 3 and 18, serving three-year staggered terms, so that one-third expire each year. Any change in the number of trustees shall be reflected in the slate of officers presented for congregational vote at the next Annual Meeting.

Section 5: Matters Requiring a Congregational Vote

The following matters require a vote by the members (partners) of the church:

- The call or dismissal of the Pastor.
- The election of officers.
- Any change to the number of trustees.
- The approval of a candidate to be a Deacon.
- The approval of a candidate to be licensed for pastoral ministry.
- The approval of the annual church budget and any changes or amendments to the budget.
- A change in the permanent time of Sunday worship.
- The purchase, sale, mortgage, transfer of title, or lease of any real property.
- The ratification and modification of the church constitution and/or bylaws.
- A proposal to change the church's denominational affiliation.

- Acceptance or incurrence of debt beyond what is necessary and normal.
- Any other legal matters (such as contracts and proposals for mergers or acquisitions).
- The dissolution of the corporation along with the distribution of its assets.

Section 6: Meeting Etiquette

A. Moderator and Secretary

The Pastor shall moderate all meetings of the congregation (the corporation), except when matters concerning the Pastor are being considered for a vote. In that case, the Church Council Chairperson shall moderate the congregational meetings. The Council Chair shall also preside when the pastorate is vacant and when the church is selecting a Pastor.

The Church Clerk shall be the secretary for meetings of the congregation. In the absence of the Clerk, those present at the meetings shall select a Clerk *pro tempore* to record the minutes.

B. Procedure

The Holy Spirit shall govern at all meetings of the church, and all meetings should be carried out in a spirit of worship and unity.

All meetings shall include prayer and other elements of worship to allow for the presence of God, the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and the seeking of God's will.

The church will observe the principles of good parliamentary procedure, using "Roberts Rules of Order" (latest revision) as a guide when not in conflict with these bylaws.

The presiding officer shall be the final interpreter of protocol, bylaws and constitution.

C. Participation

Any member (partner) present at a congregational meeting shall have the privilege of speaking on any topic or motion under discussion, provided the person is recognized by the moderator.

Members (partners) will refrain from speaking on matters not related to the subject under discussion and will refrain from all unkind and discourteous remarks, observing always a spirit of love and Christ-likeness. Should a person fail to conduct himself or herself properly, the moderator will call the person out of order.

Article IX — CHURCH STAFF

Section 1: Employment of Staff

The church shall employ part-time and/or full-time staff to carry out the functions and ministries of the church as conditions and finances warrant. The Pastor shall determine which staff positions are created, filled, maintained, or discontinued.

Once the need for any staff is recognized and approved by the Church Council, the Pastor (in consultation with the Council) shall write the job description and set the terms of employment. The Pastor shall interview the candidates and hire the staff person(s). The Pastor shall supervise all church employees and shall have the responsibility to hire and dismiss said employees. The members of the staff are accountable to the Pastor; the Pastor is accountable to the congregation. All staff members shall be supervised in accordance with policies and procedures as determined by the Church Council.

The Pastor shall be retained or dismissed as specified in Bylaws Article II (*The Pastor and Pastoral Staff*).

Section 2: Pastor's Cabinet (Pastoral Staff)

All pastoral staff shall become members (partners) of the church as soon as possible after accepting the call to their position. They shall work under the supervision of the Senior Pastor. See Bylaws Article II, Section 8 (*The Pastor's Cabinet*) for details.

Section 3: Operational Staff

Operational (non-ministerial) staff are not required to be members (partners) of this church, although membership (partnership) shall be encouraged.

Section 4: Possible Positions

Staff positions might include Assistant Pastor, Youth Pastor, Church Administrator, Office Administrator (Secretary), Music Director, musicians, custodian or janitor, etc.

Section 5: Payment of Staff

All wages and salaries shall be paid out of the general fund of the church and shall be recommended by the Church Council (with input from the Stewardship and Finance Ministry) and included in the annual budget. Congregational approval of the wages and salaries is incorporated in the approval of the budget at the Annual Meeting (or approval of changes to the budget made at some other business meeting of the church).

Section 6: Family of Staff

The spouse, grown child, or relative of employed staff cannot serve as an elected leader of the church unless a "Declaration of Conflict-of-Interest" is signed and that person recuses himself or herself from Church Council meetings and other meetings in which matters pertaining to the staff member are being discussed.

Article X — AUXILIARY MINISTRIES AND ORGANIZATIONS**Section 1: Relationship to the Church**

There may be various auxiliary ministries and organizations in the church such as the Women's Ministry, Men's Ministry, Youth Ministry, and/or others. All such groups shall be considered arms of the church and shall exist for the purpose of advancing a specific function or kingdom outreach to the glory of God.

These groups may be formed provided they meet with the approval of the Pastor and Church Council. Each group shall determine its goals and establish times and places of meetings and activities, all being in accord with the total church program.

All auxiliary ministries and organizations shall be under the supervision of the Pastor and the Church Council and shall give reports to the church as requested (such as at the Annual Meeting). All officers, if any, of such groups shall be active members (partners) in this church.

Any of these groups may be self-governing and they may function under their own constitution and/or bylaws. Such constitutions, bylaws, and any future amendments shall be approved by the Church Council, and may not contain any provision out of harmony with the constitution and bylaws of this church.

Section 2: Finances of Auxiliary Organizations

The Church Treasurer and Church Council shall have oversight of all finances and financial activity of all auxiliary ministries and organizations of the church.

The auxiliary groups may have their own funds in the church's Ministries Account, but must submit accurate financial reports to the Church Treasurer and the Stewardship & Finance Ministry when requested. See Bylaws Article XII, Section 3 (*Funds of the Church*).

Article XI — DELEGATES & REPRESENTATIVES

Section 1: Representation in the Denomination

A. Meetings of the Delegates

This church shall be entitled to three delegates to represent the church at any meetings of the RGR Network of Transforming American Baptists at which the church is expected to participate. The three delegates shall be the Pastor and two additional church members (partners) of legal age. The church may select alternate delegates to substitute for any regular delegates who are unable to attend such a meeting.

B. Permanent Council on Ordination

This church shall be entitled to have representation on the Permanent Council on Ordination of the RGR Network of Transforming American Baptists. Representatives shall consist of all ordained clergy of this church in good standing with the RGR Network and one layperson appointed by the church.

Section 2: Representation in Other Bodies

The church may select delegates or representatives to such other bodies to which it belongs and to which it is entitled.

Section 3: Selection

The Church Council may appoint such delegates, or the Nominating Team may select them and include them in its recommendations at the Annual Meeting for congregational approval.

Article XII — THE CHURCH YEAR

The fiscal year of the church shall be the calendar year, beginning on the first day of January and closing on the last day of December.

Article XIII — CHURCH FINANCES

Section 1: Financial Support

A. Tithes and Offerings

The primary means of support of this church shall be by the regular tithes and free-will offerings of the members (partners) and friends of the church. Members (partners) shall be encouraged to give at least a tenth of their income to the church, and to support any special emphasis above and beyond the tithe. The Bible teaches that the proper method of financing the Lord's work is through systematic proportionate giving of money (Malachi 3:10; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7).

The need for special offerings and the method used in receiving them will be determined by the Pastor in consultation with the Church Council and/or the Stewardship & Finance Ministry.

B. Other Sources

Contributions, donations, and grants from outside sources shall be accepted unless otherwise restricted by the church.

C. Campaigns and Fundraisers

Capital campaigns, fundraisers, and other methods of finance may be used as determined by the Pastor, Church Council and/or the Stewardship & Finance Ministry when conducted in accordance with the *Stewardship and Finance Operational Guide*.

Section 2: Budget

The church shall operate in accordance with the annual budget as adopted by the congregation at the Annual Meeting, or as may be further decided upon by the church at any regular or special business meeting (approving or rejecting any proposed changes or amendments to the budget).

Section 3: Funds of the Church

A. General Fund

The General Fund shall be used for regular budget operations. All receipts shall be deposited into this checking account unless otherwise noted herein or by a specific provision made by the church leadership. All general budget expenditures shall be made from this fund.

B. Cash Reserve Account

There shall be maintained a separate cash reserve account. The amount recommended for this account is three months of weekly operational costs for the church.

C. Memorial Fund

The Church Council or Treasurer may establish and maintain a Memorial Gift Fund for receiving and dispersing financial gifts in memory or honor of loved ones.

D. Designated Funds

From time to time, other special funds may be created and maintained as needed to further the purpose and ministries of the church. Because designated funds are only to be used for the designated purpose, it is advisable to use broad categories instead of narrow, specific ones so any unused fund balances may be used for other similar projects.

E. Ministries Account

There may be created a separate checking account for auxiliary ministries and organizations of the church. A separate ledger shall be established for the purpose of knowing what was raised, deposited, and expended by such groups.

Section 4: Accounting Procedures

All funds shall be collected, recorded, and disbursed according to the *Stewardship and Finance Operational Guide*.

Article XIV — USE OF CHURCH PROPERTY

Section 1: General Principles

All the facilities and properties of the church are dedicated to Jesus Christ and shall be used only for church purposes and Christian activities except as may be authorized by the Church Council.

Under no circumstances will smoking, alcoholic beverages, drug or substance abuse, or boisterous revelry be allowed on or in church property.

The Church Council shall establish guidelines for the use and loan of church property, and establish fees as necessary.

It will be the prerogative of the Church Council to determine the wisest use of the entire property of the church and to designate and assign such usage, and from time to time to change such assignments as may be best for efficiency and effectiveness. No class or group will have exclusive use of any room even though it may be provided with special equipment or decoration.

Section 2: Use by Members (Partners)

Any member (partner) in good standing may request to use the church building for any personal function that is not contrary to Biblical teachings. The Church Council shall determine whether or not such a request will be granted when the building is not otherwise reserved. The building must be cleaned and returned to the same condition in which it was found. While there is no charge for members (partners) to use the building, donations to cover the overhead expenses will be accepted.

Persons dismissed or who have withdrawn from the membership (partnership) of the church have no right to make claim upon any of the church property, and any property in their possession shall be returned immediately.

Section 3: Use by Outside Organizations

All outside organizations or groups **not already** connected with the church which want to use the facilities for a one-time use shall be required to obtain permission from the Pastor and/or Church Council. Long-term use or rental shall require a vote of the Church Council.

If an outside group **already** connected to the church or to which the church already belongs requests to use the building for a special meeting, worship service, or other such function, approval from those in charge (such as the Pastor or Council Chair or Church Administrator) should be sufficient to make sure it's OK and the date is available. It would be best if all event requests came before the Church Council, but this is not always possible.

Section 4: Off-site Equipment Use

Whenever any church equipment is needed for use away from church property, permission must be secured and will be granted in accordance with policies which may be established by the Church Council.

Section 5: Storage Space

The church building and grounds are not to be used for personal storage (unless special permission is given), as this detracts from the appearance and functionality of the church.

Section 6: Church Vehicles

If at such time the church has vehicles, those vehicles shall be limited to church functions and activities and shall be driven only by a member (partner) in good standing, over the age of twenty-one who holds a valid driver's license. Vehicles should be properly maintained and returned in a clean condition.

Article XV — SUBSIDIARY CORPORATIONS

There may be established subsidiary corporations to carry out the purpose, goals and objectives of the church. Each subsidiary corporation shall be independent, with its own charter, structure, governance and non-profit status, but shall be subject to review by the church.

Article XVI — AMENDMENTS

These bylaws may be amended by a simple majority vote of those present and qualified to vote (assuming that there is a quorum present) at a regular or special business meeting, provided that such amendments have been approved by the Church Council and that notice of such a meeting and the content of the proposed amendments or alterations are announced during the worship service and/or published in the weekly church bulletin (or via any type of mass communication technologies) on the two consecutive Sundays immediately preceding the proposed meeting.