



## **CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS OF THE ABUNDANT HARVEST BAPTIST CHURCH**

### **PREAMBLE**

We, being born-again, Bible-believing Christians, identifying ourselves as historical Baptists in our doctrine, in the interests of growing in the grace and knowledge of Our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, through true worship and good works; fulfilling our responsibilities to propagate the Word of God both at home and abroad; contending earnestly for the faith of Jesus Christ; that all things might be done decently and in order; do institute the following statement of our faith, principles, and church government.

## Table on Contents

|                                                        |    |
|--------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Article 1 – Name and Purpose .....                     | 4  |
| Section 1.01 - Name .....                              | 4  |
| Section 1.02 – Purpose and Mission .....               | 4  |
| Article 2 – Character .....                            | 4  |
| Article 3 – Historic Baptist Principles .....          | 5  |
| Article 4 – Affiliations .....                         | 6  |
| Article 5 – Statement of Faith .....                   | 7  |
| Section 5.01 – Statement of Faith .....                | 7  |
| Section 5.02 – Authority of Statement of Faith .....   | 11 |
| Article 6 – Covenant .....                             | 12 |
| Article 7 – Membership .....                           | 13 |
| Section 7.01 – Qualifications for Membership .....     | 13 |
| Section 7.02 – Duties of a Member .....                | 14 |
| Section 7.03 – Privileges of a Membership .....        | 14 |
| Section 7.04 – Discipline of a Member .....            | 15 |
| Section 7.05 – Transfer of Membership .....            | 16 |
| Section 7.06 – Termination of Membership .....         | 17 |
| Article 8 – Governance .....                           | 17 |
| Article 9 – Officers .....                             | 18 |
| Section 9.01 – Designation of Corporate Officers ..... | 18 |
| Section 9.02 – Lead Pastor .....                       | 19 |
| 9.02.1 – Qualifications .....                          | 19 |
| 9.02.2 – Duties .....                                  | 19 |
| 9.02.3 – Calling a Lead Pastor .....                   | 19 |
| 9.02.4 – Termination .....                             | 20 |
| 9.02.5 – Lead Pastor Transition .....                  | 20 |
| Section 9.03 – Associate Pastors .....                 | 21 |
| 9.03.1 – Qualifications .....                          | 21 |
| 9.03.2 – Calling an Associate Pastor .....             | 21 |
| 9.03.3 – Termination .....                             | 21 |

|                                                           |    |
|-----------------------------------------------------------|----|
| Section 9.04 – Non-Vocational Lay Elders .....            | 21 |
| 9.04.1 – Qualifications .....                             | 21 |
| 9.04.2 – Selection.....                                   | 22 |
| 9.04.3 – Termination.....                                 | 22 |
| 9.04.4 – Vacancy.....                                     | 22 |
| Section 9.05 - Elders .....                               | 22 |
| 9.05.1 – Composition.....                                 | 22 |
| 9.05.2 – Meetings.....                                    | 23 |
| 9.05.3 – Responsibilities .....                           | 23 |
| 9.05.4 – Specific Duties of Elders.....                   | 23 |
| Section 9.05 – Deacons.....                               | 23 |
| 9.05.1 – Qualifications .....                             | 24 |
| 9.05.2 – Responsibilities .....                           | 24 |
| 9.05.3 – Meetings.....                                    | 25 |
| 9.05.4 – Selection.....                                   | 25 |
| Article 10 – Meetings.....                                | 25 |
| Section 10.01 – Meetings for Worship .....                | 25 |
| Section 10.02 – Special Meetings .....                    | 25 |
| Article 11 – Binding Arbitration.....                     | 26 |
| Section 11.01 – Submission to Arbitration .....           | 26 |
| Section 11.02 – Notice of Arbitration .....               | 26 |
| Section 11.03 – Limitations on Arbitration Decisions..... | 27 |
| Section 11.04 – Arbitration Procedures .....              | 27 |
| Article 12 – Amendments .....                             | 27 |

## **Article 1 – Name and Purpose**

### **Section 1.01 - Name**

This corporation, congregation of believers, shall be known as Abundant Harvest Baptist Church.

### **Section 1.02 – Purpose and Mission**

- (A) This congregation is organized as a church exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes within the meaning of Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future United States Revenue Law), including, but not limited to, for such purposes, the establishing and maintaining of religious worship, the building of churches, parsonages, schools, missions, daycare centers, camps, nursing homes, and any other ministries that the pastor may be led of God to establish in the United States and in any foreign country.
- (B) The purpose and mission of this church shall be to labor by the help of God, and the power of the Holy Spirit, to carry out the great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ as stated in Matthew 28:18-20, and elsewhere. To this end, every member shall be urged to take the gospel of salvation to the lost, personally and representatively. Converts shall be instructed as to their duty to confess Christ by baptism (immersion in water), and taught in matters of Christian conduct, Bible study, church attendance, personal soul-winning, tithes and offerings, faithfulness to Christ, and any other areas of instruction deemed necessary to their spiritual prosperity and growth. This shall be further facilitated through the holding of regular and special church services.
- (C) The church shall also ordain and license men to the Gospel ministry; educate believers in a manner consistent with the requirements of the Holy Scriptures, maintain missionary activities in the United States and in any foreign country; and engage in any other ministry that the church may decide, from time to time, to pursue in obedience to the will of God. (1 Corinthians 7:17, 14:19; Titus 1:5, 2:4; Acts 5:42, 13:1-3, 14:23, 15:35-36, 40, 20:20; 1 Timothy 1:3, 2:7, 3:2, 4:11, 6:2; 2 Timothy 2:2; Romans 10:14-15; 2 Corinthians 8:12, 14; Philippians 4:10, 14-16; Hebrews 13:7, 17; Jeremiah 3:15; Ephesians 4:11-12)

## **Article 2 – Character**

This Church shall be an autonomous, self-governing, group of baptized believers in the name of Jesus Christ, subject only to the spiritual control of the Lord Jesus Christ as defined in the written Words of God, and not in any other ecclesiastical body or church organization. The group will move to be self-supporting as soon as possible.

### **Article 3 – Historic Baptist Principles**

A Baptist is a born-again Christian whose beliefs regarding the Bible and its teachings can tend to differentiate him from many other professed Christians. Strictly speaking, Baptists are not Protestants. Our spiritual forefathers were in existence long before the Reformation. Bible believers have held these basic truths from the Scriptures that have identified them apart from both the Catholic Church and Protestants throughout recorded history back to the first century, even though they have been known by various other group names, including Ana-Baptists, Paulicians, Waldensians, etc. A more in-depth presentation of our Church doctrine, along with the associated Scriptures is given in Section 5.01 – Statement of Faith.

Being in agreement with the historical doctrinal position of Baptist Churches, we choose to be called a “Baptist Church,” until at such time this name shall be wholly associated with apostasy, heresy and teachings contrary to the historical Baptist principles listed:

- (A) The pre-eminence of Jesus Christ as our Divine Lord and Master. He is the only Head over, and Lawgiver to, His churches. Local churches cannot make laws of God, but only execute those which He has given. We will not submit to any self-claimed religious leader, official or overlord, nor to any system of ecclesiastical machinery among our churches. Jesus is to be Lord in both our lives and our churches.
- (B) The supreme authority of the Bible as God's only divine, complete, and infallible revelation. It is sufficient as our only guide and standard of authority in all matters of faith, practice, and morals; whatever it teaches is to be believed and whatever it commands is to be obeyed; whatever it commends is to be accepted as both right and useful; whatever it condemns is to be avoided as both wrong and hurtful; but what it neither commands nor teaches is not to be imposed on the conscience as of religious obligation.
- (C) The competency of the individual soul to approach God and to interpret the Word of God according to the leadership of the Holy Spirit. It is the privilege of every person to read and understand the Bible for himself, without dictation from, or dependence on anyone, being responsible to God alone for his use of the sacred truth.
- (D) All born-again believers are their own priests having Jesus Christ as their High Priest, who alone can mediate between man and God. Because we are priests, according to Scripture, we may approach God, pray to Him, and worship Him freely and fully at any time. We need no other human intermediary since we have direct access to God through Christ.
- (E) The Church membership is to be made up of only born-again individuals, who having understood their sinfulness, and need of a Saviour, have by faith alone, repented of their sinfulness, and trusted in Christ as God's own way of salvation, and then been Scripturally baptized by full

immersion in water.

- (F) There is to be absolute separation of Church and State. No organic union of the two can be accepted. The Church should neither ask for, nor accept of, support from civil authorities, since to do so would imply the right of the same civil dictation and control. The support of the Church belongs to those who belong to it. Because Human Government is of divine appointment, we are to be subject to and obey those vested with governmental authority in all secular matters, but not contrary to conscience and the Word of God. But, civil governments, rulers and magistrates have no right of dictation to, of control over, or of interference with the practice of a Christian's faith, so long as one does not intrude upon, interfere with, or do injustice to the basic rights of others.
- (G) The practice of one's faith is to be free and voluntary, based solely upon one's conscience, both in respect as to beliefs, worship and service; neither conformity to, nor support of religion in any form should be Church or State mandated. Christian faith and practice are matters of conscience and personal choice, and not subject to official dictation; and for either civil or ecclesiastical authority to enforce conformity, physically punish dissent, or compel the support of any form of worship, is a crime against the right of man, is an assumption of divine prerogatives on the part of humans, and is treason against Christ, the only Lord of the conscience and Sovereign of the soul.
- (H) The local congregation of believers is to be completely autonomous. Each local church assembly is, with God's enabling, to be self-governing, and independent of all other churches, and of all persons and bodies of men whatever, as to the administration of its own affairs. In the realm of spiritual matters, it has the right to be free from any other human authority, whether civil or ecclesiastical.
- (I) There are only Two Church Offices: Pastor (which is another word for *bishop* or *elder*), and Deacon. There are no archbishops, Vicars, Nuns, priests, or anything else that would imply a hierarchy. A Baptist Church is composed simply of brethren (Matthew 23:8), with shepherds (pastors) leading them as they all follow Jesus Christ by obeying the commands of the Word of God, the Bible.

These basic principles identify a Baptist type of church throughout history.

## **Article 4 – Affiliations**

This congregation, while holding to the historic Baptist distinctives of faith and practice, desires to maintain fellowship with all Bible-believing churches, organizations, societies and individuals, which manifest both in faith and practice their agreement with the faith as set forth in this constitution. This congregation may provide missionary offerings to any individual missionary, missionary society, missionary board, or convention that it chooses. Recognizing the benefits of cooperation with other churches in world mission, this Church voluntarily affiliates with the Southern Baptist Convention, the Florida Baptist Convention, and the Northeast Florida Baptist Association.

## **Article 5 – Statement of Faith**

### **Section 5.01 – Statement of Faith**

The following comprise the Scriptural beliefs of this church and its members.

#### **(A) The Bible**

We believe the Bible to be the revealed Word of God, fully and verbally inspired of God. We believe the Scriptures to be the inerrant, infallible Word of God, as found within the sixty-six books from Genesis to Revelation. We believe that God not only inspired every word, but that He has preserved them through the ages. (Psalm 12:6-7; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; 1 Peter 1:23-25; 2 Peter 1:19-21)

#### **(B) God**

We believe in one God; Who is eternal, self-existent, infinite, and immutable. We believe He has one nature, one essence, and one substance; yet manifest Himself to man in three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Deuteronomy 6:41; 1 Timothy 1:17; 1 John 4:4)

#### **(C) Jesus Christ**

We believe Jesus Christ to be the one and only Saviour of mankind. We believe Jesus Christ to be eternally God and to possess all the attributes of Deity. We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ was virgin-born, that He was God incarnate, and that the purpose of the incarnation were to reveal God, to redeem men, and to rule over God's kingdom. We believe Jesus Christ never relinquished any attributes of His Deity, but merely veiled them. We believe He lived a perfect, sinless life, at the end of which He was offered for all mankind as a substitutionary sacrifice for man's sin. This sacrifice was a just payment to God for the forgiveness of sin. It was activated by His death through the shedding of His blood on the cross and was accepted by God upon His resurrection. We believe He ascended into Heaven after His resurrection to be seated at the right hand of the Father and is now waiting for the time of receiving His church at the rapture, which is followed by His return seven years later to earth to rule and reign as King for 1,000 years. (Psalm 2:7-9; Isaiah 7:14, 9:6, 43:11; Micah 5:2; Matthew 1:25; Luke 1:26-35; John 1:1, 3, 14, 18, 29; Romans 3:19-25, 5:6-15; Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Timothy 2:5, 3:16; Titus 2:10-15; Hebrews 7:26, 9:24-28; 1 Peter 1:19, 2:2; 1 John 1:3; Revelation 20:1-6)

#### **(D) The Holy Spirit**

We believe the Holy Spirit of God is a person who has personality and all the attributes of Deity. We believe the Holy Spirit has always been involved in the affairs of mankind; however, we believe He has a special ministry that began at Pentecost and will continue until the rapture. This ministry includes reproving the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment. The Holy Spirit was also sent to regenerate, sanctify, seal, and fill all who have placed their faith in Jesus Christ. (Genesis 1:2; John 3:5-6, 14:16; Acts 1:5, 11:15; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19-20, 12:13)

**(E) Sin and Salvation**

We believe all men were born with an inherited sin nature received from our common ancestor, Adam. We believe that because of his nature, man is a sinner by choice, and he is totally incapable of reforming himself or ceasing from his sin by his own power. We believe the only hope of deliverance is a total change of mind concerning his sinful condition and inability to change it, and a turning to Jesus Christ as the only Saviour. We believe that only through the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ on the cross can a man be delivered from his sin. We believe that all those who reject Jesus Christ as their Saviour are already condemned to an eternity in the lake of fire. (Genesis 5:1-5; Acts 4:19, 16:31; Romans 3:10-23, 5:6-12, 6:23, 10:19; Ephesians 2:8-9; Titus 3:5-6; Revelation 20:11-14)

**(F) The New Testament Church**

We believe that the church began with the calling out of the twelve apostles by Jesus Christ and was empowered on the day of Pentecost. We believe Jesus Christ commanded every born again Christian to assemble together in local, physical, visible places (Matt 18:20; Heb 10:25) for the purpose of worship, preaching, gathering of offerings, sending out missionaries (Acts 13), evangelizing (Matt 28:19,20), baptizing new converts, and edification. We believe that all Christians are part of Jesus Christ's "body" (Rom 12:5; Col 1:18), which is also called "the church", but that that "body" has not assembled yet, but will, in heaven (Heb 12:22,23). We believe all true believers will be taken up at the rapture, just prior to the tribulation. (Matthew 16:16-18; Acts 1:15, 2:41-43, 11:15, 20:28; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58; Ephesians 1:12-14, 5:25-30; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Timothy 3:4-15)

**(G) The Last Days**

We believe in the literal interpretation of the Scriptures in their grammatical and historical context. We believe in the pre-tribunational rapture of the church saints, followed by the seven-year tribulation. We believe in the pre-millennial return of Christ to the earth and His literal rule of one thousand years. Following this one thousand year reign is the Great White Throne judgment and then the new heaven and new earth. (1 Corinthians 15:51-58; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18, 5:1-9; Revelation 19-22)

**(H) Separation**

We believe that all saved should live in such a manner as not to bring reproach upon their Saviour and Lord. God commands His people to separate from all religious apostasy, all worldly and sinful pleasures, practices, and associations. We believe that this separation is not isolation from unsaved persons, but is living in such a way that there is a clear distinction between the love of the world and love of the Father. The leaders in the church should manifest character that is exemplary in conduct. Both in the church services and in daily life, Christians should dress in a way that is clearly marked by modesty and a distinction between the sexes. (Romans 12:1-1; 14:13; 1 Timothy 2:8-10, Deuteronomy 22:5, 1 Corinthians 11:14-15; 1 Timothy 3:1-6)

**(I) Creation**

We believe that God created the universe in six literal, 24-hour periods. We reject evolution, the gap theory, the day-age theory, theistic evolution, and intelligent design not attributed to God as



unscriptural theories of origin. (Genesis 1-2; Exodus 20:11)

**(J) Civil Government**

We believe that God has ordained and created all authority consisting of three basic instructions: 1) the home, 2) the church, and 3) the state. Every person is subject to these authorities, but all (including the authorities themselves) are answerable to God and governed by His Word. God has given each institution specific Biblical responsibilities and balanced these responsibilities with the understanding that no institution has the right to infringe upon the other. The home, the church, and the state are equal and sovereign in their respective biblically assigned spheres of responsibility under God. (Romans 13:1-7; Ephesians 5:22-24; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 2:12-14)

**(K) Human Sexuality**

1. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance. (Genesis 2:24, 19:5, 13, 26:8-9; Leviticus 18:1-30; Romans 1:26-29; 1 Corinthians 5:1; 6:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4)
2. We believe that the only legitimate marriage is the joining of one man and one woman. (Genesis 2:24; Romans 7:2, 1 Corinthians 7:10; Ephesians 5:22-23)
3. In keeping with our beliefs regarding human sexuality as express in this statement of faith and in keeping with our purpose as express in Section 1.02 – Purpose and Mission, we have the following practical policies:
  - a. All people are welcome to attend our regular worship services.
  - b. Those who attend may not display behavior that is indicative of the sinful behaviors listed in (K)(1) of this section in church services, at church functions, and on the church grounds.
  - c. Church representatives are to display overt disrespect for those who are involved in the sinful behaviors listed in (K)(1) of this section.
  - d. The pastor of the church will preach consistently against all forms of sinful behavior as listed in (K)(1) of this section, as well as other sinful behaviors.

**(L) Family Relationships**

1. We believe that men and woman are spiritually equal in position before God but that God has ordained distinct and separate spiritual functions for men and women in the home and in the church. The husband is to be the leader of the home, and men are to be the leaders (elders) of the church. Accordingly, only men are eligible for licensure and ordination as

elder by the church. (Galatians 3:28; Colossians 3:18; 1 Timothy 2:8-15, 3:4-5, 12)

2. We believe that God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. The husband is to love his wife as Christ loves the church. The wife is to submit herself to the Scriptural leadership of her husband as the church submits to the headship of Christ. Children are an heritage from the Lord. Parents are responsible for teaching their children spiritual and moral values and leading them, through consistent lifestyle example and appropriate discipline, including Scriptural corporal correction. (Genesis 1:26-28; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Psalm 127:3-5; Proverbs 19:18, 22:15, 23:13-14; Mark 10:6-12; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33, 6:1-4, Colossians 3:18-21; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7)

#### **(M) Divorce and Remarriage**

1. We believe that God disapproves of and hates divorce and intends marriage to last until one of the spouses dies. A true Bible-believing Christian does not advocate, advance, encourage, promote, or champion divorce. However, divorced persons are not second class Christians just because of a failed marriage. If a person has done wrong in the past, there can be forgiveness at the cross.
2. We believe there are scriptural grounds for divorce. This does not mean that a person should divorce, but that God made provisions for divorce. Divorce is a dissolving of a marriage. Technically speaking, death causes a “divorce” of a couple. Both parties are scripturally and legally considered single. Divorce is allowed when the sin of sexual immorality is involved. Additionally, divorce is allowed if an unbelieving spouse leaves and deserts.
3. We believe that if a person has legitimate scriptural grounds for divorce, in the eyes of our Lord they are single. The previously married man has no wife, and the previously married wife has no husband. Throughout Scripture, when a divorce is scriptural and allowed, remarriage is also allowed. If a scriptural divorce takes place, the person is “loosed” and there are Biblical grounds for remarriage. (Malachi 2:14-17; Matthew 19:3-12; 1 Romans 7:1-3; 1 Corinthians 7:1-2, 28; 1 Peter 3:1-6)

#### **(N) Abortion**

We believe that human life begins at conception and that the unborn child is a living human being. Abortion constitutes the unjustified, unexcused taking of unborn human life. Abortion is murder. We reject any teaching that abortions of pregnancies due to rape, incest, birth defects, gender selection, birth or population control are acceptable. (Job 3:16; Psalm 51:5; 139:14-16; Isaiah 44:24, 49:1, 5; Jeremiah 1:5, 20:15-18; Luke 1:44)

#### **(O) Love**

We believe that we should demonstrate love for others, not only toward fellow believers, but also toward both those who are not believers and those who oppose us. We are to deal with those who oppose us graciously, gently, patiently, and humbly. God forbids the stirring up of strife, the

taking of revenge, or the threat or the use of violence as a means of resolving personal conflict or obtaining personal justice. Although God command us to abhor sinful actions, we are to love and pray for any person who engages in such sinful actions. (Leviticus 19:18; Matthew 5:44-48; Luke 6:31; John 13:34-35; Romans 12:9-10, 17-21, 13:8-10; Philippians 2:2-4; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Titus 3:2; 1 John 3:17-18)

**(P) Lawsuits between Believers**

We believe that Christians are prohibited from bringing civil lawsuits against other Christians or the church to resolve personal disputes. We believe the church possess all the resources necessary to resolve personal disputes between members. We do believe, however, that a Christian may seek compensation for injuries from another Christians' insurance company as long as the claim is pursued without malice or slander. (1 Corinthians 6:1-8; Ephesians 4:31-32)

**(Q) Missions**

We believe that God has given the church a great commission to proclaim the Gospel to all nations so that there might be a great multitude from every nation, tribe, ethnic group, and language group who believes on the Lord Jesus Christ. As ambassadors of Christ we must use all available means to go to the foreign nations and not wait for them to come to us. (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:46-48; John 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2 Corinthians 5:20)

**(R) Giving**

We believe that every Christian, as a steward of that portion of God's wealth entrusted to him, is obligated to support this local church financially. We believe that God has established the tithe as a basis for giving, but that every Christian should give sacrificially and cheerfully as God has prospered them to the support of the church, the relief of those in need, and the spread of the Gospel. We believe that a Christian relinquishes all rights to direct the use of the tithe or offering once the gift has been made. (Genesis 14:20; Proverbs 3:9-10; Acts 4:34-37; 1 Corinthians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:6-7; Galatians 6:6; Ephesians 4:28; 1 Timothy 5:17-18; 1 John 3:17)

**(S) Euthanasia**

We believe that the direct taking of an innocent human life is a moral evil, regardless of the intention. Life is a gift of God and must be respected from conception until natural death. Thus we believe that an act or omission which, of itself or by intention, causes death in order to eliminate suffering constitutes a murder contrary to the will of God. Discontinuing medical procedures that are extraordinary or disproportionate to the expected outcome can be a legitimate refusal of over-zealous treatment. (Exodus 20:13, 23:7; Matthew 5:21; Acts 17:28)

## **Section 5.02 – Authority of Statement of Faith**

The Bible itself is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice of what we believe. The statement of Faith does not exhaust the extent of our faith. We do believe, however, that the foregoing Statement of Faith accurately represents the teaching of the Bible and, therefore, is binding upon all members.

## **Article 6 – Covenant**

**As a bond of unity among us, this Church approves the following covenant which shall be accepted by each individual as a condition of membership.**

Having been led, as we believe, by the convicting work of the Holy Spirit to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our personal Saviour, and on profession of faith in Him, having been baptized (by full immersion in water) in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ, and thereby form a New Testament Church.

We promise, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this Church in Scriptural knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its spirituality and prosperity; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to give it sacred preeminence over all institutions of human origin; and to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the Church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel throughout the world by our free will offerings.

We further covenant to maintain family and private devotions; to properly rear and educate our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord as presented in the Holy Scriptures, and to faithfully witness for Christ in seeking the salvation of the lost around us.

We further agree, that we will watch over and counsel one another in the spirit of brotherly love, that we will remember one another in prayers, that we will aid each other in sickness and distress, and cultivate Christian compassion in feeling and courtesy in speech, being slow to take offence, but always ready for reconciliation keeping in mind the rules of our Saviour to secure it without delay.

Whereas, we are the light of the world and the salt of the earth, we will seek God's power to enable us to deny ungodliness and every worldly lust, living in diligent care in this present world.

As living testimonies of His saving power and glory, we promise to be just and honest in our dealings, and faithful in our commitments. We will not engage in backbiting and unrighteous anger. By so promising, we will strive to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour; we will humbly and earnestly seek to live to the honor and glory of Him who loved us and gave Himself for us.

We moreover endeavor, that when we leave this group, we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other Bible believing and Bible-teaching, local church, wherein we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Holy Word, the Bible.

## **Article 7 – Membership**

### **Section 7.01 – Qualifications for Membership**

Anyone who professes faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, who has been baptized by immersion, who evidences love for and a desire to serve Him, and who is willing to submit to our church Constitution and By-Laws, will be welcomed into the fellowship of this church.

In order to become a member, the candidate must attend the church membership class. A membership class designed especially for children shall be made available. The class is required for children seeking church membership. Parents/guardians are required to attend along with their child and will assist the elders in determining if the child is ready for membership.

Upon the elder's recommendation, the candidate will be presented to the church for their approval. A majority vote of the church members present and voting will be required to approve a candidate for membership. The elders will inform the congregation of the names of those they intend to recommend for membership at least one week prior to the vote.

Candidates are received by:

(A) By baptism (immersion) as a true believer in Christ Jesus as personal Saviour; (Any person that places his faith in Jesus as personal Saviour;

(Any person that places his faith in Jesus as the Son of God – Who died and shed His blood on the cross to atone for our sins – and that accepts Him as his own Saviour, and with all his heart is willing to obey Him and His Word, may, by acknowledgement of the church and by baptism, be received into membership, per Acts 2:41);

(B) By letter of transfer from another Bible-believing Baptist church of like faith and practice if the applicant has been baptized by immersion subsequent to a profession of faith (Act 18:27);

(C) By testimony of faith, having been baptized by immersion under the authority of another Bible-believing Baptist church of like faith and practice (Acts 9:18, 26-27; 1 Timothy 1:1); or

(D) By restoration, if having been removed from membership, upon majority vote of the congregation after confession is made public before the church membership of the sin or sins involved, and satisfactory evidencing repentance to the elders (or deacon counsel if the elder counsel is vacant) (Galatians 6:1-2; James 5:16).

Additionally, it is our policy that those unrepentantly committed to living a lifestyle exhibiting the perversions described in Section 5.01 – Statement of Faith (K)(1) will not be considered for membership.

In all cases, the elders council (or deacon counsel if the elder counsel is vacant) reserves the rights to refuse membership consideration to any person or persons whose lifestyle is not consistent with a personal relationship with the Lord.

## **Section 7.02 – Duties of a Member**

On becoming a member of this church, in addition to the contents of Article 6 – Covenant, each one further covenants to love, honor, and esteem the pastor and elder council; to pray for them; to recognize their authority in spiritual affairs of the church; to support the church in prayer, offerings and financial support as the Lord enables; and in accordance with Biblical commands, to support through lifestyle the beliefs and practices of the church.

- (A) It is the duty of members to love, to honor, and to esteem the elders (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13), to pray for them (2 Thessalonians 3:1-2), and to submit to them in the Scriptural exercise of their Holy Spirit-given authority (Act 20:28; Hebrews 13:7, 17).
- (B) Toward those outside the membership, it is the duty of members to be exact in fulfilling obligations, keeping promises, and, as opportunity enables, to declare the Gospel of Christ to such persons.
- (C) It is the duty of members, upon moving from this area, to unit with another Baptist church of like faith and practice and to request that church to send to Abundant Harvest Baptist Church for their letters of recommendation.

## **Section 7.03 – Privileges of a Membership**

Central to the privileges of membership is satisfaction in pleasing the Lord by uniting publicly with the church and in giving expression to your faith.

- (A) Members are entitled to publicly identifying with this local assembly, the body of Christ.
- (B) Members are entitled to the special oversight, guidance, and care of the Elders of this congregation. It is not only natural that they would give more attention to members, but it is also their special responsibility.
- (C) Members have the opportunity not only to learn more of the Bible, Christian doctrine and ethics on the Lord's Day, but to have it applied to their life through discipleship by the Lead Pastor and Elders. Members are equipped to live balanced, righteous and godly lives, and engage diligently in private and family worship.
- (D) Members have the opportunity of discovering and utilizing spiritual gifts. These gifts are exercised in commitment to the local body of Christ. Opportunities to serve other members of the body are provided under the oversight of elders. (1 Corinthians 12:4-11)
- (E) Members have an opportunity to have input into the ministry and outreach of the congregation through voting at congregational business meetings. Only members at least 18 (eighteen) years of age who are physically present at a duly called meeting of the church shall be entitled to vote. There shall be no proxy or absentee voting. The eligible membership of the church has certain limited areas to exercise a vote. Members may not vote to initiate any church action, rather the

vote of a member is to confirm and ratify the direction of the church as determined by the elder counsel. (Acts 13:1-2)

- (F) Members have the opportunity to enjoy the special benefits of care for physical and financial and tangible needs by the church body through the leadership of the deacon ministry.
- (G) Members may inspect or copy the prepared financial statements of the church and the minutes of the proceedings of church congregational meetings, provided he shall have made a written request upon the church and the church has received the written request at least five business days before the requested inspection date. The church may impose a reasonable charge, covering the costs of labor and material, for copies of any documents provided to the member before releasing the copies to the member.
- (H) Individual giving records, individual membership records, counseling records, staff compensation records, employee files, the minutes of the meetings of the elder / deacon council meetings, and other personal and/or confidential records shall not be available for inspection or copying.

## **Section 7.04 – Discipline of a Member**

Discipline is that procedure including Christian teaching, training, admonition, and rebuke, both public and private, with the view to helping the individual Christian grow in grace, mature in the faith, separate from worldliness and live wholly for the Lord. At such time that a member shall refuse to receive such help, it will be necessary for the Church to exclude him or her from its membership (Luke 17:3,4; 1 Timothy 5:20; 1 Corinthians 12:26; 5:9-13; 2 Corinthians 6:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:6)

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

- (A) There shall be a discipline committee consisting of the Elder Council and the deacon Council. The discipline committee shall have sole authority in determining heretical deviations from the Statement of Faith, violations of the church covenant, or any habitual behavior that is unbecoming to a saint of God. The Elder Council may bring an individual who is unrepentant and unwilling to be restored before the church body for dismissal. If an Elder or a Deacon is the subject of a disciplinary matter, he shall not sit as a member of the discipline committee. The Elders and Deacons shall be entitled to the same steps as other church members and be subject to the same discipline.
- (B) Members are expected to demonstrate special loyalty and concern for one another. When a member becomes aware of an overt offense of such magnitude that it hinders spiritual growth and testimony, he is to go alone to the offending party and seek to restore his brother. Before he goes,

he should first examine himself. When he goes, he should go with a spirit of humility and have the goal of restoration.

- (C) If reconciliation is not reached, a second member, either a deacon or a member of the council of elders (or one of their wives at the pastor's discretion for matters solely between ladies) is to accompany the one seeking to resolve the matter. This second step should also be preceded by self-examination and exercised in a spirit of humility with the goal of restoration. (Matt 18:16)
- (D) If the matter is still unresolved after the steps outlined in subsections (B) and (C) have been taken, the discipline committee, as the church representatives who are biblically responsible for putting down murmuring, shall hear the matter. If the matter is not resolved before the discipline committee, the committee shall recommend to the members of the church that they, after self-examination, make an effort personally to go to the offending member and seek that member's restoration.
- (E) If the matter is still unresolved after the steps outlined in subsections (B), (C), and (D) have been taken, such members who refuse to repent and be restored are to be removed from the membership of the church upon a majority vote of the membership present at a meeting called for the purpose of considering disciplinary action.
- (F) No matter may be heard by the discipline committee or the church unless the steps outlined in subsection (B) and (C) have been taken, except in the case of a public offense.
- (G) If an unrepentant offending party is removed from the church membership, all contact with him from that point forward (except by family members) must be for the sake of restoration.
- (H) The procedures provided in this section are based on Matthew 18:15-20; Romans 16:17-18; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Corinthians 2:1-11; Galatians 6:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 10-15; 1 Timothy 5:19-20; and Titus 3:10-11.
- (I) Membership may be terminated pursuant to this section as a result of immorality, drunkenness, discord, gossip, heresies, or any habitual behavior that is unbecoming to a saint of God. (Psalm 15:1,3; Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:11, 13; 2 Thessalonians 3:11-12; 1 Timothy 5:13, 15, 6:3-5; 1 Peter 4:15)

## **Section 7.05 – Transfer of Membership**

Members in good standing who have fulfilled their obligations to the Church, or satisfactorily arranged the same with the Elders, shall upon request be granted a letter of transfer to unite with such Baptist Church as they may designate. Such letter of transfer shall be sent to the Pastor or the Clerk of the Church the member intends to join and shall be valid only for six months, but may be renewed after that time by vote of the Church upon recommendation of the council of elders if satisfactory reasons be given for the



non-use. These limitations of time shall be included in the letter of transfer.

## **Section 7.06 – Termination of Membership**

- (A) Delinquency: Any member who without reasonable excuse to not attend regular services of the church for a period of six months, typically based on the record of attendance, shall be known as delinquent, and the said member's name shall be presented to the Elder Council as such. The Elder Council, having made an investigation, and the said condition not corrected nor cause found for the delinquency, shall then, without unnecessary delay (typically within 1 – 2 weeks), place such a member on inactive status. Members on inactive status have no voting privileges, will have no say in church meetings at all, and will not hold office or serve in the church. (1 John 2:19) Members not on inactive status are active members. The Elder Council, having witnessed a period of renewed faithfulness in attendance of the inactive member, may, at their discretion on a case-by-case basis, return the person's status to being an active member.
- (B) Dual Membership: No member of this church may hold membership in another church simultaneously. If any members unites in membership with another church, that person is automatically terminated without notice from membership in this church.
- (C) Resignation: A member may resign at any time, but no letter of transfer or written statement of good standing will be issued upon such resignation, except at the discretion of the Elder Council.
- (D) Discipline: Membership may be terminated as a result of discipline of the member in accordance with Section 7.04 – Discipline of a Member.
- (E) Death: Upon the death of a church member, the member's status on the church roll shall state that the said member is deceased.
- (F) Letter of Transfer: Membership in this church shall be terminated upon a letter of transfer being sent to another church, in accordance with Section 7.05 – Transfer of Membership.

## **Article 8 – Governance**

This Church is formed by a group of baptized believers united together according to the laws of Christ as set forth in the Bible, and is and shall continue to be wholly independent of every other church and church organization.

The government of this congregation is and shall continue to be vested in the members who compose it and through its duly selected ministers. Recognizing that Christ is the Head of the Church, the

congregation shall seek individually and collectively to determine the mind of the Lord in all matters which necessitate corporate Church action.

The governance and leadership model for this church is:

- (1) Jesus Christ, the Head of the Church. All decisions must be consistent with the Word of God.
- (2) Congregationally governed; the church members are the final legislative authority for the church.
- (3) Elder led: the Elders embody the biblical concept of shepherd/overseer with the Lead Pastor serving as the presiding Elder. Some Elders are employed by the church as professional clergy and some are elected as non-vocational lay elders. All are appointed to give spiritual oversight of the church.
- (4) Deacons: Godly, qualified men and woman who assist the Elders and serve the church in practical and caring ways.
- (5) Church members: the local body of Christ who are equipped and unleashed to do the work of the ministry.

## **Article 9 – Officers**

### **Section 9.01 – Designation of Corporate Officers**

As an accommodation to legal relationships outside the church, the church will have three officers: a president, treasurer, and a secretary. Until such time and Elder Council is established, the Lead Pastor shall serve as president to the corporation. The treasure and secretary shall be appointed by the Lead Pastor. Once an Elder Council is in place, these officers will be elected annually by the Elder Council and shall serve as the board of the corporation. Except as otherwise provided in these by-laws, they shall have full authority of non-profit directors under the laws of Georgia. They shall have no power to incur debt, buy, sell, mortgage, and lease or transfer church property except by an affirmative vote of the church members present and voting at a regular or special business meeting. No single expenditure exceeding 1% of the annual budget whereby the credit of the church is pledged shall be made except by a recommendation of the Elders and approved by the church at a regular or special business meeting.

## **Section 9.02 – Lead Pastor**

### **9.02.1 – Qualifications**

The Lead Pastor shall meet the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 6:10-12; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-3 and Acts 20<sup>17-35</sup> and be in agreement with the Constitution and By-Laws of this church.

### **9.02.2 – Duties**

- a. The Lead Pastor, in partnership with the other Elders, will discern, communicate, and implement a God-given mission and vision for the church.
- b. The Lead Pastor will regularly preach and teach God's Word with clarity, passion, and relevance.
- c. The Lead Pastor is the chief under-Shepherd and will see to the spiritual care, nurture, and growth of the members and attendees at the Church.
- d. The Lead Pastor will lead the church in expressing the love of God in outreach to both the local community and the world at large.
- e. The Lead Pastor with the concurrence and approval of the Elder council shall be responsible for the hiring, dismissal, and management of all church staff personnel, except the hiring and dismissal of the Vocational Pastors.

### **9.02.3 – Calling a Lead Pastor**

Whenever necessary, whether by death, resignation, or removal of the Lead Pastor, the church shall, without delay, proceed to secure a new Lead Pastor in the following manner"

- a. The Elder council shall appoint a Search Committee. When the size of the membership permits, the search committee will have a minimum of seven members. A majority of the committee will be lay members of the church and will include at least two Deacons.
- b. After prayer and thorough examination, the committee will present a candidate to the Elders. Upon the recommendation of the Elders, a candidate will be presented to the church.
- c. Arrangements for the candidate to be examined by the church will be made. This will allow for the candidate to preach in at least two Sunday services and participate in an open period of dialogue with church members.
- d. Notice of the candidate's scheduled appearances shall be given publicly two consecutive weeks immediately preceding the schedule date. This notice shall include the notice of a meeting for the purpose of voting on the candidate.

- e. The vote must be by written and secret ballot.
- f. The extending of a call to the candidate for the position of Lead Pastor will require a quorum of at least one-third of the membership and an affirmative vote of at least three-fourths majority of the church members present and voting.
- g. The term of service of the Lead Pastor shall be for an undesignated period of time. The term shall continue until terminated by retirement, resignation, dismissal, or death.

#### **9.02.4 – Termination**

- a. Should the Lead Pastor desire to resign, he shall notify the church at least thirty days in advance of the effective date of the resignation. The details of any separation agreement between the Lead Pastor and the church will be recommended by the Finance Committee, approved by the Elders, and brought to the membership for approval.
- b. The Lead Pastor shall not be subject to dismissal by the church at any time, except for violation(s) of the Statement of Faith or church bylaws. Disciplinary removal of the pastor from office automatically terminates his membership. A restoration to membership after disciplinary removal will be subject to the requirements of Section 7.01 – Qualifications for Membership (D).
- c. The Elders, by a majority vote or ten percent of the membership eligible to vote, may call a special business meeting to consider the dismissal of the Lead Pastor. A non-vocational lay Elder, or a deacon in the case of a vacant Elder council, will chair such meetings. A quorum of at least one third of the membership and an affirmative vote of at least three-fourths majority of the church members present and voting shall be necessary for the dismissal of the Lead Pastor.

#### **9.02.5 – Lead Pastor Transition**

Upon resignation, retirement, dismissal, or death of the Lead Pastor, the Elders shall designate someone to perform the duties of the Lead Pastor until an Interim Lead Pastor is called. In the absence of other Vocational Pastors, the Elders shall see to the oversight of the church until an Interim is called.

During the transition period, the Elders will:

- a. Ensure that the pulpit is filled for each public service of worship or prayer.
- b. Select an Interim Lead Pastor.
- c. Ensure that the church is regularly updated with information from the Search Committee without jeopardizing the confidentiality of the candidates being considered.
- d. Maintain the stability and ensure harmony within the church during the transition period.

## **Section 9.03 – Associate Pastors**

Under the direction and guidance of the Lead Pastor, the associate pastor(s) of the church shall assist the pastor in carrying out the ministries of the church.

### **9.03.1 – Qualifications**

The qualifications set forth in 9.02.1 – Qualifications apply to all other vocational pastors.

### **9.03.2 – Calling an Associate Pastor**

- a. When additional vocational pastors are needed to advance the work of the church, the Elders will recommend a candidate. The candidate then will be presented to the church. Notice of the scheduled appearance shall be given publicly two consecutive weeks immediately preceding the scheduled date. This notice shall include the notice of a special business meeting for the purpose of voting upon the candidate. An affirmative vote of at least three-fourths majority of the active members present and voting shall be necessary for the calling of the associate pastor.
- a. Membership into the church is granted to a vocational pastor who accepts a call to serve in the church, and to his wife.
- b. The term of service of vocational pastors shall continue until terminated by retirement, resignation, dismissal, or death.

### **9.03.3 – Termination**

- a. Should an Associate Pastor desire to resign, he shall notify the church at least thirty days in advance of the effective date of the resignation. The details of any separation agreement between the Associate Pastor and the church will be recommended by the Finance Committee, approved by the Elders, and brought to the membership for approval.
- b. The Elders, by a majority vote or ten percent of the membership eligible to vote, may call a special business meeting to consider the dismissal of the Associate Pastor. A non-vocational lay Elder, or a deacon in the case of a vacant Elder council, will chair such meetings. An affirmative vote of at least three-fourths majority of the active members present and voting shall be necessary for the dismissal of the associate pastor.

## **Section 9.04 – Non-Vocational Lay Elders**

### **9.04.1 – Qualifications**

The qualifications set forth in 9.02.1 – Qualifications apply to all Elders.

#### **9.04.2 – Selection**

The Elders will initiate and guide the appointment process of non-vocational Lay Elders including seeking the nomination of potential elders from the church membership. Candidates nominated will be examined and approved by the church nominating committee. Candidates examined and approved by the Elders will be presented to the church membership for their approval. Only the necessary number of candidates needed will be presented. An affirmative vote of at least three-fourths majority of the active members present and voting at a regular or special business meeting shall be necessary to select an Elder. Those approved will serve a three-year term and will be eligible to be re-elected for another three year term. There must then be a break in service of at least one year before a person is eligible to serve as an Elder again.

#### **9.04.3 – Termination**

- a. Should a non-vocational elder desire to resign, he shall notify the church at least thirty days in advance of the effective date of the resignation.
- b. The Elders, by a majority vote or ten percent of the membership eligible to vote, may call a special business meeting to consider the dismissal of the elder. An affirmative vote of at least three-fourths majority of the active members present and voting shall be necessary for the dismissal of the elder.

#### **9.04.4 – Vacancy**

In the event of an unexpected vacancy during the year, the Elders may recommend to the church a specific individual to fill the remaining time unto the next regular annual nomination period. The individual must be approved by at least a three-fourths majority of the active members present and voting.

### **Section 9.05 - Elders**

#### **9.05.1 – Composition**

If it is possible because of the number of qualified men, the Elder Council will have a minimum of five members. The Elders will be composed of both vocational pastors and non-vocational lay elders with a majority being non-vocational lay elders. The Lead Pastor will serve as the presiding Elder and, at his discretion, may designate another Elder to facilitate the Council meetings. The Elders will appoint which vocational pastors will serve on the council. With the exception of the Lead Pastor, vocational members of the team will have a term of service of three years and will be eligible to be appointed for another three year term. Any person serving as an Elder who is receiving compensation directly or indirectly from Abundant Harvest Baptist Church shall recuse himself from any vote on the nature and amount of his compensation.

### **9.05.2 – Meetings**

The Elders will meet in Council session at least once a month. Special meetings may be called by the Lead Pastor or another Elder named by him. A quorum consists of a majority of members. Any action taken will require a majority vote of the whole Council.

### **9.05.3 – Responsibilities**

The elders are responsible for providing the vision and direction to the church. They shall pastor the people by providing spiritual guidance, teaching, and by equipping the people for the work of the ministry. They should specifically:

- a. Live exemplary lives, serving as models of holiness, godly conduct, and sacrificial service for the church.
- b. Lead and manage the church wisely, according to biblical principles and consistent with the church's purpose.
- c. Conduct the administrative responsibilities of the Council in a timely and orderly manner.
- d. Receive periodic reports from all church committees and ministry teams.

### **9.05.4 – Specific Duties of Elders**

- a. Membership – Examine and approve candidates for church membership.
- b. Discipline – Oversee the process of church discipline.
- c. Deacon Oversight – Oversee the work of the deacons.
- d. World Missions – Mobilize the church for world missions.
- e. Congregational Meetings – Oversee and conduct all congregational meetings.
- f. Ordinances – Administer the ordinance of baptism and the Lord's Supper.
- g. Committees – Establish committees and ministry teams and appoint their members.
- h. Finances – Prepare for membership approval the annual budget, incurring debt, buying, leasing, and selling property.
- i. Corporate Officers – Annually elect the board of the corporation; president, treasurer, and secretary.

Other duties – Perform any other duties as necessary to advance the church within the limits set forth in this constitution.

## **Section 9.05 – Deacons**

The word *deacon*, means “servant, attendant, aid, waiter, etc.” The meaning given for the word deacon in 1 Timothy 3:10 and 13 is “to be an attendant, to wait upon.” The Greek words translated deacons in Philippians 1:1 and 1 Timothy 3:8-12 are given to mean “to run errands, an attendant, a waiter, specifically to a Christian teacher or pastor.” In Acts 6:1-4, the first servants were chosen by the church for the purpose of leading such task as would free those in charge of the services for prayer and the study of the Word. Therefore, because this church accepts the Scriptures as final authority rather than tradition,

the office of deacon shall not in any way be taken to mean authority over the church or the Elders. The deacons are models of Christian charity within the congregation.

#### **9.05.1 – Qualifications**

- a. Deacons shall meet the qualifications set forth in Acts 6:1-3 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13
- b. In their lifestyles, a deacon shall not indulge in worldly and sinful practices that would tend to weaken the testimony of this church (1 Thessalonians 5:22). No one who brings disrepute upon the church through sinful language, practice, or associations, shall be considered for deacon or, having fallen into such practices and persisting in the same, be retained. Habitual disobedience of the Word of God shall disqualify the deacon, and his office shall be declared vacant upon such a determination by the Elder Council and / or the Deacon Council. Also, in keeping with the Scriptures, gossiping, tattling, back-biting, undermining, holding grudges, violent uncontrolled temper, etc. are unbecoming of the office of a deacon, shall be grounds for dismissal from office at the discretion of the Elder Council and / or the Deacon Council.
- c. No person shall be elected to the office of deacon who has not been a faithful member of the church for a period of six months or more (1 Timothy 3:10).

#### **9.05.2 – Responsibilities**

- a. The general duties of a deacon, aside from appointed task, shall be to assist the Elders in building up the church numerically, financially, and spiritually; to visit the sick, sorrowing, and needy; to prepare for the observance of the Lord's supper; to help with the administration of the ordinance of baptism; to strive personally to win the lost to Christ; to guard and protect the reputation of the church and the Elders against gossip; to investigate delinquents, and to endeavor to remedy any spiritual weakness in the lives of the members; to cooperate with the Elders in the care, operation, and repair of the physical properties of the church; and to care for and lead the administrative needs of the church's various ministries as requested by the Elder Council.
- b. The deacons will serve as "ministers of mercy" whereby they will officially coordinate and manage efforts of compassion, care and benevolence with the church body.
- c. The deacons duties toward the Lead Pastor shall be to pray for him earnestly and continually; to see that his material and physical needs are taken care of; and to strive in every way to help him in the performance of Scriptural duties (Acts 6:2-7).
- d. The deacons are to be faithful in all things (1 Timothy 3:11), especially the regular and special services of the church. Therefore, unless because of illness or otherwise providentially hindered, a deacon is responsible to attend all church and deacon meetings.



- e. They will also support the Elders by sharing information, bringing input from the membership, making suggestions as needed, and providing advice on all issues that will be brought before the church membership for a vote.

### **9.05.3 – Meetings**

The meetings of the Deacons shall be called by the Lead Pastor for the purpose of reviewing the activities of the church. Meetings should be held approximately every four to six weeks, and at the descetions of the Lead Pastor.

### **9.05.4 – Selection**

- a. Each deacon shall be elected for a term of two years. He may be re-elected as many times as the Elder Council and the church so desire.
- b. New deacons shall be nominated by the currently serving deacons, who will serve as the nominating committee.
- c. The currently serving deacons of the church shall meet with the Elder Council prior to the annual election meeting, and after prayer, shall select candidates from among the non-paid, church employee membership who meet the requirements and who will cooperate with the leadership in fulfilling the duties of the office. The nominees shall meet with the Lead Pastor before their names are placed on the ballot or read before the church prior to voting. These candidates must be nominated ahead of time and their names placed on the ballot in order to be elect at the annual election. Vacancies may be filled at any regular or special administration meeting of the church, at the discretion of the Elder Council.

## **Article 10 – Meetings**

### **Section 10.01 – Meetings for Worship**

Unless otherwise determined by the Elder Council, the church shall meet each Sunday for public worship and at least once during the week for Bible study and prayer. The ordinance of the Lord's Supper shall be observed periodically throughout the year, at the discretion of the Elder Council.

### **Section 10.02 – Special Meetings**

- a. A meeting for the calling of a pastor or the severance of the relationship between the church and pastor shall be called in accordance with the provision of Section 9.02 – Lead Pastor.

- b. Bible conferences, missionary conferences, and revivals may be held as the Elder Council deems beneficial.
- c. Special church meetings may be called at any time by the Lead Pastor when such meetings fall on regular times of service.
- d. The Lead Pastor may call a special church meeting falling on a time other than the regular church service, providing it is announced in at least one regular service prior to the date of the meeting.
- e. No secret or unauthorized meetings are permitted. No activity beyond that of routine weekly affairs shall be carried on in the absence of the Lead Pastor, unless otherwise directed by the Lead Pastor.
- f. Unless otherwise stipulated in the constitution and bylaws, a majority vote of the voting members at any constitutionally called church meeting shall be required. The minimum voting age is 18 (eighteen).

## **Article 11 – Binding Arbitration**

### **Section 11.01 – Submission to Arbitration**

Believing that lawsuits between believers are prohibited by Scripture, all members of this church agree to submit to binding arbitration any matters which cannot otherwise be resolved, and expressly waive any and all rights in law and equity to bringing any civil disagreement before a court of law, except that judgment upon the award rendered by the arbitrator may be entered in any court having jurisdiction thereof.

### **Section 11.02 – Notice of Arbitration**

In the event of any dispute, claim, question, or disagreement arising out of or relating to these bylaws or any other church matter, the parties shall use their best efforts to settle such disputes, claims, questions, or disagreement as befits Christians. To this effect, they shall consult and negotiate with each other in good faith and, recognizing their mutual interests not to disgrace the name of Christ, seek to reach a just and equitable solution. If they do not reach such solution within a period of sixty (60) days, then upon notice by either party to the other, disputes, claims, questions, or differences, shall be finally settled by arbitration as described in Section 11.01 – Submission to Arbitration, above, and such Procedures for Arbitration as are adopted pursuant to Section 11.04 – Arbitration Procedures, below.

## **Section 11.03 – Limitations on Arbitration Decisions**

- a. Should any dispute involve matters of church discipline, the arbitrators shall be limited to determining whether the procedures for church discipline as outlined under Section 7.04 – Discipline of a Member, were followed.
- b. Should any dispute involve the removal from office of the pastor or any church officer, the arbitrators shall be limited to determining whether the procedures set forth in 9.02.4 – Termination were followed.

## **Section 11.04 – Arbitration Procedures**

The procedures for arbitration shall be as adopted by the Elder Council and the Deacon Council.

## **Article 12 – Amendments**

These bylaws may be revised or amended by a majority vote of the membership present and voting at any regular church administration meeting, provided that said revision or amendment has been submitted in writing and announced from the pulpit fourteen (14) days before the vote is taken.

### **Adoption**

These bylaws were adopted by two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting at a duly called meeting of the church in which a quorum was present.

These bylaws supersede any other bylaws of Abundant Harvest Baptist Church.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Pastor (President)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Secretary