



PILLAR CHURCH
OF WASHINGTON DC

MEMBERSHIP HANDBOOK

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THE IDENTITY OF PILLAR CHURCH

1. GOSPEL

Membership class starts with the gospel because it is the centerpiece of the Christian faith. Nothing we do makes any sense or has any significance if our message is unclear or unsure. So, let's start our conversation about membership with a reminder of the importance of gospel awareness and a brief explanation of "the gospel."

Fact: The word gospel means "Good News."

Ask around and you will quickly learn that there are a lot of definitions of "the gospel." You may have heard various renditions at church, in books, or on the Internet. If you pay attention you will find a variety of well-meaning religious folks who will attempt to define the "good news" for you. According to the Bible, the good news is, *"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God"* (2 Corinthians 5:21).

The Bible teaches that there is a holiness without which we will not see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14). You have committed sins against a holy God (Romans 3:23). God is just and cannot let your sin go unpunished (Romans 6:23). God demands justice but displayed mercy by sending Jesus (Romans 6:23). Jesus lived perfectly, died an innocent man, and Jesus' death satisfied God's anger over your sin (Romans 5:8). The only way that you are saved is if God gives you grace to have faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross (Ephesians 2:8-9). You are born again by the Holy Spirit through the power of the Word (John 6:44, 1 Peter 1:23). If any man believes this message and turns to Christ, he will be forgiven (Romans 10:9-10). The saving motive for wanting eternal life is that we get God in heaven forever (John 17:3).

Fact: The word Christian means, "Little Christ."

The early church first used the term because they were seeking to be like Christ.

Many people quickly identify themselves as Christians because of where they were born, who their parents are, or what church they attend. The Bible tells us clearly what it means to be a Christian. Even if you have considered yourself a Christian for a long time, I challenge you to compare your definition of "Christian" to the points of the gospel mentioned above.

Becoming a Christian is more than...

- Being born in a Christian nation.
- Going to church.
- Being a good person.
- Being baptized.
- Knowing the gospel or intellectually assenting to the gospel.

Becoming a Christian or being born again expresses itself in two ways...

1. Repenting of Sin:

Repentance is a change in direction. The natural man pursues his own pleasure, but the Christian pursues Christ.

"The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15)

2. Believing the Gospel:

Believing is trusting God in what he has done in Christ leading the new man to treasure Christ.

"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (2 Corinthians 5:21)

Are you a Christian?

Do you trust that God has saved you? Do you believe the gospel? Have you repented?

2. DOCTRINE

A statement of faith¹ is a document of the church that articulates what the church believes. Pillar DC is in voluntary cooperation with the Pillar Church network of The Praetorian Project. For the sake of unity, the churches of the network have agreed to share the same statement of faith.²

You may be wondering why we would begin with a class reviewing our Statement of Faith or Doctrine. Does anyone really use these things anymore? Yes, because the single most important thing about a church is what it believes. The only reason this church exists is because this statement is true: What we believe matters in fact, what we believe is a matter of life and death.

Here is a brief definition of how we will use each of the terms when we discuss doctrine as closed and open-handed:

Closed-Handed Issues represent those issues that we ask every member to affirm and support in good-conscience. Major disagreement in one of these areas makes it difficult to carry out the gospel-centered mission of the church. Note, we are not saying that every disagreement within this category separates a Christian from a non-Christian. For example, we have Presbyterian friends that take a different view of the ordinance of baptism, but believe the gospel and we would certainly not argue that they are not Christians because of this disagreement.

Open-Handed Issues represent those issues where disagreement should be discussed and debated but not at the expense of unity around the essential mission of the church.

Closed-Handed Issues of Doctrine

God. God is the creator and ruler of the universe. He has eternally existed in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are co-equals and one God.

The Father. God the Father reigns with providential care over His universe. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise.

¹ This list of “Closed-Handed Issues” is Pillar Church’s full statement of faith.

² In addition to this, Pillar DC uses an amended version of the 1853 New Hampshire Statement of Faith as a clarification to this Statement of Faith and can be found in Appendix J on page 46.

The Son. Jesus Christ is the only Son of God. He is fully God and fully man. He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless human life, and offered himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all by dying on a cross. He arose from the dead after three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death and ascended into heaven where he sits at the right hand of God.

The Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is present in the world to make people aware of their need for Jesus Christ. He lives in all Christians from the moment of salvation, providing them with power for living and with guidance in doing what is right.

Scripture. The Bible is God's word to us. Human authors wrote the Bible under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. Because of its divine inspiration, the Bible is the supreme source of truth for all people. We believe that every word of the Bible is inspired and that, in its original form, the Bible has no error. We also believe that the Bible plays an indispensable role for the followers of Christ. It builds up, transforms, encourages, corrects, and protects the Christian as he or she studies and applies it.

Man. Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. In the beginning, man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Man's decision to sin caused a division between Creator and creation and left man in need of a Savior.

Salvation. Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense, salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

Evangelism and Church Planting. It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ, and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ, to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. We believe that disciples are most effectively made in the context of the local church. Therefore, church planting and missions are of utmost importance. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every Christian to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ.

Ordinances. There are two ordinances for the New Testament church. The first, baptism, is the immersion of a believer in water. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. Second, the Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby followers memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

Gender Identity and Marriage. We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female and that these two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God; marriage was created and instituted by God for the good of his creatures and creation in order to display his gracious love and to teach the world about how he would unite himself to his redeemed people through Jesus Christ; marriage is a single, exclusive, covenant union entered into by one man and one woman which God bears witness to; only within such union does God intend sexual intimacy to occur; any form of sexual immorality is sinful and offensive to God.³

Open-Handed Issues of Doctrine

“In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, and in all things charity.”

— St. Augustine

Unity is of great importance in the church. Churches at times tend to make primary issues secondary ones and secondary issues primary. We believe it is important to identify which issues are primary (the Statement of Faith) and which issues are secondary (open-handed).

It is important to note that we are not claiming that “open handed” issues are not important issues. We are, however, claiming that they are not more important than the unity of our church. The issues that are that important are contained in the Closed Handed Doctrines section. A member of Pillar DC cannot disagree with any of the beliefs in the Closed Handed Doctrines section above.

Open-Handed Issues represent those issues where disagreement should be discussed and debated but not at the expense of unity.

Examples of Open-Handed Issues:

- **End Time Views.** There are a lot of views on the end times and a lot of the prophetic passages in the New Testament. Two members may take opposing viewpoints on eschatological issues and still agree on essential ones. This is not to say that both views are correct, but simply that sacrificing unity over these views is not worthwhile.
- **Education.** Many Christian parents place their children in the public school system in support of public education. Others believe that private Christian education or home schooling is the best decision. The issue should be discussed, debated and prayed over among those in the church but should

³ See Appendix F, “Why a Statement on Marriage is so Important” on page 36 for a full explanation

never be reason for division and disunity among the body of Christ.

- **Giving.** Some believe that giving a full 10% of one's income as a "tithe" to the church is a biblical mandate, while others believe that the Scripture intends for us to be generous and sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit concerning the amount that we give. Valid arguments exist for both viewpoints, but unity among the family of God is more critical than either.
- **Bible Translations.** Some Christians believe that the King James Version of the Bible is the only inspired version in the English language while others prefer the ESV, the NAS or the NIV. Still others mix and match Bible translations depending on the setting. This is not to say that one translation of the Bible is not any better than another, but that no translation is worth division in the church.
- **Bible Counseling.** While we believe there are some situations where a person may need medication and/or clinical counseling, we believe that the remedy to the majority of Man's problems should be administered by the church through the Word of God. Again, disagreement on this topic should not be a reason for division in the church.

3. DISTINCTIVES

It is important to point out some of the positions that make Pillar Church distinct from other faithful churches.

Because we don't want you to be surprised by a position we hold after you have become a member, we want to inform you of our positions on several "touchy" subjects. It is possible that you will not agree with one or more of the items on this list. If this proves to be true, you are encouraged to discuss the matter with one of our elders for further explanation.

Keep in mind that some of these are "open-handed" issues and joining Pillar Church doesn't necessarily mean that you agree with these issues. The list is in no particular order.

Distinctives About Our Beliefs

BIBLE TEACHING FROM A REFORMED PERSPECTIVE

Although not a doctrinal requirement of the church (our Statement of Faith is our doctrinal foundation), those who lead and teach our church affirm and teach from a Reformed perspective. That means that we believe God is sovereign (in control) over all things, including our salvation. This is actually really good news, because we are so sinful that we never would have sought God on our own; if he weren't in control of our salvation, we could never be saved.

A reformed perspective could be summarized by the Five Solas of the Reformation (Scripture alone our chief authority, saved through faith alone, saved by grace alone, saved in Christ alone, saved for the glory of God alone).

COMPLEMENTARIAN

As our statement of faith says, "God has created men and women equal in their essential dignity and human personhood, but different and complementary in function with male headship in the home and in the church."

In marriage, complementary roles reflect the relationship of Christ and his church. A Christian husband is to serve and love his wife sacrificially as Christ loved the church. A Christian wife is to submit to her husband's leadership as the church submits to Christ.

In the church, the role of elder/pastor/overseer is reserved for faithful men, who follow the example of Christ, the Chief Shepherd, who leads by laying down his life for the sheep and seeks to give proper care and nurture. The role of deacon is available to men and women.

BELIEVER'S BAPTISM

Baptism is an act of obedience that all Christians are called to once they are born again.

We believe that the Bible teaches that baptism is...

- By immersion into water
- Only for those who have trust in Christ alone for the forgiveness of their sins and received new life from God

Baptism by immersion symbolizes that the old self that was enslaved to sin is dead and gone and that the believer has been set free from the bondage of sin and death and raised to walk in a new manner of life as he or she grows in Christlikeness (Romans 6:3–4).

Baptism also symbolizes a believer's new identity in Christ and allegiance to Christ. Being plunged beneath the water symbolizes a believer's union with Jesus in his death (Jesus has died the death we deserve in our place) and coming up out of the water symbolizes a believer's union with Jesus in his resurrection (we will be raised with Christ).⁴

THE LORD'S SUPPER

We celebrate the Lord's Supper regularly for these reasons:

- We believe this was the practice of the early Christian church and we seek to model our ministry after them (e.g., Acts 20:7).
- We wish to make the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ the centerpiece of our Sunday morning gatherings.
- We believe that the regular observation of the Lord's Supper helps lead us to continual repentance both corporately and individually (Matthew 5:23–24; 1 Corinthians 11:27–32).

Distinctives About Our Structure

LED BY ELDERS⁵

The words elder, pastor, and bishop/overseer are used interchangeably in the New Testament to refer to the same role (e.g., Acts 20:17, 28; Titus 1:5, 7; 1 Peter 5:1–2). The New Testament exemplifies a pattern of a *plurality* of elders (e.g., Acts 14:3, 15:4, 14:3, 20:17; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1; James 5:14). These men are responsible for leading Pillar Church and serve as its primary teachers and shepherds. Some of our elders are paid staff, while other elders are volunteers.

⁴ If you are interested in being baptized or if you lead someone to Christ who is ready to obey Christ in baptism, please see Appendix D, "Baptism Theology and Practice" on page 33

⁵ See a current list of elders and deacons at PillarDC.com/leadership

Elders have five primary responsibilities:

- To watch over the church, provide overall direction, and shepherd the flock towards godliness (1 Thessalonians 5:12–13, Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2)
- To pray for the church (Acts 6:4, James 5:14)
- To teach sound doctrine (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9; Acts 20:28–30; 1 Peter 5:2)
- To administer restorative church discipline (Galatians 6:1–2)
- To model a life of distinction (1 Timothy 3:2, 5:19–21; 1 Peter 5:3; Titus 1:6)

The role of an elder is a biblical role and the Bible lists out certain qualifications of spiritual maturity which must be met (1 Timothy 3:1–7; Titus 1:5–9; 1 Peter 5:1–4). The Bible also indicates that this office should only be held by men.⁶

SERVED BY DEACONS

Deacons serve our church by directing the various ministries and caring for the needs of the congregation (see Acts 6:1–7).

Deacons have one responsibility:

- Serve the church (Acts 6:1–6)

Since the role of deacon is a biblical one, we look again to the Scripture for the qualifications of the person to fill this office (1 Timothy 3:8–13). The Bible indicates that this office is available to men and women (1 Timothy 3:8–13; Romans 16:1).

CONGREGATIONALIST

Some matters require the judgment of the whole membership. Biblical precedent leads us to set the membership as the final authority on the following issues:

- affirmation of elders and deacons (thereby affirming leadership and direction)
- affirmation of statement of faith (thereby affirming doctrine)
- decisions regarding membership status, including the bringing in of new members and the discipline of unrepentant members (thereby affirming membership)
- the annual church budget (thereby affirming direction)
- Other matters that may be submitted by the elders to the congregation

Each member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of this church consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God. Further, members are

⁶ For more information, see Appendix G, "Why We Have Male Leadership" on page 40.

privileged and expected to regularly attend Sunday morning worship, faithfully observe the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and submit to the church's discipline and instruction.

REGENERATE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

The membership of a local church should be made up of Christians who have received new life from God (regeneration).

This means that if you wish to be a member with Pillar Church, you have given credible testimony to the fact that you have believed the gospel and have repented of your sins.

Distinctives About Our Activities

WE PLANT CHURCHES

We desire to plant biblically faithful, multiplying churches in every place we find lacking. We commonly send people and resources that will likely never return to us for the establishment of new churches and the spread of the gospel around the world. Each year an increasing amount of our total income is used for the establishment of new churches locally and globally.⁷

WE ARE ENGAGED IN EVANGELISM

At Pillar Church, you're going to hear *a lot* about sharing your faith with non-Christians around you. We want to challenge and equip every member to live out our value of bold evangelism.

WE ARE SERIOUS ABOUT DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship takes place in formal and informal settings in every aspect of our church's life. We encourage every member to disciple others and to be discipled. We want to challenge and equip every member to live out our value of intentional discipleship.

⁷ For more information, see Appendix H, "What Does it Mean to Be a Church Planting Church?" on page 42.

4. IDENTITY

Our Mission

HELPING PEOPLE KNOW JESUS AND MAKE HIM KNOWN IN DC AND AROUND THE WORLD.

We say these words every Sunday. They are posted around our building and displayed on our website. But what do they mean?

HELPING PEOPLE...

We hope for our church to be a helpful community, in which people can come to know Christ and be trained to share his Word. We believe that “ministry” is something for *every Christian* to do, not just pastors (See Ephesians 4:11–12). This is why we long to see every member of Pillar equipped to do ministry.

Pillar Church is not a place to sit back, get comfortable, and consume, but a place to be trained and deployed for God’s work.

People need HELP to know Jesus and make him known, because these things aren’t natural. We cannot afford to coast, because we need to help one another mature and be more active and effective in fulfilling the mission.

- What are we to help one another do? Two things (Knowing Jesus and making him known).
- Where are we to do these two things? In two contexts (in DC and around the world).

KNOW JESUS...

Christians come to know God through Jesus, not by our own works. When we interact with non-Christians, our top priority and desire is for them to know Jesus and to be made right with God.

But “knowing Jesus” isn’t just something we do one time. Our relationship with Jesus will last forever so we always need to labor to know him more truthfully and deeply (Ephesians 4:13).

At Pillar, we will equip you to know Jesus *and* help others to do the same: to fight sin, cultivate righteousness, and be active on God’s mission.

AND MAKE HIM KNOWN...

Being a follower of Jesus is not a private religious commitment, but allegiance to a reigning king. We believe the King Jesus calls every follower to serve him, advancing his mission as an ambassador, sharing the message of Christ with others (2 Corinthians 5:20). This calling is not a burden, but God's mercy to us (2 Corinthians 4:1).

At Pillar, we will equip you to share your faith clearly and boldly with non-Christians whom you know.

IN DC...

Why did we seek to start another church in DC when there were already many healthy ones? Here are just a few illustrations of the importance of work in DC:

- The harvest is plentiful in DC. Of the 700,000 people in the city, less than a quarter of the population professes evangelical Christianity.⁸ People move to DC from all over the nation and world; we want to reach those people, train them to know Jesus and make him known, and send them to make disciples wherever the Lord would bring them next.
- We want to reach Capitol Hill. There are approximately 24,000 non-Christians within a few blocks of our church building.
- We want to reach Marine Barracks Washington (0.6 miles from our building), the ceremonial head of the U.S. Marine Corps. The barracks are full of spiritual darkness and there is an urgent need to offer the hope of Christ to the hundreds of marines living and working here.

Many more reasons could be given. There are many neighborhoods (e.g., public housing in Southwest), military installations (e.g., Joint Base Anacostia-Bolling and Joint Base Andrews), and communities (e.g., the arts) that we want to reach for Christ's glory by being active in evangelism and planting churches.

AND AROUND THE WORLD...

We believe that DC is a strategic hub for sending missionaries to the hardest-to-reach places around the world.

⁸ "Evangelical" can be a troublesome word to some, because this *theological* word has frequently been misused to describe a *political* demographic. By evangelical, we mean followers of Jesus who adhere to biblical truth (the inerrancy and sufficiency of Scripture), Christ-centered faith and practice (the work of Jesus at the cross and resurrection is the foundation and center of our faith), the need for personal conversion (we cannot be saved by being born in a Christian place or being involved in church activities, but only through personal saving faith in Christ alone), and activism (the need for every Christian to display their faith by good works). Evangelicals can be a member of any political party.

Because Jesus has “ransomed people for God from every *tribe and language and people and nation*” (Revelation 5:9), our goal cannot be to merely reach as many people as possible but to also reach as many *kinds* of people as possible.

Think about the world’s population in three categories:

	% OF WORLD POPULATION	CHARACTERISTICS
GOSPEL ACCESS (GA) or “Reached” <i>Example: DC</i>	47.5%	• Bible in their language • Multiple churches in their vicinity • Christians in their culture • A history of Christian witness <i>Not every individual in these places is a Christian, but Christians are present and working in these places.</i>
LITTLE GOSPEL ACCESS (LGA) or “Unreached” <i>Example: Thailand</i>	26.4%	• Some Bible in their language • The beginnings of a church in their vicinity • Very few Christians in their culture (less than 2%) • No history of Christian influence (the gospel is being presented for the first time) <i>The gospel is beginning to spread in these places, but they need help from the outside.</i>
ZERO GOSPEL ACCESS (ZGA) or “Unengaged” <i>Example: The Zaza people of Turkey</i>	26.1%	• No Bible in their language • No churches in their vicinity. • No Christians in their culture • No history of Christian influence (the gospel has never been presented) <i>If one of these people wanted to follow Jesus, they would be completely unable to, because they have absolutely no way of hearing about him. There is no Bible or book they can read, no church they can attend, and no Christians they can meet.</i>

We are living in a GA place and we *must* keep working to reach the lost where we are, but we also have an obligation to use our resources for the good of those who have less access or no access (Romans 1:14).

We long to send missionaries to LGA places where they will train local leaders, translate the Bible, and strengthen churches.

We long to send missionaries to ZGA places, where they will share the gospel for the first time, make the first disciples, plant the first church, and translate the Bible for the first time.

Why should we prioritize these places with no access to the gospel?

- **Christ commanded it.** “Go therefore and make disciples of *all nations*.” Nations = ethnic groups, not geopolitical nation-states.
- **The glory of God requires it.** God *is* worthy of worship from every tribe, tongue, and nation. We must work to bring that praise to him (Philippians 2:11).
- **Paul modeled it.** He wrote, “I make it my ambition to preach the gospel, not where Christ has already been named” (Romans 15:20).
- **Justice demands it.** Christ cares for the overlooked least of these. He leaves the 99 to find the one. We must lay down our lives to reach the *quarter* of the world’s population who have no access to the gospel.
- **Our context supports it.** In DC, we have the opportunity to reach, disciple, and train highly-motivated, disciplined individuals with marketable skills and a desire to make a difference. Let’s train these people to live for Christ, not career, and help them use their jobs to reach the nations.
- **Compassion demands it.** “For ‘everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.’ How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent?” (Romans 10:13–15)
- **The blood of Christ has purchased it.** The angels praise Christ, singing “By your blood you ransomed people for God *from every tribe and language and people and nation*” (Revelation 5:9).

Our Values

Values are deep-rooted convictions that shape the life and leadership of our church. Our mission describes what we will do, while our values characterize everything we do.

THE BIBLE

We want everything we do to be rooted in God’s Word.

“All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” (2 Timothy 3:16)

Example: On Sunday mornings, we preach through books of the Bible, rather than just preaching topical messages or sharing opinions.

RISK-TAKING FAITH

Jesus has called us to exercise humble, bold trust in him. We have confidence because of God's power, not our plans.

"And my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19)

Example: We aim to train and send our best leaders to plant churches and serve as missionaries in places of great gospel need.

BOLD EVANGELISM

We believe every Christ follower is called to share the gospel, therefore we see it as our responsibility to equip every Christian to confidently and competently share their faith.

"... in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect..." (1 Peter 3:15)

Example: We go out together for evangelism twice a month (Gospel & Grub) and expect every member to read the Bible with a non-Christian (*Know Jesus*).

SELFLESS SERVICE

We prioritize following Jesus' example of putting others first.

"... do not use your freedom as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another." (Galatians 5:13)

Example: Love the District Teams work to meet practical needs in our community.

INTENTIONAL DISCIPLESHIP

Discipleship is becoming more like Christ by knowing God more truthfully, loving God more sincerely, and obeying God more faithfully. This kind of growth won't happen automatically, so we've created an intentional pathway for every believer to grow.

"... in your hearts honor Christ the Lord as holy, always being prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you; yet do it with gentleness and respect..." (1 Peter 3:15)

Example: We desire for every member of Pillar to go through the *Follow Jesus* study at least one time.

THE GREAT COMMISSION

We are open-handed with our people and our resources so that we can all seriously fulfill our role in God's plan to make disciples and reach the world.

"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age." (Matthew 28:19-20)

Example: Antioch Teams work to support missionaries after they leave.

5. PARTNERSHIPS

Our Denomination

As a church, one of the most common questions we receive is “What kind of church are you?” or “What denomination are you?” We are a **Southern Baptist Church**.

Since its organization in 1845, the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) has grown to over 50,000 churches with more than 16 million members. Southern Baptists support more than 6,000 church planters in North America and more than 3,000 international missionaries. Locally, we associate with the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia.

WHAT IT MEANS TO BE A SOUTHERN BAPTIST CHURCH:

- We agree with the Southern Baptist Convention’s theological positions.
- We cooperate with 50,000 other churches which also affirm those same theological positions for missions.
- We contribute to a shared mission fund called the Cooperative Program, which provides support to thousands of church plants in North America, thousands of missionaries around the world, six seminaries, and other entities.

WHAT IT DOESN’T MEAN TO BE A SOUTHERN BAPTIST CHURCH:

- It doesn’t mean that we are governed by the SBC.
- It doesn’t mean that the SBC owns any of our property.
- It doesn’t mean that our offerings go to them or they control our money.

Our Network

The **Praetorian Project** is a family of multiplying churches planted near major U.S. military installations. The project seeks to offer long-term discipleship of highly-transient people.



6. HISTORY

- **2012** — Pillar Church of Dumfries founded the Praetorian Project with a vision to plant churches near every major Marine Corps installation.
- **2014** — Thomas Hudson and another church planter were sent out from Pillar Church of Dumfries, Virginia to start Pillar Church of Washington DC. Throughout a long season of faithful ministry, the team struggled to raise funds and gain momentum in the city. Thomas worked as an engineer to support the ministry and his church planting partner eventually moved on to another ministry opportunity.
- **2018** — McLean Bible Church launched its Maine Ave campus in SW DC. Soon after, leaders at MBC began to consider launching this congregation as an independent local church.
- **September 8, 2019** — The congregations of McLean Bible's Maine Ave campus and the Pillar church plant merged to form a new church — Pillar Church of Washington DC (the Pillar we all know and love today).
- **September 2021** — After seven meeting locations in two years, we were able to buy our first building, 1111 South Carolina Ave SE.
- **July 2022** — We sent our first church planting team to start Pillar Church of San Antonio, Texas.
- **Until Jesus comes back** — Lord willing, we hope to continue preaching the Bible, making disciples, sending missionaries, planting churches, and helping people know Jesus and make him known in DC and around the world.

GETTING INVOLVED

1. CHURCH LIFE

These are some practical ways that we seek to follow Christ and live out the church covenant. We expect to see all members engaged in each of these areas as they are able.⁹

Sunday Morning Worship¹⁰

We gather every Sunday (the Lord's Day) to encourage one another (Hebrews 10), sing praise to God, hear the preaching of the Word, and more. Christians have gathered weekly for the entire history of the church.

"And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near." (Heb 10:24–25)

Next Step: Join us every Sunday at 10:30 a.m.

Small Groups

Small groups meet weekly for fellowship, Bible study, and prayer. Groups are for all — men and women, young and old.

Next Step: Find the group closest to you at PillarDC.com/groups

One-on-One Discipleship

While discipleship happens in every aspect of the life of the church, it is helpful to create formal environments for intentional discipleship.

We have created an intentional pathway to help every member be disciples and make disciples, so that every member can confidently and competently study the Bible one-on-one with a non-Christian or another Christian.

- *Know Jesus* is a Bible study that walks through 15 passages in Mark's Gospel. It gives you everything you need to have a Christ-centered one-on-one Bible study with a non-Christian. We've made this resource available for you for free. Every member of Pillar Church is expected to regularly study the Bible with a non-Christian.

⁹See Appendix A, "Living Out our Church Covenant" on page 29

¹⁰See Appendix B, "Making the Most of Sunday Mornings" on page 31

- *Follow Jesus* is a Bible study for Christians that covers some basics of living as a follower of Jesus. We want every member of Pillar Church to go through this at least once, so that they're able to take someone else through it.

Next Steps: *Pick up two copies of Know Jesus and ask a non-Christian friend to go through it with you. Ask a current member of Pillar to go through the Follow Jesus Bible study.*

Ministering to One Another

Every Christian is called to help and serve other Christians. You are called to speak the Word to others, correct others when they are in sin (and hold them accountable), and share practical counsel from the Word in order to encourage and edify others.

A good guideline for ministering to others is to consider the “one another” commands in the New Testament. You can see a full list on page 34.

Next Step: *In at least three conversations this week, share a truth from the Bible with someone else in our church.*

Supporting the Church Financially

Our church cannot be sustained without every member giving regularly and generously as they are able.

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. (2 Corinthians 9:7)

Next Step: *Set up a recurring gift and see other ways to give at PillarDC.com/give*

Serve In Teams

These teams meet practical needs in our church to keep the building running, make Sundays happen, and help needy church members.

Next Step: *See a list of teams and leaders at PillarDC.com/serve. Contact any leader to join that team.*

Serve Out Teams

These teams seek to meet needs outside of our church.

- *Antioch Teams* serve missionaries sent from our church with video calls, letters, care packages, prayer, and fasting.

- *Love the District Teams* serve the needy in our city, seeking to offer the hope of Christ.

Next Step: See a list of teams and leaders at PillarDC.com/serve. Contact any leader to join that team.

Second Sunday Prayer

We gather monthly for an extended time of corporate prayer. At Second Sunday Prayer, we sing, hear a short devotional, spend time praying together, take the Lord's Supper together, and have a potluck dinner.

We want members to prioritize being present for this event each month.

Next Step: Join us each month at 5:30 p.m. on the Second Sunday.

Corporate Fasting¹¹

Fasting is the Christian discipline of abstaining from food and drink (besides water) for a period of time, for a specific spiritual purpose. Corporate fasting is a pattern throughout Scripture (e.g., Acts 13:2).

We fast together on the fourth Wednesday of every month. If you are able, please abstain from food until dinnertime, when we will break our fast.

Next Step: Fast with the whole church each month on the fourth Wednesday.

Gospel & Grub

Twice each month, we go out for street evangelism after our morning service. This is not the only way to do evangelism, but it is a great way to build confidence.

Next Step: Join us for evangelism on the first and third Sundays after worship.

Training Opportunities

We want to create spaces for every member to grow in their ability to minister to others.

- *Church-Wide Training Events* regularly take place to help you grow. Training events cover topics like...
 - Making Disciples

¹¹ For more information, see Appendix C, "How (And Why) to Fast" on page 32

- Evangelism
- How to Study the Bible
- How to Teach the Bible
- *Church Planting Residency* is a group for men working towards planting a church in North America, with practical guidance on leadership, fundraising, and church structure.
- *The Missional Leadership Cohort* is a group for those who are exploring a call to vocational ministry, eldership, or other church leadership. These could be future church planters, pastors, missionaries, elders, or deacons. The cohort gives potential leaders an opportunity to learn and discuss theology and gain practical ministry experience.
- *The Cross-Cultural Missions Cohort* is a group for those exploring a call to missions among the unreached. The group gives future missionaries an opportunity to engage with current missionaries, develop a robust theology of missions, understand current trends in missions, and gain experience in cross-cultural ministry.

WhatsApp Groups

We have several group texts that facilitate fellowship and community in informal ways.

Next Step: Find information to join these groups at pillardc.com/chat

2. MEMBERSHIP

“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body— Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” (1 Corinthians 12:12–13)

Reasons for Membership

REASON #1 — It Protects You

Perhaps the most important reason to join a church is that the church provides a measure of spiritual safety and accountability for the Christian. If you haven’t noticed yet, humans sin a lot. Our hearts are prone to wander from God. The righteousness of Christ in us is continually at war with our selfish nature. The Christians within a church family help spur each other on to righteous living.

“If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!” (Ecclesiastes 4:10)

REASON #2 — Commitment is Good

Today, many people are afraid of commitment. In many areas of life, our society views commitment as a thing to be feared, but as followers of Jesus we are part of a new society. Just as in a love relationship, courtship is fine, but we all recognize that marriage is better.

Formal membership is the way that you say to the church, “I want to be a part of this church; I believe her doctrine, I love her people, I want to serve in her ministries, and I want to have a say in her direction.” Likewise, the church says to you, “We want you to be a part of this family. We love you. We are going to help you walk closely with Jesus.” It’s a mutual commitment; it’s good for you and it’s good for the church.

REASON #3 — It Places You Squarely “In”

You may like to think of the church as a business, a non-profit organization, or a social club, but according to the Bible, the church is like a **family** (1 Timothy 3:15), a **body** (1 Corinthians 12) and a **bride** (Ephesians 5:22–33).

- If the church is a family, a Christian without a church is a spiritual orphan.
- If the church is a body, a Christian without a church is like a hand without an arm.
- If the church is a bride, a Christian without a church cannot be complete.

In many churches today there is no way of telling who is part of the church and who isn’t. In these churches, membership is obtained easily and means very little. At Pillar

Church, we prefer to have meaningful membership and to work hard to help every member walk with Christ.

REASON #4 — Leaders Can Obey the Scripture

The elders of every church have been assigned the task, “shepherd the flock of God that is among you” (1 Peter 5:2). How can they do this if they don’t know who is part of the flock? (See also Hebrews 13:17)

REASON #5 — There is Scriptural Support for the Practice

There is no explicit command for formal church membership in the pages of the Bible, but that doesn’t mean that formal membership is not a biblical idea.

Throughout Old Testament history, God made a clear distinction between his people and the world (see Lev. 13:46, Num. 5:3, Deut. 7:3). God has never been confused about who his people are, so the church should, to the best of their ability, not be confused either.

Christ says that entering the kingdom of God means being bound to the church “on earth” (Matthew 16:16-19; 18:17-19). Where do we see the church on earth? In the local church. The New Testament explicitly refers to some people being *inside* each local church and some people being *outside* (1 Corinthians 5:12-13). This is much more than a casual association. For example, the church in Corinth consisted of a definite number of believers, so that Paul could encourage them to welcome people in (2 Corinthians 2:8) and put people out (1 Corinthians 5:1-8).

Additionally, the dozens of “one another” commands in the New Testament, written to local churches, fill out our understanding of what church membership should practically look like.

Qualifications for Membership

Our constitution includes three criteria for becoming a member.¹² Each member must be...

1. personally trusting in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
2. baptized according to the New Testament pattern of believer’s baptism as a personal witness of their faith in Christ.
3. willing to attend, love, serve, and submit to the other members.

The elders shall be responsible for determining each person’s qualification for membership, relying on a person’s profession of faith and other evidence.

Membership Covenant

A church covenant is a promise — made to God, the local church, and one’s self.

¹² See Pillar Church’s Constitution on page 51 (Article V, Section 1).

While our Statement of Faith is a summary of what we believe, our church covenant is a summary of how we agree to live. More importantly, it is a summary of how God would have us live. It does not include every explicit command of Scripture, but it does give a general summary of what it means to live as a disciple of Christ.

Each member of Pillar Church must sign the membership covenant:

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Lord, Savior, and supreme Treasure of our lives, and having affirmed the adopted statement of faith, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love, to strive for the advancement of this Church in knowledge, holiness, peace, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality and fruitfulness; to sustain its worship, ordinances, and discipline; to welcome, and test biblically, instruction from the Scriptures by the elders of the church, seeking to grow toward Biblical unity in the truth and doctrines; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the Church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations, both with our finances and our time.

We also engage to maintain family and secret personal devotions; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to educate our children in the Christian faith; to support the efforts of the church to prepare the next generations to put their confidence in God; to walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment; to avoid all tattling, backbiting and excessive anger; to seek God's help in abstaining from all drugs, food, drink, and practices which bring unwarranted harm to the body or jeopardize our own or another's faith.

We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay. We moreover engage that when we move from this place, we will, if possible, unite with a like minded church where we can carry out the articles of this confession and the spirit of this covenant.

How to Become a Member

1. Membership Class

All prospective members must attend our Membership Class. Attending a class does not obligate you to become a member of the church or continue with the membership process.

2. Membership Conversation

The prospective member will meet two of the pastors in one 45–60 minute conversation. This isn't an "interview" (for us to decide if you're "good enough" to join the church), this is a conversation, where we get to know you better and enable you to get to know the pastors of the church better as well. We want to hear about your testimony and beliefs and learn how we can better serve you.

3. Live Like a Church Member

After the membership conversation, we'll wait 6–8 weeks to give time for the rest of the church to get to know each prospective member..

During this time, we encourage every member candidate to "live like a member." Here are a few steps we expect member candidates to take during this phase:

- Prioritize attendance at corporate gatherings, like Sunday morning worship and Second Sunday Prayer
- Join a small group
- Get to know other members
- Begin to regularly support the church financially

4. Sign the Membership Covenant

If they agree, the prospective member would then sign the statement of faith and church covenant.

5. Be Baptized

If it is determined that the prospective member has not been baptized as a believer then the candidate would be baptized.¹³

6. Congregational Affirmation

The elders would then recommend the membership candidate to the members of the church for membership. The members would vote to affirm the prospective member at a members meeting.

¹³ For instructions about how to get baptized and an outline of the process we have established for baptism, see Appendix D, "Baptism Theology and Practice" on page 33.

APPENDICES

These are some useful resources to help you grow as a Christian and fully engage in life at Pillar Church.

We hope and pray that they are helpful to you.

A. Living Out Our Church Covenant	29
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A. Living Out Our Church Covenant

1. SPEND TIME PRIVATELY WORSHIPPING

Knowing God must be the chief passion of our lives. If it isn't, none of this matters. We need God desperately.

From the Church Covenant: "We also engage to maintain family and secret personal devotions."

From the Word: "pray without ceasing." (1 Thess 5:17)

2. SUNDAY MORNING WORSHIP

Prioritize attendance on Sunday mornings so that you can use your gifts to serve others, be encouraged, and hear the preaching of the Word. Be present more often than not.

From the Church Covenant: "We also engage... to sustain [the Church's] worship, ordinances, and discipline; to welcome, and test biblically, instruction from the Scriptures by the elders of the church"

From the Word: "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some..." (Hebrews 10:24–25)

3. SECOND SUNDAY PRAYER

We gather on the second Sunday of every month at 5:30 p.m. to pray together — to cry out to God to help us. Our mission will NOT succeed unless we pray.

From the Church Covenant: "We also engage... to sustain [the Church's] worship, ordinances, and discipline... to remember one another in prayer..."

From the Word: "And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some..." (Hebrews 10:24–25)

4. SMALL GROUP

Groups meet together for prayer, Bible study and fellowship.

From the Church Covenant: "We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love..."

5. STUDY THE BIBLE WITH A NON-CHRISTIAN

If we don't want to see people come to Christ, why are we even here? Our mission is to help people KNOW Jesus!

From the Church Covenant: "We engage... to contribute cheerfully and regularly to... the spread of the Gospel... with our time."

From the Word: "Go therefore and make disciples..." (Matthew 28:19)

6. SERVE IN TEAM

Be a part of a team that helps keep the church running.

From the Church Covenant: "We engage... to contribute cheerfully and regularly to... the support of the ministry... with our time."

From the Word: "Do not neglect to do good..." (Hebrews 13:16)

7. SERVE OUT TEAM

ANTIOCH TEAMS support missionaries, LOVE THE DISTRICT TEAMS seek to serve the needy in our city.

From the Church Covenant: "We engage... to contribute cheerfully and regularly to... the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations... with our time."

From the Word: "Do not neglect to do good..." (Hebrews 13:16)

8. SACRIFICIALLY GIVE

Our church cannot be sustained without every member giving regularly and generously.

From the Church Covenant: "We engage... to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the Church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations, both with our finances and our time."

From the Word: "God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Cor 9:7)

B. Making the Most of Sunday Mornings

God's Word challenges us to prioritize the gathering of God's people each week (Hebrews 10:19–27). Here are a few ways that you can make the most of Sunday morning worship.

1. COME WEEKLY

"... not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near" (Hebrews 10:25).

You cannot encourage others if you are not present. Commit to be present more often than not.

2. PREPARE PRAYERFULLY

Pray for the gathering, for the pastors and leaders as they prepare, for yourself (that you'll be open to the preaching and humble to receive encouragement from others), for conversations that you'll have (that God would use you to encourage others).

3. ARRIVE EARLY AND STAY LATE

You will not have the space to encourage others and be encouraged if you show up late and leave as soon as the service is over.

4. SPEAK TRUTH TO PEOPLE

"Ministry" is not something for the professional pastors to do — it is for every Christian. At the gathering, we are all called to "encourage one another" (Hebrews 10:25).

5. SING LOUDLY

We sing to obey Colossians 3:16, "teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God." So know the words we sing, familiarize yourself with the songs, and sing loudly.

6. HUMBLY LISTEN TO THE SERMON

Don't try to evaluate a speech, come to the Word of God as needy people who need daily bread. Follow along in your Bible to see it for yourself. Take notes if that's helpful.

7. BE FULLY PRESENT

From the moment you walk in the door until the moment you leave, be present and look for people to serve and engage with. Put your phone and other distractions away. Welcome guests and invite them to sit with you (Romans 15:7).

C. How (And Why) to Fast

Fasting is the Christian discipline of abstaining from food and drink (besides water) for a period of time, for a *specific spiritual purpose*. While there may be physical or mental benefits from fasting, *Christian* fasting is concerned primarily with a spiritual purpose.

WHY SHOULD WE FAST?

- Jesus exemplified fasting (Matthew 4:2) and expected fasting (Matthew 6:16–18).
- When we don't spend time preparing food, we can devote more time to prayer.
- When we don't eat, we add urgency to our prayers, as if we are saying, "God, I want you to _____ more than I want food."
- When we don't eat, we add devotion to our prayers, as if we are saying, "God I want *you* more than I want food."
- When we abstain from food for a prolonged period, we add focus to our prayers.
- God has a pattern of blessing his people when they fast together (e.g., Acts 13:2).

TIPS FOR FASTING

- **Make a Plan** — Before fasting, determine how long you will fast, when and how you will pray during your fast, and what purpose you will fast for.
- **Choose a Specific, Single Purpose** — Examples include the salvation of a non-Christian you know, the end of a specific sin in your life or another's life, the healing of an illness in someone's life, guidance from God, the success of missionaries, an unreached people group, expressing deep repentance, and to know God more deeply.
- **Replace Meal Times with Prayer** — The time that you save from not preparing and eating food can be replaced with extended times of prayer.
- **Work Together** — If you have children who are too young to fast, consider swapping meal times with your spouse or a friend (e.g., You can cook breakfast while your spouse or friend devotes extended time to prayer; and then your spouse or friend can cook lunch). Women, consider helping a single mom on our days of corporate fasting.
- **Pray Every Time Your Stomach Grumbles** — Your hunger pangs will be a reminder of the specific purpose you are fasting for. Every time you feel hungry, pray a short prayer like "God I want you to _____ more than I want food."
- **Ask Your Doctor** — If you have a medical condition that may affect your ability to fast (e.g., diabetes, pregnancy, nursing), consult a doctor before making plans. Fasting should be spiritual helpful, not physically harmful.
- **Don't Boast** — Our fasting should be private. We are fasting for God's glory, not our own. Don't brag about how often you fast or complain about being hungry (Matthew 6:16–18).

FASTING TOGETHER AT PILLAR

We will fast together on the *fourth Wednesday of every month*. If you are able, please abstain from food until dinnertime, when we will break our fast. Corporate fasting is a pattern throughout Scripture (e.g., Acts 13:2) and we want to prioritize it in our church.

D. Baptism Theology & Practice

Statement of Faith

There are two ordinances for the New Testament church. The first, baptism, is the immersion of a believer in water. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. Second, the Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby followers memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming

Elucidation¹⁴

We believe that Christian Baptism is the immersion in water of a believer (1), into the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost (2); to show forth, in a solemn and beautiful emblem, our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life (3); that it is prerequisite to the privileges of a Church relation; and to the Lord's Supper (4), in which the members of the Church, by the sacred use of bread and wine, are to commemorate together the dying love of Christ (5); preceded always by solemn self-examination (6).

1. Acts 8:36-39; Matt. 3:5-6; John 3:22-23; 4:1-2; Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:12; 16:32-34; 18:8 2. Matt. 28:19; Acts 10:47-48; Gal. 3:27-28 3. Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:20-21; Acts 22:16 4. Acts 2:41-42; Matt. 28:19-20; Acts and Epistles 5. 1 Cor. 11:26; Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20 6. 1 Cor. 11:28; 5:1, 8; 10:3-32; 11:17-32; John 6:26-71

Meaning

Baptism is the public confession of faith in Christ alone for the forgiveness of sins – an outward profession of an inward faith and conversion. The symbolic act of baptism represents the real union of a believer with the death, burial, and resurrection of Christ. Thereby, baptism is a sign of being cleansed from the stain of sin and becoming part of the people of God, the church. Baptism symbolizes a believer's identification with Christ, purification through Christ, and incorporation into the body of Christ. Therefore, baptism is a picture of the gospel making it significant for the life of the church and the individual Christian.¹⁵

Given the meaning, spiritual, and symbolic nature of baptism, we affirm the act in and of itself does not produce forgiveness of sins or cause salvation. Rather, baptism is a testimony of God's grace and saving faith already present in a person's life. (Romans 6:3-4; Acts 2:41; 22:16; 1 Corinthians 15:1-28; Galatians 1:6-9, Colossians 2:12; Hebrews 10:22)

¹⁴ Pillar DC uses a version of the 1853 New Hampshire Statement of Faith as a clarification.

¹⁵ Wright, Shawn D., "Baptism in History, Theology, and the Church," p 107-130, in Leeman and Dever, *Baptist Foundations*.

Elements of Baptism

The essence of baptism includes three elements: confession, gospel context, and biblical mode. A Christian would obey Christ's command to be baptized based upon and following his or her conversion and confession of faith in Jesus's life, death, burial, and resurrection, and repentance from sins (*credo*). Then one's Baptism is to be performed in the presence of gospel witnesses and administrators of a local church (context). Finally baptisms are to be performed with the biblical mode of immersion in water (mode).¹⁶

Steps to be Baptized at Pillar DC

The following is an outline of the typical process we have established for baptism. Even if you have been baptized, it's important for every member to know our church's process of baptizing believers, so that you are able to guide someone through this process after you lead them to Christ.

Step 1

The candidate expresses a desire to the elders to be baptized and a conversation about baptism is scheduled.

Step 2

The candidate meets with at least two elders to discuss the meaning of baptism, to share their testimony, and to explain the reason they desire to be baptized. As shepherds and leaders of the church, the elders help to discern the credibility of a candidate's testimony of faith in Jesus Christ and readiness for believer's baptism. If the individual has not already done so, he or she would then take Pillar Church's membership class to begin the process of becoming a covenant member of Pillar Church.

Step 3

With the recommendation of the elders, the baptism is scheduled on the day of the next regularly scheduled membership meeting. The elders inform the members of the church of the upcoming baptism of the individual and his or her desire to pursue church membership.

¹⁶ Dever, Mark, *The Church: The Gospel Made Visible* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2002), 32: "While it is difficult to maintain that *baptizo* could only mean "immerse" in the New Testament era, immersion does seem both to be the most straightforward meaning of the word itself (thus the unbroken practice of immersion among Greek-speaking churches) and to best fit the uses of the word in the New Testament." See also Wayne Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1994), 67, and Millard Erickson, *Christian Theology*, 2nd ed. (Ada, MI: Baker Academic, 1998), 1113.

Step 4

The elders would aid in the development of the candidate's testimony. Then just prior to the candidate's scheduled baptism, the elders ask that the candidate affirm and sign the church covenant. The individual shares their testimony before the congregation and then they are baptized.

Step 5

The next step of obedience to Jesus for a newly baptized believer is to join Pillar Church as a covenant member. The newly baptized believer would be affirmed as a member of the church during the membership meeting following the service.

Frequently Asked Questions

What do we mean when we say someone is “baptized as a believer”?

A baptized person, who experienced conversion and professed their faith in Christ alone for salvation, prior to their baptism. Then that person was baptized by Christians who heard their testimony and affirmed their belief, repentance, and trust in Christ alone for salvation. In order to receive the Lord's Supper at Pillar DC, a congregant should have been subjected to a valid baptism which could have been regular or irregular.

What is a valid, regular baptism?

We believe that valid, regular baptism happens in a Christian's life when they profess faith in Christ, repent of their sins (*credo*), are affirmed in their faith and testimony by a local visible church (context) and are then baptized by immersion (mode). They then join the membership of the local visible church.

What is a valid, irregular baptism?

An irregular baptism would be one that happens when either context or mode vary yet the person's baptism was based on their profession of faith in Christ (*credo*).

What are examples of an irregular baptism?

1. A faithful, professing Christian (*credo*) being baptized by immersion (mode) at a Christian camp setting by a camp attendee or camp counselor (context). The context here is irregular because it is not administered by a member or in the presence of a local church.
2. A faithful, professing adult Christian (*credo*) being baptized by water sprinkling (mode) at a church by the pastor (context). The mode here is irregular because the Christian is not being immersed in water.

What is invalid baptism?

An invalid baptism occurs when one or all of the essential elements does not comprise a person's "baptism."

What are examples of an invalid baptism?

1. An adult believer (credo) who left the Roman Catholic church, but desires to return to that church and be baptized by the priest. This would be an invalid baptism because the church is an untrue community (context) because they believe a different gospel than that taught in the Scriptures, namely that one is justified not by Christ alone but Christ plus their meritorious works of grace as prescribed by Roman Catholic doctrine.
2. A unbelieving teenager that gets dunked underwater in a pool by a true Christian. While there is water being used, the person being dunked is not a professing Christian (credo) and is not being done in the presence of a local church (context).
3. An infant is sprinkled with water by a pastor during a church service. This would be considered an invalid baptism because the infant is not professing faith (credo). This is also known as paedobaptism.
4. A believing adult immerses himself in water alone at his home. There is water being used (mode) and the person is a professing believer (credo), but this is not a true baptism because the baptism was administered by the baptizee and not by another Christian, nor is it in the presence of other Christians (context).

How essential is mode when it comes to baptism?

Water is essential to baptism. As we see throughout the New Testament, believers were baptized in or with water. However, there are varying ranges of what immersion can mean in Scripture but in every case water is used. Additionally, the subjects of baptism are confessing Christians who submit to apostles and local church administration while being immersed in some way. Therefore, as long as a Christian is the subject of baptism and that baptism is administered by a local church, the mode (immersion completely under water, pouring, sprinkling, or the like) can be irregular or outside of the normal practice of the New Testament, i.e. a person confined to a wheelchair who is a true believer but unable to be immersed could have water poured over them as the local church administers the baptismal act. (Mark 4:1-20; Acts 2:38-41; 8:12-13; 10:44-48; 16:29-33; 18:8; Galatians 3:26-27; Colossians 2:12)

Will we accept someone into membership if the mode of believer's baptism was by sprinkling at another church prior to coming to Pillar DC?

Yes, because this would be an irregular baptism not an invalid baptism. It would be considered valid yet irregular because the person was a professing Christian (credo) and the baptism was administered by a local church (context).

Can my children be baptized?

Although there is not an explicit biblical command regarding the age of baptism, we believe there is wisdom in delaying baptism until confirming, as best as the members along with the elders of the church can assess, that genuine faith is present in the believing child of a member. In regards to the age of a candidate for baptism, there is not a definitive minimum age before a convert can be baptized. However, we believe that prior to baptism a candidate should show evidence of faith, and if not an adult, independent of biblical parental care and oversight.¹⁷

This cautious, yet optimistic approach preserves the purity of baptism, ensures a proper comprehension of baptism's significance, and safeguards against a false understanding of salvation. The biblical precedent for believer's baptism is clear, whereas the case for immediate baptism is not.

What is Paedobaptism?

Paedobaptism is the act of baptizing children prior to their confession of faith, therefore Pillar Church of Washington DC refrains from practicing paedobaptism. Paedobaptism is another example of invalid baptism.

Is baptism necessary for salvation?

No, baptism is not necessary to receive Christ's free gift of eternal life. The Bible makes this clear in various places including Ephesians 2:8-9. It is by faith alone that we are saved. Therefore, baptism is not salvific. It is an outward symbol of the inward change of conversion, repentance, and belief in the heart of a believer.

This means that someone could be saved towards the end of their life and be with Christ for all eternity without having been baptized. One example is the man that hung on a cross next to Jesus. It was the man's faith in Jesus that saved him (Luke 23:40-43). Due to the nature of crucifixion, it would have been very unlikely for this man to have been baptized before dying.

Advocates for salvific baptism are quick to turn to 1 Peter 3:21 because it states "Baptism...now saves you." However, further down in verse 21, Peter clarifies with the phrase "not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience." While Peter is connecting baptism with salvation, it is not the act of being baptized that he is referring to (not the removal of dirt from the flesh). Being immersed in water does nothing but wash away dirt. What Peter is referring to is what baptism represents, which is what saves us (an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Jesus Christ). In other words, Peter is simply

¹⁷ "While there are instances of immediate baptism, there are other instances where the time factor is not clear (Acts 18:7-8) and where conversions are reported without any mention of an immediate baptism (4:4; 13:48); in fact, conversions are spoken of as a daily occurrence, but not baptisms (2:47; 16:5)." Hammett, Biblical Foundations for Baptist Churches, 273.

connecting baptism with belief. It is not the getting wet part that saves but the “appeal to God for a clean conscience” which is signified by baptism, that saves us. The appeal to God always comes first. First belief and repentance, then we are baptized to publicly identify ourselves with Christ.¹⁸

What does baptism by the Spirit mean?

We understand the baptism by the Spirit to mean when the Holy Spirit enters into a believer, thus uniting them to Christ. This happens when a believer is regenerated or born again and not during the act of baptism.

A popular meaning held traditionally by Pentecostal congregations is that the baptism of the Holy Spirit is a second blessing to be sought after and is seen as the greatest achievement in the Christian life. One example of evidence for this second blessing is speaking in tongues.

Pillar Church rejects that there is a second baptism, a second blessing that brings about a deeper union with the Holy Spirit, or that this blessing brings about the confirmation of a believer’s conversion.

What is the difference between John the Baptist’s baptism and being baptized in Jesus's name?

Acts 19:4 states that “John baptized with the baptism of repentance.” John states the same thing in Matthew 3:11 - “*I baptize you with water for repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire.*”

John’s baptism therefore represents a recognition of one’s sin, a desire for spiritual cleansing, and a commitment to follow God’s law in anticipation of the Messiah’s arrival.¹⁹

Being baptized in Jesus’s name, not only represents repentance, but also marks one’s identity with Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection (Rom. 6:1-5). Jesus’ death on the cross satisfies the wrath of God and washes away our sin. Christian baptism is symbolic of the cleansing of sin, conversion, and the oneness with Christ.

John’s baptism then was looking forward to what Jesus would accomplish and was preparing people to receive him as their Lord and Savior.

¹⁸ Got Questions <https://www.gotquestions.org/baptism-1Peter-3-21.html>, accessed on 1/2/2026

¹⁹ Got Questions <https://www.gotquestions.org/baptism-of-John.html>, accessed on 1/8/2026

What about the delayed indwelling of the Holy Spirit we see in Acts?

In Acts 8, there is a group of Samaritans that heard the Gospel and were baptized. However, in verse 16, we learn that they had not yet received the Holy Spirit. Which seemingly contradicts the truth that the Holy Spirit enters a believer upon their conversion.

It is important to note that the book of Acts is a historical recording of the spread of the gospel and the establishment of the early church. The Samaritans' delay in receiving the Holy Spirit was in fact delayed because that is what Scripture tells us. However, based on the rest of Scripture, this should not be taken to be viewed as a normal case or normative in the Christian life.

For God's own purposes, he delayed the Samaritans from receiving the Spirit until the arrival of Peter and John. But they did eventually receive the Holy Spirit. This demonstrates God's sovereignty over the gift of the Holy Spirit not the apostles or Simon the magician, who attempts to control the Holy Spirit for monetary gain. Neither, as recorded in Acts 8, is baptism itself the ordinance that causes one to receive the Holy Spirit.²⁰

What about the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts?

Similar to the story of the Samaritans, the Ethiopian Eunuch's unique case of baptism should be taken as what historically happened and not a normal practice (normative) for us to follow today. In Acts 8, Philip shared the Gospel with the eunuch, he believed, and was baptized in water on the side of the road.

We would consider this an irregular baptism today because the eunuch was not baptized in the context of a church, even though he did believe (credo) and was most likely immersed in water (mode) (see Acts 8:38 - down into the water).

²⁰ Witherington III, Ben, *The Acts of the Apostles: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary*, (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1998) 288-289.

E. The “One Another” Commands of Scripture

1. “...Be at peace with each other.” (Mark 9:50)
2. “...Wash one another’s feet.” (John 13:14)
3. “...Love one another...” (John 13:34)
4. “...Love one another...” (John 13:35)
5. “...Love one another...” (John 15:12)
6. “...Love one another” (John 15:17)
7. “Be devoted to one another in brotherly love...” (Romans 12:10)
8. “...Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 12:10)
9. “Live in harmony with one another...” (Romans 12:16)
10. “...Love one another...” (Romans 13:8)
11. “...Stop passing judgment on one another.” (Romans 14:13)
12. “Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you...” (Romans 15:7)
13. “...Instruct one another.” (Romans 15:14)
14. “Greet one another with a holy kiss...” (Romans 16:16)
15. “...When you come together to eat, wait for each other.” (I Cor. 11:33)
16. “...Have equal concern for each other.” (I Corinthians 12:25)
17. “...Greet one another with a holy kiss.” (I Corinthians 16:20)
18. “Greet one another with a holy kiss.” (II Corinthians 13:12)
19. “...Serve one another in love.” (Galatians 5:13)
20. “If you keep on biting and devouring each other...you will be destroyed by each other.”
(Galatians 5:15)
21. “Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other.”
(Galatians 5:26)
22. “Carry each other’s burdens...” (Galatians 6:2)
23. “...Be patient, bearing with one another in love.” (Ephesians 4:2)
24. “Be kind and compassionate to one another...” (Ephesians 4:32)
25. “...Forgiving each other...” (Ephesians 4:32)
26. “Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs.” (Ephesians 5:19)
27. “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” (Ephesians 5:21)
28. “...In humility consider others better than yourselves.” (Philippians 2:3)
30. “Do not lie to each other...” (Colossians 3:9)
31. “Bear with each other...” (Colossians 3:13)
32. “...Forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another.”
(Colossians 3:13)
33. “T each...[one another]” (Colossians 3:16)
34. “...Admonish one another (Colossians 3:16)

35. "...Make your love increase and overflow for each other." (I Thessalonians 3:12)
36. "...Love each other." (I Thessalonians 4:9)
37. "...Encourage each other..." (I Thessalonians 4:18)
38. "...Encourage each other..." I Thessalonians 5:11)
39. "...Build each other up..." (I Thessalonians 5:11)
40. "Encourage one another daily..." Hebrews 3:13)
41. "...Spur one another on toward love and good deeds." (Hebrews 10:24)
42. "...Encourage one another." (Hebrews 10:25)
43. "...Do not slander one another." (James 4:11)
44. "Don't grumble against each other..." (James 5:9)
45. "Confess your sins to each other..." (James 5:16)
46. "...Pray for each other." (James 5:16)
47. "...Love one another deeply, from the heart." (I Peter 3:8)
48. "...Live in harmony with one another..." (I Peter 3:8)
49. "...Love each other deeply..." (I Peter 4:8)
50. "Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling." (I Peter 4:9)
51. "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others..." (I Peter 4:10)
52. "...Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another..." (I Peter 5:5)
53. "Greet one another with a kiss of love." (I Peter 5:14)
54. "...Love one another." (I John 3:11)
55. "...Love one another." (I John 3:23)
56. "...Love one another." (I John 4:7)
57. "...Love one another." (I John 4:11)
58. "...Love one another." (I John 4:12)
59. "...Love one another." (II John 5)

F. Why a Statement on Marriage is So Important

Pillar Church was founded to exist as a church that would uphold the timeless truth revealed by God in the Scriptures in the midst of an ever-changing culture. For this reason, there are times in the life of a church that it is wise to clarify teaching that previously would have been assumed by writing an explicit statement that summarizes our teaching clearly. When assumptions and definitions of shared terms like marriage and gender change in the culture we are in danger of changing by not clarifying and distinguishing our beliefs from the common understanding of our context. Given recent events and changes in our nation's legal understanding of marriage and our larger culture's views on sexuality we believe it is wise to have a clear statement of our beliefs for a number of reasons.

First, it is important for us to continue to describe and press toward a biblical vision for all of life. We are not just defending ourselves against a changing culture; we ourselves are seeking to be renewed day by day after the image of our creator. Each of one of us is shedding the sin and confusion of our past as it pertains to relationships, marriage, and sexuality and need a fixed vision to walk toward together. God has given such a vision for gender, marriage, and sexuality in His word and we need clarity when the culture changes.

Second, it is important for us as we seek to proclaim the gospel and call people out of sin into the freedom of repentance and faith in Christ. We must embody in this way a counter-culture that people can find when the pursuit of sin has failed them. Doctrinal clarity helps us to know and understand our identity as the people of God who are sojourners from a better Kingdom. Sin overpromises and under delivers and we know that. In the days ahead, others around us are going to discover the same thing, as what they thought would fulfill them leaves them empty. If we have given all our ground, we will not have anywhere to invite them to stand for refuge and redemption.

Third, it is important for us as we seek to keep the proclamation of the gospel the central work of our church. A lack of clarity can cause division, as the points of cultural tension will continue to draw us into unnecessary skirmishes if we are not clear together. Churches that lack clarity on issues that the culture around them is fighting about usually consume themselves with the same battles. It is important to be clear on what we believe so that we can go beyond that to how to best represent it winsomely in our culture. By making a clear statement of our beliefs we will be able to keep the gospel work we do together at the center of our mission and time together.

Finally, it is important for the sake of affording the church appropriate legal protection as new laws are instituted. It is important for churches to define their

religious convictions if they hope for them to be protected. It will not be safe to assume that any one of us will have the opportunity to be the rightful interpreter of the church's positions if we have not clearly defined them. Legal battles could become a point of distraction for churches in the future and we can protect ourselves from unnecessary distraction by establishing clarity in our Statement of Faith.

Statement on Marriage Explanation

"We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female..."

The statement aims from the outset to affirm what scripture states clearly as it relates to male and female gender. Namely, that gender is not a social construct grounded in our perception of others, and ourselves but that it is grounded in the creating work of God. Therefore, as Christians who believe that God created all things good, we not only accept the distinctions of gender as real but also wonderfully intended for our flourishing as human beings created to shine forth God's image. Furthermore, gender is immutable because it is given by God rather than defined by our perception. We reject human thinking to the contrary that gender can be chosen or changed.

"and that these two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God..."

It is important that we clearly understand the value that Scripture assigns to the recognition of the two distinct genders of male and female. They together, and not separate, contribute to a picture that Scripture says displays the image of God in humanity. God, whose image could not be exhausted in any picture, has chosen to give a portion of his chosen display to each gender so that together they would fulfill their calling as His image bearers. Our calling as human persons is hindered when we do not labor to understand the distinct values brought forth by male and female. We can confess that a detailed understanding of the distinctions between male and female remain a mystery while still affirming that there are some clear differences that we should seek to understand well. All the while knowing that clarity will yield good fruit intended by God. In a world where sin confuses and distorts this will be imperfect, but the work of the Spirit in Salvation turns us away from valuing our perception of our calling and identity to our identity in Christ. Colossians 3:10 instructs us that through our relationship with Christ we "have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator." In the end both male and female contribute something unique to the human display of God's image that is lost when we choose to ignore the distinction of gender.

"marriage was created and instituted by God for the good of his creatures and creation..."

As we similarly consider the connected topic of marriage it is important to remember that God also created and instituted marriage. It was not a cultural development, but an original institution that pre-dates the first sin and its effects. Marriage as instituted by God was intended for the mutual benefit of man and woman who would in turn aid one another in the fulfillment of their calling to image God. Following on the creation of the distinct genders with their distinct contributions is the institution of this mutual relationship where both benefited from the other, as they would image God. As a result, their union would bless creation as they exercised a dominion together having children and establishing a culture that would beautifully display the facets of God's glory in the midst of creation. The calling and institution are both instituted by God and therefore we do not look to human wisdom for the regulation and definition of marriage but to God's revelation of himself in His word.

"in order to display his gracious love³ and to teach the world about how he would unite himself to his redeemed people through Jesus Christ..."

Before considering how God has regulated or defined marriage we cannot pass by the deep importance it plays in preparing us to understand God's eternal plan of redemption. Even before the fall into sin God was preparing a way to display how His redemptive or saving plan would work. In marriage God would see the two as united and related to them as a unified whole. The one-flesh union is not just about sex but about the establishment of a new reality in each marriage that God recognizes as a union. The two individuals have become one. We can see this in Genesis 3 during the recounting of the first sin and its after effects. Adam has not just failed because he sinned against God, but also because he did not wage war against Satan as he was tempting Eve. Adam was responsible. Additionally, Eve did not act as a help suitable for Adam in resisting the enemy but drew him into the sin. They were not just responsible for themselves but one another. In the same way, those who come to Christ by Faith are united to Christ. There is a union recognized by God where he no longer sees us as sinners separate from Christ. He is the Groom and we the church are His bride. He laid his life down to accomplish our victory and is glorified as we respond to His love. He sees us in and through Christ and His work. Our sins have been paid because we are one with Christ and He paid the debt. Our standing before God is righteous because Christ has given His righteousness to our union. In marriage we experience the difficulty of costly love and come to value the merciful love of Jesus. All of this is God's story meant to be displayed and understood through the picture of the marital union. It is God's story to tell and God's story to regulate and define.

"marriage is a single, exclusive, covenant union entered into by one man and one woman which God bears witness to..."

Not only is marriage instituted by God, it is defined and regulated by Scripture, and clearly explained by Jesus who is our final authority for understanding Genesis 2. In

Genesis we do not just read that God brought Adam and Eve together but that this would be the pattern for all subsequent marriages. A man would leave his father and mother and cling to his wife in a one-flesh union. Marriage as God institutes it and recognizes it is a single and exclusive commitment between one man and one woman who cling fast to one another. For this reason, we would reject that someone could be legitimately married to more than one person simultaneously. Again, the confusion and distortion of sin may cause what is clear to God to be hard to see in earthly reality. For example, the polygamy in the Old Testament often causes confusion in the minds of those who read the Bible. But when understood properly, the narratives themselves reveal the brokenness present and cause through sin. Narratives do not teach explicitly but by exposing the fruit of such choices, which are negative when examined. The narratives of the Old Testament work to teach through their accounts, but do not affirm all of the activities of those whom God worked through to display his grace and plan. Jesus points at that as he mentions that divorce is a way of dealing with the complex implications of the fall as it effects marriages and relationships. But the bigger point must not be missed when Jesus speaks so clearly in places like Mark 10. The idea of marriage that Jesus recognizes is the one from the beginning that includes a male and a female who are joined together in marriage. The marriage is described as singular and exclusive. Sexual expression outside of the union is clearly forbidden, and God recognizes this relationship as something that he has created.

“only within such union does God intend sexual intimacy to occur;⁶ any form of sexual immorality is sinful and offensive to God.”

Finally, in marriage as defined, the fulfillment of our God-given sexual desire finds its proper place and calling. Human sexuality is a gift and responsibility given by God. It is a pleasure that bonds the marital union when exercised as an expression of love. It is a profound responsibility as it joins us to God's work of creation as children are produced by the union of man and woman. Outside of marriage, sexual intimacy is forbidden, and sexual expression does damage not often seen or acknowledged by those who engage in it. Here again, human perception is not our guide or help when it is used against the gracious instruction of the Word of God.

Statement on Marriage Scriptural References:

Gen. 1:26-28; Eph. 4:24; Col. 3:10 2. Gen. 1-26-28, 2:4-25, 9:1; Mal. 2:15 3. Eph. 5:25, 32 4. Eph. 5:31-32, Rev. 19:7-9 5. Exo. 20:14; Deut. 5:18; Job 31:1; Mal. 2:14, Mat. 5:28, 5:31-32, 19:3-12, Mar. 10:2-12; Rom 7:2-3, 1 Cor. 7:39 6. Exo. 20:14; Deut. 5:18; Job 31:1; Prov. 5:8, 5:19-20; Mat. 5:28; 1 Cor. 6:18; 7:2-9; Heb. 13:4 7. Gen. 19:1-29, Lev. 18:1-30, 20:10-21; 1 Kgs. 15:21; 2 Kgs. 23:7 Prov. 2:16- 20, 7:5, 10, 13, 21-22; Amos 2:7; Mat. 15:18-20; Mar. 6:18; Rom. 1:21-31, 1 Cor. 5:1, 6:9-10, 7:36-38; Eph. 5:3-4 Col 3:5; 1 Thess. 4:3-7; 1 Tim. 1:9-10; 2 Peter 2:14; Jude 6-7

G. Why We Have Male Leadership

Excerpted from an article by Alexander Strauch

There is much about biblical eldership that offends churchgoing people today: the concept of elders who provide pastoral care, a plurality of pastors, and the idea of so-called "lay" or non-clerical pastor elders. Yet nothing is more objectionable in the minds of many contemporary people than the biblical concept of an all-male eldership. A biblical eldership, however, must be an all-male eldership.

For the Bible-believing Christian, the primary example of male leadership is found in the person of Jesus Christ. The most obvious point is that Christ came into the world as the Son of God, not the daughter of God. His maleness was not an arbitrary matter. It was a theological necessity, absolutely essential to His person and work.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus trained and appointed twelve men whom He called "apostles" (Luke 6:13). Jesus' choice of an all-male apostolate affirmed the creation order as presented in Genesis 2:18-25. Luke informs us that before choosing the twelve, Jesus spent the entire night in prayer with His Father (Luke 6:12). As the perfect Son, in complete obedience and submission to His Father's will, Jesus chose twelve males to be His apostles. These men were God the Father's choice. Jesus' choice of male apostles was based on divine principles and guidance, not local custom or traditions.

As we've seen, the twelve followed the example of their Lord and Master by appointing seven men, not seven men and women, when they needed to establish an official body of servants to care for the church's widows and funds (Acts 6:1-6). Thirty years after Christ's ascension into heaven, Peter wrote to the churches of northwestern Asia Minor and exhorted his Christian sisters to submit to their husbands in the same way the "holy women" of the Old Testament age did (1 Peter 3:5). He also exhorted husbands to care for their wives and reminded them that their wives were fellow heirs "of the grace of life" (1 Peter 3:7). Thus, Peter continued to follow His Lord's example and taught both role distinctions and male-female equality.

The biblical pattern of male leadership continued throughout the New Testament era. Regarding the marriage relationship, Paul could not have stated more pointedly the divine order of the husband-wife relationship. In complete agreement with Peter's instruction on the wife's marital submission, Paul teaches that the husband is empowered and commanded to lead in the marriage relationship and that the wife is instructed to submit "as to the Lord." The following texts speak for themselves:

- "Wives, be subject to your own husbands, as to the Lord" (Eph. 5:22).
- "But as the church is subject to Christ, so also the wives ought to be to their husbands in everything" (Eph. 5:24).
- "For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church" (Eph. 5:23).
- "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord" (Col. 3:18).
- "But as for you, speak the things which are fitting for sound doctrine . . . that they [older women] may encourage the young women to love their husbands, to love their children, to be sensible, pure, workers at home, kind, being

subject to their own husbands, that the word of God may not be dishonored" (Titus 2:1,4,5).

Just as Paul teaches male headship in the family, he teaches male headship in the local church (1 Tim. 2:8-3:7). Because the family is the basic social unit and the man is the established family authority, we should expect that men would become the elders of the larger church family. Consider Paul's instructions in 1 Timothy 2:12: "But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man." In the same way that every individual family is governed by certain standards of conduct, so the local church family is governed by certain principles of conduct and social arrangement. The letter of 1 Timothy specifically addresses the issue of proper order and behavior of men, women, and elders in the local church family. To his representative in Ephesus, Paul writes, "I am writing these things to you, hoping to come to you before long; but in case I am delayed, I write so that you may know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:14, 15).

A major aspect of the church's social arrangement concerns the behavior of women in the congregation. In the church in Ephesus, as a result of false teaching that may have challenged the validity of traditional gender roles, Christian women were acting contrary to acceptable Christian behavior. In order to counter improper female conduct in the church, Paul restates Christian principles of women's conduct: "Let a woman quietly receive instruction with entire submissiveness. But I do not allow a woman to teach or exercise authority over a man, but to remain quiet. For it was Adam who was first created, and then Eve. And it was not Adam who was deceived, but the woman being quite deceived, fell into transgression" (1 Tim. 2:11-14).

First Timothy 2:11-14 should settle the question of women elders. Paul prohibits women from doing two things: (1) teaching the men of the church; and (2) exercising authority over the men.

Note that immediately following his instruction in 1 Timothy 2:11-15, that prohibits women from teaching and leading men, Paul describes the qualifications for those who oversee the local church (1 Tim. 3:1-7). Significantly, the qualifications assume a male subject. Thus the overseer is to be "the husband of one wife" and "one who manages his own household well" (1 Tim. 3:2b,4a). Paul gives no suggestion of women elders in this passage.

H. What Does It Mean to Be a Church Planting Church?

We are a church planting church. That means that a tremendous amount of our efforts and resources goes into the establishment of new churches and the raising up of pastors and church planters. We preach and pray toward the goal of sending out our very best members and resources to plant new churches.

Tim Keller: "The vigorous, continual planting of new congregations is the single most crucial strategy for the: 1) numerical growth of the Body of Christ in any city, and the 2) continual, corporate renewal and revival of the existing churches in a city. Nothing else - not crusades, outreach programs, para-church ministries, growing mega-churches, congregational consulting, nor church renewal processes - will have the consistent impact of dynamic, extensive church planting."

Below are six Church Planting truths that compel us to continually start new churches.

1. Jesus sent out Church Planters and calls us to do the same.
2. Church planting success is measured by our sending capacity rather than our seating capacity.
3. Growth through multiplication is always more effective than growth through addition.
4. New churches grow faster than older ones.
5. Every year in America 3,500 churches close forever.
6. New churches require new leaders.

There are three fundamental beliefs about church planting that guide us as we plant new churches and train new church planters.

Theology Trumps Methodology

We believe that too much training in methodology and not enough training in theology can be detrimental to the church planter. We operate with a fundamental belief that the more theologically grounded we are, the better planters we are. This is not to say that methodology does not play a role in church planting, but that the best church planting methodology flows from biblical theology.

Churches Plant Churches

We think that the local church is the means by which God will expand His kingdom. Para-church organizations are tremendous resources for the church planter and should be utilized to the extent that they are helpful. However, these organizations should never replace the local church as central authority in the church planting process.

Overgrowth is Undergrowth

Fidelity to Christ is the goal of the church-not growth. We seek to plant churches that

view the luring work of the Holy Spirit as the only hope for church growth. Additionally, it is best that a steady stream of equipped saints disperse from every local church to spread the gospel to places where Christ is not yet known.

HOW CAN YOU BE INVOLVED IN CHURCH PLANTING?

There are three primary ways that we want our members to be involved in our church planting work.

Members at Pillar can **SUPPORT** our church planting work. You can support the work by:

1. Praying regularly and specifically for our church planters and their work.
2. Providing individual financial support to our specific church plants. Many of our members give additional funds to our church planting teams in addition to their giving to our local church.
3. Partnering with the church plant in a short-term capacity. We often receive requests for event support or special projects from our church planters and work with members to fulfill them.

Members at Pillar can **JOIN A TEAM** and become directly involved in the church plant as a key member. Every time a Pillar Church plants a new church, some of our members join the team and help play critical roles in the establishment of the new church. We have church planting teams working in our region that you can consider joining without moving or you may want to consider taking a job near one of our plants for added support in establishing the church.

Members at Pillar can **PLANT A CHURCH**. Maybe you have never considered it, but everyday God is calling ordinary people to lead and establish new churches. If you believe God may be preparing you for missionary church planting in the future, we want to help you discern God's call, prepare for the work, and plant the gospel in a place where there is a significant need."

I. Why Plant Churches, Anyway?

By Tim Keller

The vigorous, continual planting of new congregations is the single most crucial strategy for the 1) numerical growth of the body of Christ in any city, and the 2) continual corporate renewal and revival of the existing churches in a city. Nothing else - not crusades, outreach programs, para-church ministries, growing mega-churches, congregational consulting, nor church renewal processes - will have the consistent impact of dynamic, extensive church planting.

Jesus' essential call was to plant churches: Virtually all the great evangelistic challenges of the New Testament are basically calls to plant churches, not simply to share the faith. The "Great Commission" (Matt 28: 18-20) is not just a call to "make disciples," but to "baptize." In Acts, and elsewhere, it is clear that baptism means incorporation into a worshiping community with accountability and boundaries.

Bible's premise: The only way to truly be sure you are creating permanent new Christians is to plant new churches. Why? Much traditional evangelism aims to get a "decision" for Christ. Experience, however, shows us that many of these decisions disappear and never result in changed lives.

Why? Many (most?) decisions are not really conversions, but often only the beginning of a journey seeking God. Only a person who is being evangelized in the context of an on-going worshiping and shepherding community can be sure of finally coming home into vital, saving faith. This is why a leading missiologist like C. Peter Wagner can say, "Planting new churches is the most effective evangelistic methodology known under heaven."

Paul's whole strategy was to plant urban churches. The greatest missionary in history, St. Paul, had a rather simple, two-fold strategy. First, he went into the largest city in the region (cf. Acts 16:9, 12), and second, he planted churches in each city (cf. Titus 1:5 "appoint elders in every town.") Once Paul had done that, he could say that he had preached the gospel in a region and that he had no more work to do there (cf. 15:19, 23).

Bible's premises: a) The way to most permanently influence a country was through its chief cities, and b) The way to most permanently influence a city was to plant churches in it.

New churches best reach new generations, new residents, and new people groups. Younger adults are disproportionately found in new congregations. Why? Older churches' traditions (time of worship, length of service, emotional responsiveness, sermon topics, leadership style, emotional atmosphere and thousands of other tiny customs) reflect the sensibilities of leaders from the older generations who have the influence and money to control church life.

New residents are better reached by new congregations. In long-established churches it may require a tenure of 10 years before you are allowed into places of leadership and influence but in a new church, new residents tend to have equal power with long-time area residents.

New social groups are better reached by new congregations. Examples: 1) New white-collar commuters in a former farming community will find older churches oriented to the original social group. 2) New Hispanics in a former Anglo community will find a new, deliberately bi-racial church far more able to create 'cultural space' for newcomers than older churches. 3) New immigrant groups can only be reached by new churches ministering in their own language. Summary: new congregations empower new people much more readily than older churches. This means church planting is not only for "frontier regions" or "pagan" countries that we are trying to see become Christian. Christian countries will have to maintain vigorous, extensive church planting simply to stay Christian!

New churches best reach the unchurched. Dozens of studies confirm that the average new church gains most of its members (60-80%) from among people outside any worshiping community, while churches over 10-15 years of age gain 80-90% of new members from people moving from other congregations. Therefore, new churches will bring 6-8 times better at drawing new people into the Body of Christ.

As a congregation ages, powerful internal institutional pressure lead it to allocate most of its resources and energy toward the concerns of its members, rather than toward those outside its walls. Older congregations, therefore, have a stability and steadiness that many people thrive on and need. Many non-Christians will only be reached by churches with long roots in the community and the trappings of stability and respectability. But new churches, of necessity, are forced to focus far more of its energies on the needs of its non-members and becomes much more sensitive to the sensibilities of non-believers. There is also a cumulative effect. In the first two years of our Christian walk, we have far more close, face-to-face relationships with non-Christians than we do later. Thus, new Christians attract non-believers to services 5-10 times more than a long-time Christian. New believers beget new believers.

What does this mean practically? The only wide scale way to bring in lots of new Christians to the Body of Christ in a permanent way is to plant new churches.

J. Revised 1853 New Hampshire Confession

1. Of the Scriptures

We believe that the Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired, and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction (1); that it has God for its author, salvation for its end (2), and truth without any mixture of error for its matter (3); that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us (4); and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union (5), and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried (6).

1. 2 Tim. 3:16-17; 2 Pet. 1:21; 1 Sam. 23:2; Acts 1:16; 3:21; John 10:35; Luke 16:29-31; Psalms 119:11; Rom. 3:1-2 2. 2 Tim. 3:15; 1 Pet. 1:10-12; Acts 11:14; Rom. 1:16; Mark 16:16; John 5:38-39 3. Prov. 30:5-6; John 17:17; Rev. 22:18-19; Rom. 3:4 4. Rom. 2:12; John 12:47-48; 1 Cor. 4:34; Luke 10:10-16; 12:47-48 5. Phil. 3:16; Eph. 4:3-6; Phil. 2:1-2; 1 Cor. 1:10; 1 Pet. 4:11 6. 1 John 4:1; Isa. 8:20; 1 Thess. 5:21; 2 Cor. 8:5; Acts 17:11; 1 John 4:6; Jude 3:5; Eph. 6:17; Psalms 119:59-60; Phil. 1:9-11

2. Of the True God

We believe that there is one, and only one, living and true God, an infinite, intelligent Spirit, whose name is JEHOVAH, the Maker and Supreme Ruler of Heaven and earth (1); inexpressibly glorious in holiness (2), and worthy of all possible honor, confidence, and love (3); that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost (4); equal in every divine perfection (5), and executing distinct and harmonious offices in the great work of redemption (6).

1. John 4:24; Psalms 147:5; 83:18; Heb. 3:4; Rom. 1:20; Jer. 10:10 2. Exodus 15:11; Isa. 6:3; 1 Pet. 1:15-16; Rev. 4:6-8 3. Mark 12:30; Rev. 4:11; Matt. 10:37; Jer. 2:12-13 4. Matt. 28:19; John 15:26; 1 Cor. 12:4-6; 1 John 5:7 5. John 10:30; 5:17; 14:23; 17:5, 10; Acts 5:3-4; 1 Cor. 2:10-11; Phil. 2:5-6 6. Eph. 2:18; 2 Cor. 13:14; Rev. 1:4-5; comp. 2, 7

3. Of the Fall of Man

We believe that man was created in holiness, under the law of his Maker (1); but by voluntary transgression fell from that holy and happy state (2); in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners (3), not by constraint, but choice (4); being by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the law of God, positively inclined to evil; and therefore under just condemnation to eternal ruin (5), without defense or excuse (6).

1. Gen. 1:27, 31; Eccles. 7:29; Acts 16:26; Gen. 2:16 2. Gen. 3:6-24; Rom. 5:12 3. Rom. 5:19; John 3:6; Psalms 51:5; Rom. 5:15-19; 8:7 4. Isa. 53:6; Gen. 6:12; Rom. 3:9-18 5. Eph. 2:1-3; Rom. 1:18, 32; 2:1-16; Gal. 3:10; Matt. 20:15 6. Ezek. 18:19-20; Rom. 1:20; 3:19; Gal. 3:22

4. Of the Way of Salvation

We believe that the salvation of sinners is wholly of grace (1), through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God (2); who by the appointment of the Father, freely took upon him our nature, yet without sin (3); honored the divine law by his personal obedience (4), and by his death made a full atonement for our sins (5); that having risen from the death, he is now enthroned in heaven (5); and uniting in his wonderful person the tenderest

sympathies with divine perfections, he is every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and an all-sufficient Saviour (7).

1. Eph. 2:5; Matt. 18:11; 1 John 4:10; 1 Cor. 3:5-7; Acts 15:11 2. John 3:16; 1:1-14; Heb. 4:14; 12:24 3. Phil. 2:6-7; Heb. 2:9, 14; 2 Cor. 5:21 4. Isa. 42:21; Phil. 2:8; Gal. 4:4-5; Rom. 3:21 5. Isa. 53:4-5; Matt. 20:28; Rom. 4:25; 3:21-26; 1 John 4:10; 2:2; 1 Cor. 15:1-3; Heb. 9:13-15 6. Heb. 1:8, 3; 8:1; Col. 3:1-4 7. Heb. 7:25; Col. 2:9; Heb. 2:18; 7:26; Psalms 89:19; Psalm 14

5. Of Justification

We believe that the great gospel blessing which Christ (1) secures to such as believe in him is Justification (2); that Justification includes the pardon of sin (3), and the promise of eternal life on principles of righteousness (4); that it is bestowed, not in consideration of any works of righteousness which we have done, but solely through faith in the Redeemer's blood (5); by virtue of which faith his perfect righteousness is freely imputed to us of God (6); that it brings us into a state of most blessed peace and favor with God, and secures every other blessing needful for time and eternity (7).

1. John 1:16; Eph. 3:8 2. Acts 13:39; Isa. 3:11-12; Rom. 8:1 3. Rom. 5:9; Zech. 13:1; Matt. 9:6; Acts 10:43 4. Rom. 5:17; Titus 3:5-6; 1 Pet. 3:7; 1 John 2:25; Rom. 5:21 5. Rom. 4:4-5; 5:21; 6:28; Phil. 3:7-9 6. Rom. 5:19; 3:24-26; 4:23-25; 1 John 2:12 7. Rom. 5:1-3, 11; 1 Cor. 1:30-31; Matt. 6:33; 1 Tim. 4:8

6. Of the Freeness of Salvation

We believe that the blessings of salvation are made free to all by the gospel (1); that it is the immediate duty of all to accept them by a cordial, penitent, and obedient faith (2); and that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth but his own inherent depravity and voluntary rejection of the gospel (3); which rejection involves him in an aggravated condemnation (4).

1. Isa. 55:1; Rev. 22:17; Luke 14:17 2. Rom. 16:26; Mark 1:15; Rom. 1:15-17 3. John 5:40; Matt. 23:37; Rom. 9:32; Prov. 1:24; Acts 13:46 4. John 3:19; Matt. 11:20; Luke 19:27; 2 Thess. 1:8

7. Of Grace in Regeneration

We believe that, in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again (1); that regeneration consists in giving a holy disposition to the mind (2); that it is effected in a manner above our comprehension by the power of the Holy Spirit, in connection with divine truth (3), so as to secure our voluntary obedience to the gospel (4); and that its proper evidence appears in the holy fruits of repentance, and faith, and newness of life (5).

1. John 3:3, 6-7; 1 Cor. 1:14; Rev. 8:7-9; 21:27 2. 2 Cor. 5:17; Ezek. 36:26; Deut. 30:6; Rom. 2:28-29; 5:5; 1 John 4:7 3. John 3:8; 1:13; James 1:16-18; 1 Cor. 1:30; Phil. 2:13 4. 1 Pet. 1:22-25; 1 John 5:1; Eph. 4:20-24; Col. 3:9-11 5. Eph. 5:9; Rom. 8:9; Gal. 5:16-23; Eph. 3:14-21; Matt. 3:8-10; 7:20; 1 John 5:4, 18

8. Of Repentance and Faith

We believe that Repentance and Faith are sacred duties, and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God (1); whereby being deeply

convinced of our guilt, danger, and helplessness, and of the way of salvation by Christ (2), we turn to God with unfeigned contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy (3); at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus Christ as our Prophet, Priest, and King, and relying on him alone as the only and all-sufficient Saviour (4).

1. Mark 1:15; Acts 11:18; Eph. 2:8; 1 John 5:1 2. John 16:8; Acts 2:37-38; 16:30-31 3. Luke 18:13; 15:18-21; James 4:7-10; 2 Cor. 7:11; Rom. 10:12-13; Psalms 51 4. Rom. 10:9-11; Acts 3:22-23; Heb. 4:14; Psalms 2:6; Heb. 1:8; 8:25; 2 Tim. 1:12

9. Of God's Purpose of Grace

We believe that Election is the eternal purpose of God, according to which he graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves sinners (1); that being perfectly consistent with the free agency of man, it comprehends all the means in connection with the end (2); that it is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, being infinitely free, wise, holy, and unchangeable (3); that it utterly excludes boasting, and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God, and active imitation of his free mercy (4); that it encourages the use of means in the highest degree (5); that it may be ascertained by its effects in all who truly believe the gospel (6); that it is the foundation of Christian assurance (7); and that to ascertain it with regard to ourselves demands and deserves the utmost diligence (8).

1. 2 Tim. 1:8-9; Eph. 1:3-14; 1 Pet. 1:1-2; Rom. 11:5-6; John 15:15; 1 John 4:19; Hos. 12:9 2. 2 Thess. 2:13-14; Acts 13:48; John 10:16; Matt. 20:16; Acts 15:14 3. Exodus 33:18-19; Matt. 20:15; Eph. 1:11; Rom. 9:23-24; Jer. 31:3; Rom. 11:28-29; James 1:17-18; 2 Tim. 1:9; Rom. 11:32-36 4. 1 Cor. 4:7; 1:26-31; Rom. 3:27; 4:16; Col. 3:12; 1 Cor. 3:5-7; 15:10; 1 Pet. 5:10; Acts 1:24; 1 Thess. 2:13; 1 Pet. 2:9; Luke 18:7; John 15:16; Eph. 1:16; 1 Thess. 2:12 5. 2 Tim. 2:10; 1 Cor. 9:22; Rom. 8:28-30; John 6:37-40; 2 Pet. 1:10 6. 1 Thess. 1:4-10 7. Rom. 8:28-30; Isaiah 42:16; Rom. 11:29 8. 2 Pet. 1:10-11; Phil. 3:12; Heb. 6:11

10. Of Sanctification

We believe that Sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of his holiness (1); that it is a progressive work (2); that it is begun in regeneration (3); and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means-especially the Word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness, and prayer (4).

1. 1 Thess. 4:3; 5:23; 2 Cor. 7:1; 13:9; Eph. 1:4 2. Proverbs 4:18; 2 Cor. 3:18; Heb. 6:1; 2 Pet. 1:5-8; Phil. 3:12-16 3. John 2:29; Rom. 8:5; John 3:6; Phil. 1:9-11; Eph. 1:13-14 4. Phil. 2:12-13; Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Pet. 2:2; 2 Pet. 3:18; 2 Cor. 13:5; Luke 11:35; 9:23; Matt. 26:41; Eph. 6:18; 4:30

11. Of the Perseverance of Saints

We believe that such only are real believers as endure unto the end (1); that their persevering attachment to Christ is the grand mark which distinguishes them from superficial professors (2); that a special Providence watches over their welfare (3); and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation (4).

1. John 8:31; 1 John 2:27-28; 3:9; 5:18 2. 1 John 2:19; John 13:18; Matt. 13:20-21; John 6:66-69; Job 17:9 3. Rom. 8:28; Matt. 6:30-33; Jer. 32:40; Psalms 121:3; 91:11-12 4. Phil. 1:6; 2:12-13; Jude

24-25; Heb. 1:14; 2 Kings 6:16; Heb. 13:5; 1 John 4:4

12. Of the Harmony of the Law and the Gospel

We believe that the Law of God is the eternal and unchangeable rule of his moral government (1); that it is holy, just, and good (2); and that the inability which the Scriptures ascribe to fallen men to fulfill its precepts arises entirely from their love of sin (3); to deliver them from which, and to restore them through a Mediator to unfeigned obedience to the holy Law, is one great end of the Gospel, and of the means of grace connected with the establishment of the visible Church (4).

1. Rom. 3:31; Matt. 5:17; Luke 16:17; Rom. 3:20; 4:15 2. Rom. 7:12, 7, 14, 22; Gal. 3:21; Psa. 119 3. Rom. 8:7-8; Josh. 24:19; Jer. 13:23; John 6:44; 5:44 4. Rom. 8:2, 4; 10:4; 1 Tim. 1:5; Heb. 8:10; Jude 20-21; Heb. 12:14; Matt. 16:17-18; 1 Cor. 12:28

13. Of a Gospel Church

We believe that a visible Church of Christ is a congregation of baptized believers (1), associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel (2); observing the ordinances of Christ (3); governed by his laws (4), and exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by his Word (5); that its only scriptural officers are Bishops, or Pastors, and Deacons (6), whose qualifications, claims, and duties are defined in the Epistles to Timothy and Titus.

1. 1 Cor. 1:1-13; Matt. 18:17; Acts 5:11; 8:1; 11:31; 1 Cor. 4:17; 14:23; 3 John 9; 1 Tim. 3:5 2. Acts 2:41-42; 2 Cor. 8:5; Acts 2:47; 1 Cor. 5:12-13 3. 1 Cor. 11:2; 2 Thess. 3:6; Rom. 16:17-20; 1 Cor. 11:23; Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:6; 2 Cor. 2:7; 1 Cor. 4:17 4. Matt. 28:20; John 14:15; 15:12; 1 John 4:21; John 14:21; 1 Thess. 4:2; 2 John 6; Gal. 6:2; all the Epistles 5. Eph. 4:7; 1 Cor. 14:12; Phil. 1:27; 1 Cor. 12:14 6. Phil. 1:1; Acts 14:23; 15:22; 1 Tim. 3; Titus 1

14. Of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

We believe that Christian Baptism is the immersion in water of a believer (1), into the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Ghost (2); to show forth, in a solemn and beautiful emblem, our faith in the crucified, buried, and risen Saviour, with its effect in our death to sin and resurrection to a new life (3); that it is prerequisite to the privileges of a Church relation; and to the Lord's Supper (4), in which the members of the Church, by the sacred use of bread and wine, are to commemorate together the dying love of Christ (5); preceded always by solemn self-examination (6).

1. Acts 8:36-39; Matt. 3:5-6; John 3:22-23; 4:1-2; Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:16; Acts 2:38; 8:12; 16:32-34; 18:8 2. Matt. 28:19; Acts 10:47-48; Gal. 3:27-28 3. Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12; 1 Pet. 3:20-21; Acts 22:16 4. Acts 2:41-42; Matt. 28:19-20; Acts and Epistles 5. 1 Cor. 11:26; Matt. 26:26-29; Mark 14:22-25; Luke 22:14-20 6. 1 Cor. 11:28; 5:1, 8; 10:3-32; 11:17-32; John 6:26-71

15. Of the Christian Sabbath

We believe that the first day of the week is the Lord's Day, or Christian Sabbath (1); and is to be kept sacred to religious purposes (2), by the devout observance of all the means of grace, both private (3) and public (4); and by preparation for that rest that remaineth for the people of God (5).

1. Acts 20:7; Gen. 2:3; Col. 2:16-17; Mark 2:27; John 20:19; 1 Cor. 16:1- 2 2. Exod. 20:8; Rev. 1:10; Psalms 118:24 3. Psalm 119:15 4. Heb. 10:24-25; Acts 11:26; 13:44; Lev. 19:30; Exod. 46:3; Luke 4:16; Acts 17:2, 3; Psalm 26:8; 87:3 5. Heb. 4:3-11

16. Of Civil Government

We believe that civil government is of divine appointment, for the interests and good order of human society (1); and that magistrates are to be prayed for, conscientiously honored and obeyed (2); except only in things opposed to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ (3) who is the only Lord of the conscience, and the Prince of the kings of the earth (4).

1. Rom. 13:1-7; Deut. 16:18; 1 Sam. 23:3; Exod. 18:23; Jer.30:21 2. Matt. 22:21; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 2:13; 1 Tim. 2:1-8 3. Acts 5:29; Matt. 10:28; Dan. 3:15-18; 6:7-10; Acts 4:18-20 4. Matt. 23:10; Rom. 14:4; Rev. 19:16; Psalm 72:11; Psalm 2; Rom. 14:9-13

17. Of the Righteous and the Wicked

We believe that there is a radical and essential difference between the righteous and the wicked (1); that such only as through faith are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and sanctified by the Spirit of our God, are truly righteous in his esteem (2); while all such as continue in impenitence and unbelief are in his sight wicked, and under the curse (3); and this distinction holds among men both in and after death (4).

1. Mal. 3:18; Prov. 12:26; Isa. 5:20; Gen. 18:23; Jer. 15:19; Acts 10:34- 35; Rom. 6:16 2. Rom. 1:17; 7:6; 1 John 2:29; 3:7; Rom. 6:18, 22; 1 Cor. 11:32; Prov. 11:31; 1 Pet. 4:17-18 3. 1 John 5:19; Gal. 3:10; John 3:36; Isa. 57:21; Psalm 10:4; Isa 55:6-7 4. Prov. 14:32; Luke 16:25; John 8:21-24; Prov. 10:24; Luke 12:4-5; 9:23- 26; John 12:25-26; Eccl. 3:17; Matt. 7:13-14

18. Of the World to Come

We believe that the end of the world is approaching (1); that at the last day Christ will descend from heaven (2), and raise the dead from the grave to final retribution (3); that a solemn separation will then take place (4); that the wicked will be adjudged to endless punishment, and the righteous to endless joy (5); and that this judgment will fix forever the final state of men in heaven or hell, on principles of righteousness (6).

1. 1 Pet. 4:7; 1 Cor. 7:29-31; Heb. 1:10-12; Matt. 24:35; 1 John 2:17; Matt. 28:20; 13:39-40; 2 Pet. 3:3-13 2. Acts 1:11; Rev. 1:7; Heb. 9:28; Acts 3:21; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 5:1-11 3. Acts 24:15; 1 Cor. 15:12-59; Luke 14:14; Dan. 12:2; John 5:28-29; 6:40; 11:25- 26; 2 Tim. 1:10; Acts 10:42 4. Matt. 13:49, 37-43; 24:30-31; 25:31-33 5. Matt. 25:35-41; Rev. 22:11; 1 Cor. 6:9-10; Mark 9:43-48; 2 Pet. 2:9; Jude 7; Phil. 3:19; Rom. 6:32; 2 Cor. 5:10-11; John 4:36; 2 Cor. 4:18 6. Rom. 3:5-6; 2 Thess. 1:6-12; Heb. 6:1-2; 1 Cor. 4:5; Acts 17:31; Rom. 2:2-16; Rev. 20:11-12; 1 John 2:28; 4:17

K. Constitution and Bylaws

Adopted June 21, 2020, last revised February 2022

Preamble

This Constitution has been created in order to:

1. preserve and secure the principles of our faith,
2. preserve the liberties of each individual member of this church,
3. ensure freedom of action and independence from any religious body or organization, and
4. provide for orderly conduct of internal affairs, in dealing with others, and of governing church members.

Pillar Church of Washington, D.C. was incorporated as a nonprofit corporation on September 3, 2021. This Constitution shall serve as the Bylaws of the corporation.

Article I – Name

The name of this organization shall be Pillar Church of Washington, D.C., the church formally organized on September 8th, 2019.

Article II – Purpose

This church exists to bring glory to God and display His character by helping people know Jesus and make him known in DC and around the world. This church shall endeavor to accomplish this purpose by:

1. Loving God and obeying His commandments,
2. Equipping the saints through biblical preaching, instruction, discipleship and study,
3. Proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching, personal evangelism, and any other means consistent with the teachings of Scripture,
4. Encouraging, supporting, and participating in missions work and the establishment of new churches – local, domestic, and international,
5. Equipping and commissioning believers to proclaim the Gospel, make disciples, and plant churches locally and globally,
6. Administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper,
7. Encouraging biblical fellowship among believers, and
8. Serving other individuals, families, and churches by providing for physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, in the name of Jesus Christ.

Article III – Statement of Beliefs

Section 1 – God:

God is the creator and ruler of the universe. He eternally exists in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are co-equals and one God.

The Father: God the Father reigns with providential care over His universe. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise.

The Son: Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God. He is fully God and fully man. He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless human life, and offered himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all by dying on a cross. He arose from the dead after three days to demonstrate His

power over sin and death, and ascended into heaven where he sits at the right hand of God the Father.

The Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit is present in the world to make people aware of their need for Jesus Christ. He lives in all Christians from the moment of salvation, providing them with power for living and guidance in doing what is right.

References: John 16:7-13; Galatians 5:22-25; John 4:24; 1 Corinthians 15: 3-4; Philippians 2:5-11; Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 6:4.

Section 2 – Scripture:

The Bible is God's word to us. Human authors wrote the Bible under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. Because of its divine inspiration, the Bible is the supreme source of truth for all people. We believe that every word of the Bible is inspired and that, in its original form, the Bible has no error. We also believe that the Bible plays an indispensable role for the follower of Christ. It builds up, transforms, encourages, corrects, and protects the Christian as he or she studies and applies it.

References: Psalms 119:11; Acts 20:32; Ephesians 5:26; 6:17; Exodus 24:4; Psalms 40:8; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 4:12; Psalm 119:105; 1 Corinthians 2:7-15; John 16:12-15

Section 3 – Man:

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Man's decision to sin caused a division between Creator and creation leaving man in need of a Savior.

References: Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5; 7:18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.

Section 4 – Salvation:

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

1. Regeneration, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace. Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Savior.

2. Justification is God's gracious and full acquittal, upon principles of His righteousness, of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer into a relationship of peace and favor with God.

3. Sanctification is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

4. Glorification is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

References: Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts 2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25;4:3; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

Section 5 – Ordinances:

There are two ordinances for the New Testament church. The first, baptism, is the immersion of a believer in water. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. Second, the Lord's Supper, is a symbolic act of obedience whereby followers memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

References: Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.

Section 6 – Evangelism and Church Planting:

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ, and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ, to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. We believe that disciples are most effectively made in the context of the local church. Therefore, church planting and missions are of utmost importance. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every Christian to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ.

References: Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.

Section 7 – Gender Identity and Marriage:

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female and that these two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God; marriage was created and instituted by God for the good of his creatures and creation in order to display his gracious love and to teach the world about how he would unite himself to his redeemed people through Jesus Christ; marriage is a single, exclusive, covenant union entered into by one man and one woman which God bears witness to; only within such union

does God intend sexual intimacy to occur; any form of sexual immorality is sinful and offensive to God.

References: Genesis 1-26-28, 2:4-25, 9:1, 19:1-29; Exodus 20:14; Leviticus 18:1-30, 20:10-21; Deuteronomy 5:18; 1 Kings. 15:21; 2 Kings. 23:7; Job 31:1; Proverbs 2:16-20, 5:8, 9-20, 7:5, 10, 13, 21-22; Amos 2:7; Malachi. 2:14-15; Matthew 5:28, 31-32, 15:18-20, 19:3-12, Mark 6:18, 10:2-12; Romans 1:21-31, 7:2-3; 1 Corinthians 5:1, 6:9-10, 18, 7:2-9, 36-39; Ephesians 4:24, 5:3-4, 25, 31-32; Colossians 3:5, 10; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7; 1 Timothy 1:9-10; 2 Peter 2:14; Jude 6-7, Revelation 19:7-9

Article IV – Structure: Offices and Staff

Christ is the head of the Church (Colossians 1:18). He is the source of all that the Church is and does. His Word, the Bible, is our standard for every decision. Pillar DC's existence is for His pleasure and purpose alone.

Pillar DC believes that all Christians are ministers and priests of God (1 Peter 2:5-10), that all Christians have received spiritual gifts from God (Romans 12:3-6), and that all Christians have a special place of service in the church body (1 Corinthians 12). Pillar DC's structure follows the example modeled by the early Christian church as recorded in the New Testament.

Two offices existed in the early Christian church: Elder and Deacon. The term 'elder' is used synonymously with the terms Bishop, Overseer, and Pastor in the New Testament. For the purpose of this document, we will use the term elder to represent all four terms. All officers (elder or deacon) shall be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

Section 1 – Elders:

The leadership of this church shall be vested in the elders who are responsible to govern the church, giving themselves to the ministry of the Word and prayer, thereby tending the flock of God in this church. The purpose of this office is to lovingly guide, give oversight to, care for, instruct, and equip the membership to do the work of the ministry. The elders shall be equal in authority but may be specialized in function. This church shall maintain a plurality of elders, exemplifying the biblical model for church leadership as described in Acts 15:4; Acts 14:3; Acts 20:17; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1; James 5:14.

Since the office of an elder is a biblical one, certain qualifications of spiritual maturity shall be met. Qualifications for elders are described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4. The Bible indicates that only men shall hold the office of elder; therefore, only male members shall be considered for this position. This church shall strive to maintain a majority of the eldership as non-staff (unpaid) elders.

The responsibilities of the elders shall include:

1. examination and instruction of prospective members,
2. examination and recommendation of all prospective candidates for offices and positions,
3. overseeing the work of the deacons,
4. conducting worship services,
5. overseeing the administration of the ordinances of baptism and Lord's Supper,
6. equipping the membership for the work of the ministry,

7. encouraging sound doctrine and practice,
8. admonishing and correcting error,
9. overseeing the process of church discipline,
10. overseeing the ministries of this church,
11. hiring, evaluating, and firing non-pastoral employees of the church
12. mobilizing this church for world missions and the establishment of new churches, and
13. ensuring that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share this church's fundamental convictions as expressed in the Statement of Beliefs.
14. While holding office, the elders shall also serve as the directors of the corporation, and shall elect the officers of the corporation, including, but not limited to, the President, Secretary, and Treasurer.

Elders: Sabbaticals

Sabbath rest is a clear command for God's people in Scripture. Sabbath rest is intended as a time set aside for God's people to clear away distractions and responsibilities to seek God's face. At times it is necessary for an elder to step away from the responsibilities of leading the flock to seek God diligently, rest, and invest in his own spiritual growth so that he can return and be even more effective as a pastor and leader.

At any time, the elders of the church can recommend a sabbatical for an elder when the circumstances call for it. The decision would be made in conjunction with the elder in question.

The elders of Pillar D.C., together with the elder up for sabbatical, will determine the start date, length, and nature of the sabbatical. A sabbatical shall be no more than 150 days.

Elders that are on staff will continue to receive their full salary throughout the length of the sabbatical.

Section 2 – Deacons:

This church shall recognize men and women who are giving of themselves in service to this church, and who possess particular gifts of service. Qualifications for deacons are described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7.

The responsibilities of the deacons shall include:

1. Care for the physical needs and spiritual well-being as they arise within the ministry of the church, then to external needs as deemed appropriate by the elders and congregation.
2. Assist the elders by performing services of administration.
3. Support and encourage the ministry of the elders as is necessary.

Section 3 – Process:

The members of the church will be informed of the need of additional elders and deacons and may prayerfully submit names of persons they understand to be biblically qualified for the position. Prospective elders & deacons will be approached and examined by the current elders.

If an elder candidate is judged by the elders to show both willingness and aptitude for the office, he will enter an “elder-in-training” status that will last a designated amount of time no shorter than 2 months and no longer than one year, as determined by the elders. Upon completion of this training, the candidate will move to the appointment category.

If a deacon candidate is judged by the elders to show both the willingness and aptitude for the office, he or she will enter a period of review no less than 1 month and no more than 6 months. Upon completion of this period of review, the candidate will move to the appointment category.

Section 4 – Appointment:

All officer candidates must first receive a 100% vote of approval by the elders prior to being voted upon by the congregation. Upon reviewing and approving the biblical qualifications of the candidate by the elders, officer candidates may be recommended to the congregation for a vote of approval. The election of officers shall be held at a members’ meeting.

Names of nominees to serve as officers shall be presented by the elders at least 2 months prior to the member’s meeting, and the election shall proceed as directed by the moderator.

The moderator shall declare elected all officers receiving a three-quarters vote of the members.

The persons elected shall assume their respective offices upon election, unless another date has been specifically designated.

Section 5 – Staff Elder(s):

The staff elder(s) shall perform the duties of elder described above and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the vocational ministry of preaching, teaching, and/or equipping.

Section 6 – Support Staff

The elders may create or dissolve paid support staff positions. Support staff shall serve under the supervision of the elders. Support staff shall affirm and support the governing documents of this church, and shall exemplify godly character.

Section 7 – Admission & Removal support staff:

A support staff member’s term may be terminated by resignation or dismissal. For the hiring or the dismissal of support staff, a three-quarters vote of the elders is required.

Section 8 - Removal of officers

For an officer, a 90% vote by the elders not subject to removal is required. Upon an affirmative vote by the elders for removal, a recommendation for removal would be made to the congregation. A 75% vote from the congregation would then be required for the official removal of the officer in question.

Section 9 – Resignation:

When an elder or staff member chooses to terminate his relationship with the church, thereby resigning his position, or resigns his position and remains a member of the church, he shall present a letter of resignation. For the Staff elder, he should provide notice at least thirty days prior to the date of the end of his employment.

Article V – Membership

Section 1 – Qualifications:

To qualify for membership in this church, a person must be:

1. a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration,
2. baptized by immersion, in obedience to Christ, following his or her regeneration, and
3. willing to commit themselves to serve Jesus Christ through the ministry and vision of this church.

The elders shall be responsible for determining each person's qualification for membership. In making this determination, they may rely on a person's profession of faith in combination with other such evidence as the elders deem appropriate.

Section 2 – Admission:

To be admitted into church membership, applicants shall:

1. attend a membership class,
2. interview with an elder to give credible evidence of repentance of sin, faith in Christ, and understanding of the gospel,
3. commit to uphold, be governed by, and submit to the governing documents of this church,
4. be recommended by the elders for admission, and be presented before the gathered membership (weekly worship gathering or duly called members' meeting)

Section 3 – Duties and Privileges:

In accordance with the duties described in the Covenant Membership Class, each member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of this church consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God. Further, members are privileged and expected to regularly attend its Lord's Day meetings, faithfully observe the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and submit to the church's discipline and instruction.

Only those who are members of this congregation shall serve in positions of leadership within the church. Notwithstanding, non-members may serve the church for purposes of administration and professional consultation. Under the oversight of the elders, persons from outside of the church may give instruction from the Scriptures for worship services, conferences, and other specifically determined occasions.

Under Christ, the members of this congregation shall have the final word in matters of doctrine, membership, discipline, and the budget. Therefore, it is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend all Members' Meetings and participate in the affirmation of officers (thereby affirming doctrine), decisions regarding membership status (thereby affirming membership), the discipline of unrepentant members (thereby upholding discipline), the annual church budget (thereby affirming direction), and in other such matters that may be submitted by the elders to the congregation.

Section 4 – Discipline:

Any member consistently neglectful of his or her scriptural duties as specified in the governing documents of this church, or who is otherwise guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so opposing the welfare of the church, shall be subject to the admonition of the elders and the discipline of the church. Any such action shall be done in accordance with Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 2 Corinthians 2:6-8; and any other pertinent Scriptures.

Church discipline can include admonition by the elders or members, suspension from participation in the Lord's Supper, removal from office, and/or removal from membership. See Matthew 18:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; 1 Timothy 5:19-20; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5.

If private efforts to bring about the member's repentance and reconciliation are unsuccessful, one or more members shall bring the matter to the attention of the elders. The elders shall review and investigate the matter. After prayer and deliberation, the elders may:

1. dismiss the matter,
2. take disciplinary action, or
3. submit the matter to the members at a duly convened members' meeting for a decision.

If the members vote to discipline the member, it shall be announced to the members to carry out the biblical admonition to bring about repentance and restoration of the disciplined member. Members who have been removed from membership by the church shall be restored to full membership privileges according to the spirit of 2 Corinthians 2:7-8 when their conduct is judged by the elders and the members to be in accordance with the governing documents and biblical repentance.

Section 5 – Removal:

This church shall recognize the removal of a person's membership:

1. upon the voluntary resignation of a member by letter,
2. upon joining in membership with another church,
3. by failure to attend worship and other ministry events at Pillar DC for three consecutive months, not having to do with military orders or other extenuating circumstances, despite good faith efforts from church leadership to reach out to said member,
4. upon the death of the member, or
5. as an act of church discipline, upon the recommendation of the elders, and when three-quarters of the present members (provided there's a quorum) vote to terminate membership.

This church shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation from membership for the purpose of:

1. proceeding with a process of church discipline,
2. to protect that member from following false teaching, or
3. for any other reason the church deems necessary or prudent.

In these instances, this church has the right and responsibility to bring any disciplinary process to an orderly conclusion, and to make final determination as to the person's membership status in connection with that process.

Article VI – Meetings and Voting

Section 1 – Worship Meetings:

This church shall meet every Sunday (the Lord's Day) and may schedule any other meetings deemed necessary by the elders.

Section 2 – Members' Meetings:

There shall be a regular members' meeting at least three times per year, at some time apart from a public worship service. The date, time, and location of regular members' meetings shall be announced at the public service of the church within two weeks preceding the meeting.

Special members' meetings shall be called as required by the elders. The date, time, and purpose of any special meeting shall be announced at the public service of the church within two weeks preceding the meeting.

A designated elder shall preside as moderator at all members' meetings of this church. This is assigned on a rotating basis and will cycle through all of the current elders. The elders shall see that the stated meetings are regularly held and that required reports are submitted to the church by the responsible members.

A budget with projected expenditures and projected income shall be proposed by the elders and approved by the members at a members' meeting not less than one month before the start of the fiscal year. A fiscal year of the church shall be from January 1 to December 31. Prior to this approval and subject to the elders' discretion, expenditures may continue at the prior year's level most recently approved by the members. The budget will be approved by the members at the account level (i.e., personnel, outreach, business expenses, etc.) to provide accountability while also providing flexibility within approved accounts. Any monies given by a member or entity for specific purposes other than the general budget shall be used solely for the specified purposes and shall not be used in calculating surplus income nor be utilized to offset budgeted program expenses. At any point during the fiscal year, if annual giving is above the projected income based on a six-month trailing average, the elders may, at their discretion, allocate additional funds not to exceed 20% of the annual projected budget surplus. Any surplus funds at the end of the fiscal year may be applied to the following year's budget. At any point during the fiscal year, if annual spending in a particular account is projected to be below the approved budget, the elders may, at their discretion, reallocate funds from those accounts to other accounts or new initiatives. Surplus funds or reallocated funds shall not be used for any personnel expenses. A 75% vote from the elders is required for spending in excess of the approved account budgets or for the creation of new initiatives. As part of good stewardship of the financial resources, regular budget reports shall be submitted at least three times per year at regular members' meetings showing approved annual budget, income, expenditures, and pending income. Formal changes to the annual budget beyond the flexibility stated in the section shall require approval by members in the same manner as approval of the annual budget. The financial records shall be made available to the members upon request.

Section 3 – Voting:

A three-quarters vote is necessary on all matters. All votes shall be cast at a regular or special members' meeting and shall be tallied based on the number of votes cast by members present, except in the case of proxy voting (*see more below). Upon the discretion of the elders, a members' meeting shall be postponed if a sufficient representation (quorum) of the membership is not in attendance. The elders will determine if a quorum is present at the beginning of the members meeting. If the elders determine that a quorum is not present, the meeting will be postponed until a date to be determined by the elders. Some matters presented to the members may require a period of consideration before voting. The elders shall determine the instances where this is the case.

*Voting by proxy is allowed in special cases when official work-related or personal health issues prohibit a member from attending. Votes by proxy must be received before the calling to order of the members' meeting. It is the absentee member's responsibility to get the vote in on time and to inform the elders that they will not be present. Proxy voting is open for matters of church policy or discipline (budget, discipline, appointing offices).

Article VII – Affiliations

This church shall be affiliated with the Praetorian Project, New City Network, the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia, and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

Article VIII – Non-Profit Status and Disposition of Church Property

This church is not organized for profit.

Section 1 – Division:

In the case of organic division of this church, all assets shall belong to those members who abide by this document as determined by Pillar Church of Dumfries, VA.

Section 2 – Dissolution:

Should conditions arise when, for any reason, this church's work cannot continue, all assets shall be transferred to Pillar Church of Dumfries, VA for redistribution.

Section 3 – Consolidation:

Should the conditions arise where a consolidation with another church of similar biblical faith is advisable, the elders shall be authorized by a three-quarters vote of the members to negotiate the terms of such a consolidation. Should the terms of said negotiation be acceptable, the members shall approve the consolidation by a three-quarters vote.

Article IX – Revisions and Amendments

Revisions or amendments to this Constitution shall be made only in the following manner:

1. Any member of the church can provide a suggested revision or amendment to this Constitution in writing to the elders of this church.
2. For a revision or amendment to this Constitution to be effected, the elders shall confirm its consistency with Scripture and affirm the revision or amendment with a 90% vote.
3. After approval from the elders, the revision or amendment to the Constitution of this church shall be presented at a members' meeting for affirmation.

4. Any revision or amendment to this Constitution shall be approved by a three-quarters vote.

Article X – Indemnification

The Church shall indemnify any person who was or is a party, or is threatened to be made a party to or witness in, any threatened, pending, or completed action, suit, or proceeding, whether civil, criminal, administrative, or investigative, by reason of the fact that the person is or was an Elder, Deacon, or Support Staff Member against expenses (including attorneys' fees), judgments, fines, and amounts paid in settlement actually and reasonably incurred by that person in connection with such action, suit, or proceeding to the fullest extent and in the manner set forth in and permitted by the Act and any other applicable law, as from time-to-time in effect. Such right of indemnification shall not be deemed exclusive of any other rights to which such Elder, Deacon, or Support Staff Member may be entitled apart from the foregoing provision. The foregoing provision of this Article shall be deemed to be a contract between the Church and each Elder, Deacon, and/or Support Staff Member who serves in such capacity at any time while this Article and the relevant provisions of the Act and other applicable law, if any, are in effect, and any repeal or modification thereof shall not affect any rights or obligations then existing, with respect to any state of facts then or theretofore existing, or any action, suit, or proceeding theretofore, or thereafter, brought or threatened based in whole or in part on any such state of facts.

L. Church Discipline: Theology, Purpose, and Pattern

What is church discipline?

A restorative process instituted by Jesus to correct sin in the lives of individual believers, the local church as a whole, and to guard the church's gospel witness. It is by which God preserves the faith of genuine believers, as well as "purges the evil person from among us" (1 Corinthians 5:13).

At times, Christians will give into their desires (James 1:14), stumble in sin, and be deceived by Satan. Church discipline exists to help bring believers who are walking on a dangerous path to repentance and restoration so that they continue to hold fast to the gospel.

"Take care, brothers, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called "today," that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have come to share in Christ, if indeed we hold our original confidence firm to the end" Hebrews (3:12-14).

Notice that the means of discipline God uses to preserve his children is to exhort (or warn) one another every day. Warning one another may simply look like having a private conversation with a brother or sister because they sinned against you (Matt. 18:15). In the most extreme cases, it could involve formal steps of church discipline such as barring someone from the Lord's Supper or excommunication from church membership.

But whatever those steps may be, the goal is always full restoration. God uses these means - things like one on one conversations or even excommunication - to bring genuine believers to repentance, so that they may "come to their senses and escape the snare of the devil".

"The goal of discipline is always redemption (1 Corin. 5:5), protecting other sheep (v. 6), and honoring the name of Christ (v. 1)."²¹

²¹ Leeman, Jonathan, Church Discipline, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/church-discipline/> Accessed, Feb. 1, 2026.

Why practice church discipline?

If someone abandons the Christian faith by choosing to willingly live in sinful rebellion against God, the fruit of their life would suggest that they are not a Christian and the church would no longer be able to affirm their testimony because choosing sin instead of obedience to the commands of Christ does not align with the profession of faith and testimony of conversion.

Therefore we participate in church discipline out of obedience to Christ establishing the practice, and we do so because it is an act of love. Restorative church discipline promotes the health of the church and protects the name and reputation of Jesus on the Earth.

Church discipline promotes the health of the church by not tolerating sinful actions. If the church did tolerate unrepentant sin, we would be implicitly telling the congregation that unrepentant sins are acceptable, thus endangering their souls (Matthew 18:5, 1 Corinthians 5:6–8).

We would also be giving the offending party false assurance by not addressing their sin. As a member of the church, we are affirming someone's testimony, saying to him/her and the watching world that we believe he/she is a Christian. We cannot affirm someone's faith if they are actively choosing to sin.

"Jesus has attached his name to the church. He has staked his reputation on us. Strange, isn't it? Now, the whole matter does not finally rest on our shoulders. He has proven through the life of Old Testament Israel that he will do whatever it takes to protect his name. Still, he gives our churches a job to do: to care for his name and reputation before the nations. Like it or not, the world will draw its conclusions about him based on us."²²

Lastly God's word requires that his people separate themselves from sin and those who actively choose sin instead of obedience.²³ Those who are in Christ and profess him as the Lord and Savior are to be identified with godliness and not lawlessness (Titus 2:11-14). We are to be holy as our God is holy which requires that we are not defiled by persistence in sin and regularly practice repentance. Ultimately God's word calls us to individually live holy lives and separate ourselves from individuals who profess faith in Christ yet willingly and actively choose to disobey his word, the Scriptures.²⁴

²² Church Discipline: How the Church Protects the Name of Jesus - 2012 - Jonathan Leeman - p. 24

²³ Matt. 18:15-20; Rom. 16:17-18; 1 Corth. 5:1-13; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14-15; 2 Tim. 3:1-5; Gal. 6:1-4.

²⁴ Dever, Mark and Jonathan Leeman, eds., Baptist Foundations: Church Government for an Anti-Institutional Age (Nashville: B&H, 2015), page 203-204.

How: The biblical practice of church discipline.²⁵

“Church discipline largely takes place informally, as Christians speak the truth in love to one another and point each other to the grace of the gospel. However, in this fallen world, there will be times when informal discipline will not be enough; there will be times when those who belong to the church refuse to repent and continue down the path of sin. It is for these situations that Jesus provides instructions for church discipline.”²⁶

Jesus established church discipline in Matthew 18:15-18. “If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.”

Therefore, as the elders shepherd the church through a disciplinary case where the church is ultimately notified, the following steps are to be obeyed as commanded by Christ.

1. **Step 1:** One individual (usually the offended party) is to go to the offending individual privately. (18:15).
 - a. There might be times when you need to get counsel from a pastor before confronting a brother or sister for sin. There might be times when you need someone to confront sin on someone else’s behalf, as with a woman who feels unsafe confronting a man who has made inappropriate advances. Yet ordinarily, Jesus wants us to confront sin privately, quietly, directly, and lovingly while always refraining from gossip.
2. **Step 2:** If the offender refuses to acknowledge his sin and repent, then the offended party will involve two or three others to go and have another conversation with the offending party (18:16).
 - a. If a second conversation is deemed necessary, prayerfully, graciously, lovingly, and truthfully, without malice or pride, explain the case to the witnesses. Then go to the offender with the witness and call them to repentance.

²⁵ Ibid, 205-206.

²⁶ Chang, Geoff, A Step by Step Primer for Church Discipline, Jan. 9 2018, <https://www.9marks.org/article/a-step-by-step-primer-for-church-discipline/> Accessed on February 15, 2026.

- b. It is worth noting here that the other individuals that become involved in this step may not agree that there is an offense. Allow for those you involve in the case to hear out both sides of the case (Prov. 18:17). You always want to give the other party the benefit of the doubt and err on the side of grace when possible. It may be concluded that this conversation is not necessary.
- 3. **Step 3:** If the two to three people have their conversation with the offending party and he/she refuses to listen. The elders of the church need to become involved in this step if they have not been already. One of the elder's responsibilities is to oversee the process of church discipline (see Pillar DC's constitution, Article IV, Section 1.) The elders will then reach out to the individual in question.
- 4. **Step 4:** If there continues to be no sign of repentance, then the church needs to be involved (Matthew 18:17). The elders will then share the facts about the case during a member meeting. The church members will then be given time to pray and call the offending party to repentance. This fourth step should be considered a last resort. It is also at this step, that the elders may ask the offending party to not partake in the Lord's Supper.
 - a. 1 Tim. 5:20 - *"As for those who persist in sin, rebuke them in the presence of all, so that the rest may stand in fear"*
- 5. **Step 5:** After the church has had time to pray and encourage the person to repent, the elders will raise the matter at the next member meeting, assuming the offending party is continuing in sin. The elders will make a motion during the meeting to vote on removing the person from membership and be barred from participating in the Lord's Supper. If there is at least a 75% voting approval, the motion will carry.

Restoration: What is restoration and when is it practiced?

If someone has been removed from membership via church discipline and has been barred from participating in the Lord's Supper, then they have been "delivered to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord." (1 Cor. 5:5)

This person does not enjoy the privileges of membership (care of the pastors and members, using their authority, etc.). They can still attend worship services, but our relationship with them changes. We should not give the appearance to either onlookers or to the excommunicated that church discipline for unrepentant sin does not have relation consequences. Any time spent together should be used to call the disciplined person to biblical repentance. We are to desire the person's repentance, pray towards that end, and make it clear to them whenever we interact with them that what we long for is their full restoration to God and the church. (Matt 18:17, 2 Thes 3:14-15, 1 Cor. 5:11)

What is restoration?

Restoration is when the repentant person has their testimony and faith affirmed by the church and the church forgives, loves, and comforts the person. This person must express true godly repentance. Restoration is given to the repentant person to its full extent with all the expectations and privileges of membership.

When does restoration happen?

The congregation, guided by the elders, must watch over the person's life to observe the fruit of repentance in the person's life (Luke 3:8). The fruit of repentance looks like godly grief that leads to one turning from sin physically, emotionally, and spiritually (2 Corinthians 7:1-13). The person disciplined has both a growing hatred of sin and an increasing resistance by the power of the Spirit to not participate in sin. Instead, freedom from sin in Christ.

If there appears to be sufficient evidence of repentance, the elders will recommend to the church at the next scheduled member meeting to restore the person. If there is at least a 75% voting to affirm the godly repentance and testimony of faith, the person will be restored from church discipline.

When a person repents, depending on their situation, they may rejoin Pillar DC's membership or they may seek to join another church's membership. The elders recommend, at a minimum, reconciliation between the offended and the repentant person before or during the restoration of the person to membership of another church. If they do seek to rejoin Pillar DC's membership, their restoration vote will also bring them back into the church's membership.

Because Pillar DC upholds local church autonomy, we do not believe another church is bound by our decision to keep the person removed from membership. Another church could bring the person into their membership because Pillar DC no longer has authority over that person nor do we have authority over another church. We believe wisdom calls for the other church to investigate the case. However, that church has the responsibility and privilege to bind and loose and is not constrained by Pillar DC's decision of excommunication.

Church Discipline FAQ

How do the elders inform the congregation about a discipline case's details?

The elders aim to share what is necessary to the case and avoid gossip about the person. The elders aim to follow these guidelines:

- Share enough for the congregation to make an informed decision.
- Not share so much that it becomes unhelpful or harmful.
- Aim to shepherd the congregation's trust.
- Start with very little detail when first announced; add more only if the case moves toward excommunication.
- Close portions of the membership meetings to allow for the sharing and discussion of details with only the membership present (the whole church, Matt 18:17).

How is church discipline loving?

Church discipline is loving for four reasons from 1 Corinthians 5.

1. For the sake of the sinning brother (5:5)
 - a. The hope, the goal, is always that they wake up from their sin; that the pain of being removed from the blessings of the church wakes them up and brings them back to their senses as an act of love
 - b. The aim is their salvation and restoration.
2. For the sake of other believers (5:6)
 - a. The Bible uses the analogy of yeast. Just like a little yeast quickly spreads through the whole lump of dough, a little sin in the community quickly infects everybody.
 - b. Demonstration of the congregation's love by taking public unrepentant sin (visible, undermining to Christ's name, and marring the witness of the church) seriously.
3. For the sake of Christ (5:7-8)
 - a. Christ died, Paul says, to get rid of sin. So why would his church tolerate in their midst those things that put him on the cross?
 - b. It is loving to take steps to not empty the cross of its power, which open, marring, and unrepentant sin does.
 - c. Taking sin seriously is a loving act in keeping with Jesus' command to be holy as God is holy.
4. For the sake of the outside world (5:9-10)
 - a. Paul says that these steps are important because we need to give the outside world an accurate picture of Jesus. Most of the world will never

read the Bible—they read the lives of Christians. Therefore, it is an act of love when we present Christ accurately.²⁷

If we excommunicate someone, does that mean they are no longer a Christian?

“That final step of discipline or excommunication doesn’t mean a church consigns someone to hell. It doesn’t have that power. The final step doesn’t even mean the church is declaring with certainty that someone is a non-Christian. A church does not possess Holy Spirit X-ray vision eyes to see into a person’s soul. Rather, the final step simply means that a church no longer affirms a person’s profession of faith.”²⁸

Because God is sovereign over our salvation from start to finish, and because we affirm Jesus’ promise that He will not lose one of His sheep, we believe the Bible clearly teaches that God will finish the work of salvation in every true believer.

So all true believers, even if they take actions and express attitudes that persist in sin, will come to repentance. It may take longer for some than others, but if someone is a genuine believer, he or she will repent. And church discipline is the biblical Christ-established (Matt 18:15-18) mechanism God uses to draw wayward sheep back to Himself, which is restoration. Every part of the process - even excommunication - serves the end of full restoration.

If someone consistently refuses to repent and hardens his or her heart against God, then that would suggest he or she was never a born-again Christian in the first place. As long as the person remains in a state of unrepentant sin the church cannot affirm them as a Christian (Matt. 18:17, 1 John. 2:19).

I am a sinner too, so how is it possible for me to discipline someone else?

Jesus has gifted you with a measure of authority that should be used within the context of the local church to, among other things, participate in the restorative church discipline process.

Nobody is perfect, but that does not make us hypocrites by exercising church discipline. We exercise discipline because we love the person and we see them living in a clear, contrary way to Scripture.

²⁷ J.D. Greear Ministries, Why is Church Discipline the Loving Thing to Do? <https://jdgrear.com/podcasts/why-is-church-discipline-the-loving-thing-to-do/> Accessed Feb 18, 2026.

²⁸ Leeman, Jonathan, Church Discipline, <https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/essay/church-discipline/> Accessed February 15, 2026.

How should I vote in the event that I do not know the person being disciplined?

In the event you do not know the person there are things that can be known in order for you to make an informed decision about the case. A juror does not have to know the defendant or the prosecutor to be a faithful citizen who weighs in on the facts of the case to come to a verdict in a court case.

You can be a neutral party who can make sure that the details are clear and not skewed in favor of one party over the other. You are able to notice if the details of the case are becoming gossip or unnecessarily detailed.

The act of church wide discipline does not require you to know the person but to be able to hear the clear facts as shared by the elders and pray for the offended to forgive, for the unrepentant to repent, and for God to be glorified in this process.

What sins could lead to the church being notified of the discipline case?

“The sins should be simultaneously outward, significant, and unrepentant. To say a sin is *outward* is to say it can be seen with the eyes or heard with the ears. Church leaders shouldn’t speculate about the state of people’s hearts, as if to say we accuse their hearts of being “proud” or greedy” when we have no evidence for it. To say a sin is *significant* is to say it’s consequential enough that the church doesn’t feel like it can continue to affirm the person’s profession of faith because of it. To say a sin is *unrepentant* is to say that the person has been challenged but refuses to let go of the sin with his or her actions, even if their words promise otherwise.”²⁹

Examples of sins that can lead to excommunication (assuming the person is unrepentant) are forsaking the church gathering; marital adultery, abuse, or abandonment; or an arrestable offense.

²⁹ Ibid.