

## BRANCH LIFE CHURCH CONSTITUTION

We the members of Branch Life Church, recognize the following constitution is an extra-biblical legal document required by the commonwealth of Pennsylvania and serves as an organizational tool designed support, not supersede, the authority of Christ, his word and the God given church leaders responsible to oversee this local church.

### ARTICLE I – NAME, PURPOSE, MISSION

#### 1.01 - NAME

The name of this church shall be the Branch Life Church. The church is incorporated as a non-profit corporation under the laws of the state of Pennsylvania. Branch Life Church is independent of any denomination yet is Baptist in our governance. The church is to be separate from civil government yet bound by its laws as long as they are not in opposition to Scripture.

#### 1.02 – PURPOSE

This congregation is organized as a church for charitable, religious and educational purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) of 1986, for such purposes including, but not limited to, proclaiming the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; establishing and maintaining religious worship; educating people in a manner consistent with the Bible; sharing with the surrounding community our resources, facilities and properties; and maintaining missionary activities in the United States and around the world.

#### 1.03 – MISSION

The mission of Branch Life Church is to glorify God by connecting people to Christ and reaching our world, fulfilling the words of Jesus in Matthew 28:19-20: *“Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you”* **Empowered by prayer** our aim is to pursue the **multiplication** of disciples, leaders and churches locally, regionally and globally, with the Holy Bible as the sole standard of faith and doctrine.

While never compromising on the **truths of Scripture**, we will seek to implement this mission with **Christ-like generosity** as we share Christ using **culturally engaging methods** that will likely change from generation to generation.

### ARTICLE 2 - DOCTRINE, DISTINCTIVE BELIEFS, COVENANT

#### 2.01 DOCTRINAL BELIEFS

These basic doctrines within the Branch Life Church Statement of Faith represent what we believe to be core elements of Biblical teaching. We expect all members of Branch Life Church to affirm these doctrines.

##### **A. Revelation**

We believe that it is possible for man to know God (1) but only to the extent God reveals Himself to man, for apart from the divine self-revelation, finite man cannot know the infinite God (2).

We believe that God reveals Himself to all people through creation and conscience. This gives them a general sense of God's existence (3); a general awareness of His power (4), wisdom (5), majesty (6), and goodness (7); and a sense of man's ultimate accountability to God (8).

We believe that God has further revealed Himself through the incarnation of His Son (9), and through the Holy Scripture (10).

## **B. Scripture**

We believe that the Bible is the final, complete, and infallible authority for our lives; that the Bible consists of sixty-six Old Testament and New Testament books; that as originally written it is in its entirety verbally inspired by God; and that it is indeed the Word of God (11).

## **C. God**

We believe that there exists one living and true God (12); that in His being He is infinite (13), eternal (14), self-existent (15), unchanging (16), and ever-present (17); that in His nature He is spirit (18); that He is personal (19); that He is perfect and absolute in all His attributes (20), including those of His Holiness (21), His power (22), and His knowledge (23); that He is therefore sovereign in His position, just in all His decrees, and righteous in all His actions; that He is the cause of all existence beside Himself (24); and that the full comprehension of His person is beyond the capacity of finite man (25). We further believe that in His divine and infinite being there is a trinity of persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (26), sharing equally in every divine perfection while executing distinct but harmonious offices in every divine work (27).

### **1. God the Father**

We believe that the Father is truly God, and that in the Godhead He occupies a functional but not a positional superiority (28). These functions include, but are not limited to, creation (29), planning redemption (30), sending the Son (31), sending the Holy Spirit (32), raising the Son from the dead (33), and giving authority to the Son to judge the world (34). It is to the glory of the Father that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord (35).

### **2. God the Son**

We believe that Jesus Christ is truly God (36); that He is eternal (37), was active in the creation (38), and entered the realm of humanity by means of birth from a virgin, human mother, having been conceived by the Holy Spirit (39); and that although in His humanity He possessed a human nature and human limitations (40), yet without sin (41), He nevertheless did not cease to be God. We believe that the purpose of the incarnation was to provide redemption for men (42) by means of a predetermined (43), substitutionary (44), propitiatory (45) death on the cross; that Christ bodily rose from the dead (46) and ascended into heaven (47); and that He will one day return to earth (48). Furthermore, we believe that Jesus is presently the Advocate (49) and Great High Priest (50) of His people, the exalted Head of His Church (51), and the only Mediator between God and man (52).

### **3. God the Holy Spirit**

We believe that the Holy Spirit is truly God (53); that Scripture was given by Him (54); that He convicts of sin; that He bears witness to the truth of the Gospel in preaching and testimony (55); that He is the regenerating agent in the new birth (56); that He seals (57), indwells (58), guides (59), gifts (60), teaches (61), confirms (62), sanctifies (63), and comforts (64) believers.

## **D. Satan**

We believe in the spirit being of Satan who was created by God as an angel but through pride and Rebellion became the enemy of his Creator. Satan is the unholy and temporary god of this world and ruler of all powers of darkness and sin (65).

## **E. Sin**

We believe in the reality of sin, that sin is departure from the purpose and will of God, and that the active originator of sin in the universe was Satan (66).

## **F. Creation and Man**

We believe that God created all things (67) and that man was created and is made in the image of God (68). Man was originally created sinless (69) but by choice fell from his sinless state (70). All of mankind are now sinners by nature and by choice (71), naturally inclined to evil (72), utterly devoid of the righteousness required by the law of God (73), and therefore, under just condemnation without defense or excuse (74).

## **G. Salvation**

We believe that salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in Christ alone. Each person must choose to accept the forgiveness, salvation, and the reconciliation that God offers to us through Christ's life, death, and resurrection. There is nothing we can do to deserve this life—it is a free gift of God, and our responsibility is simply to receive it.

### **1. Grace**

We believe that it is by grace, God's unmerited favor, we are saved through faith, and this is not from ourselves, but it is a gift of God. Grace is given freely not based on any good works, kind deeds or through baptism, intercessory prayer or communion (75).

### **2. New Birth**

We believe that in order to be saved, sinners must be born again (76); though formerly dead in sin, we are made alive in Christ (77).

### **3. Repentance and Faith**

We believe that repentance, a change of mind and purpose from sin and toward God, is an integral part of saving faith (78), and that faith in the Lord Jesus Christ is the only condition of salvation (79). We believe that saving faith is trusting in Christ alone for salvation.

### **4. Justification**

We believe that justification, occurring at the time of new birth, is that judicial act of God whereby He imputes the righteousness of Christ to the believer and therefore declares the believer righteous; that it includes the forgiveness of sin and the promise of eternal life, not in consideration of any works of righteousness we have done, but solely by grace through faith in Christ (80).

### **5. Sanctification**

We believe that sanctification is the work of God in all believers by which He changes our hearts and minds, and He continues making our character more and more like Jesus Christ (81).

## **6. Eternal Destiny**

We believe that death seals the eternal destiny of each person. At the final judgment, each unbeliever will be separated from God and condemned to the lake of fire. Each believer will be received into God's loving presence and rewarded for their faithfulness to Him in this life. Believers will spend eternity with God in the new Heaven and the new Earth (82).

## **H. Marriage and Family**

We believe that the Bible teaches marriage is to be exclusively the union of a biological man and woman. We also accept the Biblical prohibition of sex outside of marriage (83) and instructions to husbands, wives, and children as fully applicable to believers today (84).

## **I. The Church**

We believe, since Pentecost, born-again believers everywhere compose the Church in the universal sense, but the church is always expressed locally. The local church consists of a group of born-again, baptized believers who are organized according to Scripture; willingly submitted to the authority of the Biblically established leadership of the elders/overseers/pastors; served by deacons; self-governing; meeting together for the worship of God, fellowship, growth in Christ, serving each other, and reaching the lost (85).

The Ordinances of the church are symbolic acts of obedience and provide a vivid picture of the love and grace of God. We believe Baptism and The Lord's Table are the two God-given ordinances for the church.

### **1. Baptism**

Baptism is an outward sign of a person's internal faith in Jesus Christ. This physical demonstration symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, but more importantly, communicates a believer's loyalty and allegiance to Jesus Christ in a public way. Baptism is commanded in Scripture as an initial act of obedience by Christ-followers, but it is not conditional for one's salvation. We believe in believer's baptism by immersion in water (86).

### **2. The Lord's Table**

The Lord's Table (or Communion) is a physical act in which believers remember the death of Jesus. Jesus gave instructions for this act of worship to be an important time of remembrance, self-examination and proclamation (87).

## **2.02 DISTINCTIVE BELIEFS**

The following Distinctive Beliefs demonstrate our particular interpretation of the Bible in several areas. These Distinctive Beliefs are not universally held by all followers of Christ. Members of Branch Life Church may differ in their interpretation of Scripture regarding our Distinctive Beliefs yet for the sake of unity may not cause division or recruit others to their position. Members should expect that the distinctive will be maintained in all ministry environments at Branch Life Church, and members may not teach contrary to them.

### **A. Civil Government**

We believe that God ordains human government for the good of mankind and that believers are to obey civil law unless such law contradicts the commands of the Word of God (88). In the event of such conflict, we believe that we must obey God rather than man, and that we must not renounce our

profession or Christian practice, even in the face of trials, afflictions, persecutions, or imprisonments (89). We furthermore believe that the affairs of the church must be kept distinct from the civil government.

### **B. Election and Free Will**

We believe that election is the eternal purpose of God according to which He graciously chooses to regenerate and save sinners. It is a glorious display of God's sovereign goodness. We also believe this election is done in a manner above our comprehension, solely by the power of the Holy Spirit, so as to secure our voluntary, free will obedience to the Gospel. Election is evidenced by repentance, faith, and newness of life (90).

### **C. Perseverance**

We believe that all who are truly born again are eternally secure in God's salvation and that they will persevere by the power of God, through faith (91).

### **D. Last Things**

We believe in the personal, premillennial, imminent return of Christ (92), the resurrection of the righteous dead (93), the change of the living in Christ (94), His millennial reign on earth and the creation of the New Heaven and a New Earth where believers from all of human history will live with God, with no evil or sin (95), the resurrection of the unrighteous (96), and their judgment at the Great White Throne and subsequent sentencing to the Lake of Fire (97).

### **E. Supernatural Gifts**

We believe that the Holy Spirit empowers and gifts believers for their ministry (98). Some of these gifts can be categorized as "extraordinary" gifts because their expression overrides natural laws and ordinary human abilities. These gifts include speaking in unlearned foreign languages, the ability to miraculously heal, and speaking prophetically of future events (99). Although we believe God is no less capable of working through His people in these same ways today, there is evidence from Scripture these gifts were linked specifically to the birth of the early church as a way of confirming the message (100), and so for the sake of unity within this church family we do not practice or teach these extraordinary gifts. We do encourage believers to focus on loving one another and to pursue gifts to build up the church (101).

### **F. Complementarian Roles of Men and Women**

We believe the Bible clearly teaches equality between men and women before God (102), yet there are distinctions in roles for men and women in the home and in the church (103). Every leadership opportunity is open to women except those excluded by Scripture. Therefore, women are not permitted to serve as elders on the Oversight Team (104) or hold the authoritative office of pastor within the context of the local church (105).

### **G. Evangelism and Mission**

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to actively make disciples of all nations. Our personal growth in understanding God's love and forgiveness through the Gospel must result in personal love for our world. It is the responsibility of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by persistent prayer, personal connections, verbal witness, Godly love and living, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ. (106)

## **CHURCH COVENANT**

*Having been brought together by God through faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior with a mutual desire to deepen our faith and reach our world, we, as a local church of baptized believers, joyfully make this covenant with one another.*

*We purpose to keep the Gospel at the center of our lives; to walk daily in the power of the Holy Spirit; to search the Scriptures regularly and follow its truths; to seek the salvation of those who don't know Christ by praying for them, investing in those relationships and inviting them to follow Jesus.*

*We further purpose to love one another, to care for one another and when the need arises to forgive one another quickly as we strive for unity in our church body; to pray faithfully for the building up of our church as we love God wholly and our neighbors fully.*

*To these ends we purpose to consider our local church as essential to our individual and family lives; to pray for, encourage and submit to our church leadership; to participate weekly in our worship gatherings when not providentially hindered; to give generously to our church's ministry, vision and mission as God enables and directs; to guard our reputation with others; to lovingly serve our community; and to use our God given gifts and talents to further our mission of multiplying disciples, leaders and churches for the glory of God.*

*We gladly make this covenant together with humble dependence on God's power to carry it out.*

## **ARTICLE 3 - MEMBERSHIP AND OFFICERS**

The Head of Branch Life Church is Jesus Christ. As a spiritual body, we seek to submit to His priorities in all we do and in how we do it.

### 3.01 MEMBERSHIP

Members of Branch Life church are an essential part of the body and as such are **"team" members** essential to the health and mission of the church who worship together regularly, care for one another and who pray for, invest in and invite others. **Team members, therefore, play an active role in the life of the church and are not simply spectators or attendees at an event.**

#### **A. Qualification for Membership**

The qualifications for membership include the following

##### **1. Relationship with Jesus Christ**

Any person, who professes faith in Jesus Christ, gives evidence of having been born again, and meets the other qualifications herein, may be received into membership.

##### **2. Believer's Baptism**

Each member will have been baptized according to Scripture as a believer.

##### **3. Agreement with Doctrinal Beliefs and Support of Distinctive Beliefs**

Each member will agree with the Doctrinal Beliefs, be willing to submit to our Distinctive Beliefs and pursue a lifestyle consistent with our Church Covenant.

##### **4. Support the Ministry Leaders,**

Each member will agree to recognize the authority of the church leadership and agree to be accountable to them and my fellow believers in matters concerning my relationship with God and others.

### **5. Participate in Church Life**

Each member will seek to deepen their connection to Christ by being devoted to the weekly, worship services, investing in one another, personal spiritual growth, giving generously and serving regularly. Each member will seek to reach our world by frequently and specifically praying for, intentionally investing in and regularly inviting people to know and follow Christ and participate in the church.

### **B. Admission of Members**

To become a member of Branch Life Church each person will submit a written testimony of their salvation and baptism and follow any addition steps outlined by the church leadership. The Oversight Team will approve the membership process, as well as all new members.

### **C. Removal of Members**

Persons may be removed from membership by the Oversight Team for the following reasons:

#### **1. Death**

#### **2. Personal Request**

A member in good standing may ask, in writing, to be removed.

#### **3. Affiliation with Another Church**

A member in good standing, who formally affiliates with another church without resigning as a member of this church, will be removed from membership.

#### **4. Failure to Participate in or Support the Ministry**

A member who has failed to participate in or support the ministry of this church for a period of six consecutive months may be removed. Before removal, due notification will be attempted.

#### **5. Discipline as a Result of Unrepentant Violation of Biblical Commands and Prohibitions**

Should any member become an offense to the church and its' good name by reason of immoral or unchristian conduct, or by consistent breach of his or her covenant vows, when a member's continued conduct is in clear violation of biblical commands and prohibitions, or when a member's conduct indicates intent to hinder the mission or unity of the church as a whole, as determined by the Oversight Team, they may terminate that person's membership. This will take place over time only after reconciliation is attempted, as directed in Matthew 18:15-17, and found unattainable. In exceptional cases of gross immorality, public disobedience and doctrinal heresy the Oversight Team may take the immediate steps of restoration or dismissal as directed in 1 Corinthians 5. If a member requests removal during the discipline process, the principles of Matthew 18:15-17 will continue to be followed. To "tell it to the church" as directed in Mathew 18:17, this process will be noted and communicated publicly by the Oversight Team in an appropriate manner. The goal of this discipline is always restoration, as described in Galatians 6:1-5.

### **D. Restoration**

Former members removed by personal request, affiliation with another church, or for failure to participate in or support the ministry, may be restored to membership as approved by the Oversight Team.

When it is determined there is evidence of genuine repentance, members dismissed for violation of biblical commands and prohibitions may be restored by the Oversight Team and, when appropriate, celebrated publicly according to the spirit of 2 Corinthians 2:7-8.

### 3.02 OFFICERS

The offices for the church identified in the New Testament are that of overseers (Elder, Overseer and Pastor) and deacons (1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:1-9, I Peter 5:1-4). All officers must be members of this church for at least eighteen months prior to assuming their responsibilities, except in cases of hired pastoral staff, wherein these shall be recognized as Overseers and welcomed as members simultaneously.

#### **A. The Oversight Team**

**Note:** The biblical terms “Elder,” “Overseer,” and “Pastor” refer to complementary aspects of the same leadership office in the church (Acts 20:17, 28; 1 Peter 5:1-2). For purposes of clarity in this constitution, we will distinguish between paid and nonpaid overseers by using the term “Pastor” for those who serve in a vocational capacity and the term “Elder” for those who serve in a non-vocational capacity. Together these Pastors and Elders form the Oversight Team.

##### **1. Composition**

The Oversight Team will be comprised of the Lead Pastor, a minimum of two additional pastors and two additional Elders when applicable. The Oversight Team will be comprised of no more than nine members.

##### **2. Qualifications: Led, Qualified, Equipped and Committed**

###### **a. Led Through Prayer**

These men must have a strong desire to serve in the office of Overseer. That heart desire should be confirmed through prayer and others. This office should not be filled out of compulsion or duty.

###### **b. Qualified Through Character**

These must be men whose lives are marked by the character qualities described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

###### **c. Competence Through Training**

As part of their recognized gifts, abilities, and experience, Pastors and Elders must have proven themselves to be men who possess discernment and strategic-thinking capabilities through other ministry leadership experience, education or BLC leadership development opportunities.

###### **d. Commitment Through Unity**

Team members must be in full agreement with the Doctrinal Beliefs, Distinctive Beliefs and Church Covenant. They must fully support of the Biblical leadership of the Lead Pastor and be in alignment with the vision and mission of the church as well as be activity participating in the church’s worship services, small groups and seeking the lost.

##### **3. Selection**

###### **a. The Selection of Pastors to the Oversight Team**

The Pastor who serves as Lead Pastor will be a permanent member of the Oversight Team. When the number of other pastors is greater than five the Lead Pastor and Elders

will choose at least two other Pastors to serve on the Oversight Team. Pastors serving their first term will be affirmed by the congregation at the annual business meeting. Pastors will serve one-year, renewable terms. Pastors who serve as part-time Pastors can be chosen to serve on the Oversight Team for unlimited, one-year terms at the discretion of the lead pastor and Elders.

#### **b. The Selection of Elders to the Oversight Team**

Scripture gives evidence that the founders of the church appointed the first leaders. This implies that the existing spiritual leadership of a church should be intimately involved in the process of selecting new leaders to ensure that selection is based on spiritual rather than superficial qualifications. Beyond this, there are no specific guidelines given regarding the selection process. It would therefore appear the local church has the liberty to develop a process that will best serve its own special needs and situation (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5).

The process for selecting Elders at Branch Life Church is as follows:

##### **1). Identification**

At any time members of the congregation may nominate any man from the church membership as a candidate for an Elder.

##### **2). Evaluation**

The current Oversight Team will prayerfully review the nominees. If they believe a man to be the qualifications outlined above and there is a need, a member of the Oversight Team will be appointed to approach him to explain the specific nature of the need and to determine his willingness to serve in this capacity (1 Timothy 5:22).

##### **3). Examination**

The current Oversight Team will examine the nominee through personal assessment, interviews, and discussion.

##### **4). Affirmation**

Those candidates who are unanimously recommended by the Oversight Team will be presented to the church. A period of time, determined by the Oversight Team, will be set aside for any concerns or affirmation regarding a nominee. Concerns should first be shared with the nominee (Matthew 18). If concerns are not resolved privately, they must be shared in the presence of at least two other members of the Oversight Team (Matthew 18). If concerns are deemed legitimate, the Oversight Team must seriously reconsider the nominee. If there are no concerns, nominees will be presented for an individual vote of affirmation at the annual members' meeting. Should a vacancy occur during the year, the Oversight Team may unanimously appoint a replacement to serve until the next annual meeting.

#### **4. Tenure and Dismissal**

##### **a. Term of Service**

With the exception of Pastors, members of the Oversight Team will serve three-year terms. Two terms may be served in succession with a year off before an individual can serve again as an Elder.

**b. Process for Removal**

If it becomes apparent that an elder should no longer serve on the Oversight Team, he may resign or be dismissed by a three-quarters vote of the other Oversight Team members. Note: It is important to understand the unique biblical step given for reconciling conflict with an Elder. For an accusation against one of these leaders to be considered, there must be two or more witnesses (1 Timothy 5:19).

**5. Duties**

**a. Oversight and Leadership of the Church Body**

*The Oversight Team is commissioned by the congregation and responsible to God to lead Branch Life Church. As such it is responsible for the overall direction of the church, the spiritual health and protection of the Church's doctrine.*

**b. Delegation**

The Oversight Team is **permitted to delegate** its authority and responsibilities to individual or teams as it chooses, but no such delegation will absolve it of its accountability in any matter. Those appointed to serve do so on behalf of the Oversight Team. The Oversight Team may revoke any delegation it has made.

**c. Hiring and Dismissal of Staff**

The Oversight Team has the authority, as it deems necessary to accomplish the mission of the church, to and appoint volunteer ministry directors, coordinators and leaders and to hire and dismiss staff and pastoral staff (with the exception of the lead pastor) in accordance with the church budget.

**d. Program Evaluation**

The Oversight Team is responsible for evaluating the programming implemented by the church staff, deacons and ministry leaders based on its appropriateness and effectiveness in furthering the overall health and mission of the church. The Oversight Team may eliminate or adjust these programs as needed for the good of the church.

**e. Recommendations to Congregation**

When the position is vacant, the Oversight Team will recommend a Lead Pastor to the church. It also will recommend new members of the Oversight Team and Deacons to the church at the annual members' meeting.

**f. Approve and Represent Church Members**

The Oversight Team will approve the membership process as well as all new members and will act on behalf of the membership in all matters not specifically designated in this constitution to the membership (see article 4.02 section C)

**6. Meetings.**

a. The Oversight Team will meet a minimum of eight times each year and at least once in every quarter. At any meeting of the Oversight Team, three-quarters of the team members, including two of the Pastors who serve on the Oversight Team, will constitute a quorum. In the interest of the Unity of the body, consensus will be sought in all decisions. In the event of unresolved differences, a three-quarters vote of those

present will have final authority. All members of the Oversight Team will support publically any decisions made by consensus or vote.

b. The Lead Pastor or any team member acting on his behalf can call Oversight Team meeting. All members of the Oversight team must be informed of any meeting a minimum of five days prior to its happening. In the absence of a lead pastor a Pastor or Elder will be chosen by the Oversight Team as acting team leader.

## **B. Pastors**

### **1. Qualifications**

#### **a. Character**

Pastors will be men whose lives are marked by the character qualities described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9

#### **b. Competence**

As part of their recognized gifts, abilities and experience, Pastors must have shown themselves to be effective leaders in the area of ministry for which they are being considered.

#### **c. Doctrine and Beliefs**

A Pastor must be in full agreement with the Doctrinal Beliefs and Distinctive Beliefs of Branch Life Church.

### **2. Selection**

The appropriate number of Pastors for the leadership of the church will be determined by the Oversight Team in accordance with the budget as approved by BLC Finance Team. The Oversight Team will initiate a selection process, involving itself and any other members it deems necessary to the process. Except for the Lead Pastor, in whose case a more detailed process is required

### **3. Tenure and Dismissal**

Pastors are appointed to an indefinite tenure consistent with their continued desire and ability to serve in this capacity. However, evaluation and recognition of qualifications and competency resignation or by dismissal in accordance with the following:

#### **a. Voluntary Resignation**

A Pastor may resign at any time he chooses. The resignation must be submitted to the Oversight Team in writing for its review.

#### **b. Involuntary Dismissal**

If it becomes apparent that any Pastor is no longer qualified to serve in his role, he may be dismissed by a three-quarters vote of the rest of the Oversight Team or a three-quarters vote of a quorum of the voting members of the church. In addition to Matthew 18:15-18, it is important to understand the unique biblical step of more than one witness given for reconciling conflict with a Pastor in 1 Timothy 5:19.

### **4. Duties**

#### **a. Set Spiritual Direction**

The Pastors are collectively responsible for the leading, teaching, equipping and shepherding of the church. The Church Staff implements programming, gives vision to the various ministers of the church, and is empowered to make the necessary decision to oversee the day-to-day functions of the church.

**b. Manage Financial Resources**

The pastors are responsible for the day-to-day management of the financial resources of the church within the boundaries of the budget established by the BLC Finance Team, excluding the decisions regarding compensation for the Church Staff, which will be determined by the BLC Finance Team. The Pastors are accountable to the BLC Finance Team in all fiscal matter.

**C. Lead Pastor**

One of the Pastors will serve as the Lead Pastor. He should be characterized by his spiritual leadership and by his ability to attract and empower a creative and godly team of leaders who cast the vision and accomplish the mission of Branch Life Church. The qualifications, tenure and dismissal, and duties of the Pastors previously listed all apply to the Lead Pastor with the following additions:

**1. Selection**

The Oversight Team is responsible to serve as the search committee when there is a vacancy in the position of Lead Pastor. When the focus has been narrowed to one candidate, the Oversight Team will provide opportunities for the members to interact with the candidate. After this interaction, a members' meeting will be called. If at least three-quarters of the voting members of the church agree with the Oversight Team's recommendation, the team will offer the position to the candidate.

**2. Duties**

**a. Guidance and Leadership**

The Lead Pastor will provide overall guidance and leadership to the Oversight Team, the BLC Finance Team, and Church Staff.

**b. Teaching, Preaching and Vision**

The Lead Pastor will be responsible for the weekly worship services including preaching and teaching God's word as well as implementing vision of Branch life Church.

**c. Evaluation and Accountability**

As a first among equals, the Lead Pastor will ensure mutual accountability (Acts 20:28) and proper evaluation for the fulfillment of the responsibilities given to each member of the Oversight Team and church staff.

**3. Accountability**

There are four official levels of personal accountability for the Lead Pastor:

a. The Lead Pastor will be held accountable by individuals in the church (Matthew 18:15-18), just as each member in the Body of Christ is to be held mutually accountable. Each step of church discipline should be followed with every member of the church. Special attention should also be given to 1 Timothy 5:19.

b. The Lead Pastor will be held fiscally accountable by the BLC Finance Team

in the area of church finances. The BLC Finance Team may involve the Oversight Team if necessary.

c. The Lead Pastor will be held accountable by the rest of the Oversight Team (Acts 20:28). The Oversight Team is able to call for the resignation of the Lead Pastor by three-quarters majority of the rest of the Oversight Team.

d. The Lead Pastor will be held accountable by the collective members of Branch Life Church (Matthew 18:15-18). The congregation can call for the resignation of the Lead Pastor by three-quarters majority.

#### **4. Absence of a Lead Pastor**

In the absence of a Lead Pastor the Oversight Team will begin the process of filling the Lead Pastor role with one of the current Pastors or a new candidate. The Oversight Team will recommend to the church members a candidate for affirmation.

### **D. Other Staff (non-pastors)**

#### **1. Selection**

The Oversight Team has the authority, in accordance with the budget provided by the BLC Finance Team, to hire and dismiss staff members as it deems necessary to accomplish the mission of the church.

#### **2. Duties**

Each staff member will complete any tasks deemed necessary by their immediate supervisor to accomplish the mission of the church.

### **E. Deacons**

In the Jerusalem Church, seven men were chosen to serve the pressing needs in the believing community, freeing the leaders to give their “attention to prayer and the ministry of the Word” (Acts 6:1-4). Branch Life Church Deacons ensure that ...

1. The pastoral team members are freed up to focus on prayer and ministry of the Word
2. The practical needs within the church are met at corporate and individual levels.

The Deacons serve on behalf of the Oversight Team and help mobilize the church body. Individual Deacons will be responsible for their given ministry roles and may meet with the Pastors or Oversight Team to evaluate ministries, discuss direction, offer advice, and pray.

#### **1. Qualifications**

The word “deacon” is from the Greek word “diakonos” which means, “one who serves.” At Branch Life Church, these are men and women who provide servant-leadership to the ministries of the church. Deacons must also exhibit the qualifications set forth in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and, as members, must fully agree with the Doctrinal Beliefs and fully submit to the Distinctive Beliefs and Church Covenant.

Deacons will be BLC members who meet the qualifications in I Timothy 3:8-13. Because the office of Deacon at BLC is not a governing body within the church nor charged with oversight authority or teaching responsibilities women are permitted to serve as deacons.

## **2. Selection**

Candidates willing to serve and who meet the qualifications above will be appointed by the Oversight Team and will serve as long as they are qualified and willing and as long as a need for their ministry exists. The number of Deacon will be determined by the needs of the church community.

## **3. Structure and Oversight**

The office of deacon is primarily an administrative office of equipping others within the church to meet practical needs. Deacons operate within the existing structures of the church, under the oversight of the Oversight Team.

## **4. Individual Deacon Rolls or Teams**

### **a. Composition of Rolls or Teams**

When possible an individual deacon may be appointed by the Oversight Team to manage a particular need. When the need arises a team led by a deacon may be appointed by the Oversight Team to manage a particular need. These team leaders should meet the qualifications above and be characterized by a servant's heart, unity and responsibility.

### **b. Accountability**

Individual Deacons and other Deacon led teams are ultimately accountable to the Oversight Team. The Oversight Team has the authority to override any decision made. However, if such an occasion should arise, it will be necessary to the Oversight Team to meet with that individual or team to discuss the matter fully.

### **c. Duties**

Deacons or Deacon led teams will be appointed by the Oversight Team to manage whatever practical and personal needs that may arise. Examples of rolls or teams might include but are not bound by or limited to the following:

- Deacon(s) of Care – coordinating people care ministries to help meet the practical needs of individuals and families.
- Deacon(s) of Facilities – managing the BLC facilities and grounds
- Deacon(s) of Community Connection – managing and coordinating community service opportunities, ministries and events.
- Deacon(s) of Prayer – coordinating the BLC prayer network and teams.
- Deacon(s) of Finance – serving on the BLC Finance Team

### **d. Branch Life Church Finance Team**

One such team will be the BLC Finance Team which will maintain the following composition, accountability and duties unless otherwise directed by the Oversight Team.

#### **1) Composition of the Team**

The BLC Finance Team will include the Lead Pastor, one Elder, the Deacon of Finance and up to 6 team members selected annually by the Oversight Team and affirmed at the annual meeting. These individuals should be characterized by wisdom, spirituality maturity, unity and fiscal responsibility. At any meeting half of the affirmed members will constitute a quorum.

Should a vacancy occur during the year, the Oversight Team may appoint an individual to serve as a replacement for the remainder of the term.

## **2) Accountability**

The BLC Finance Team is ultimately accountable to the Oversight Team. The Oversight Team has the authority to override any decision made by the BLC Finance Team. However, if such an occasion should arise, it will be necessary to the Oversight Team to meet with the BLC Finance Team and discuss the matter fully.

## **3) Duties**

The BLC Finance Team will meet no less than once a quarter to administrate the financial matters of the Church. This includes the following:

### **a) Compensation and Policies for Paid Staff**

The BLC Finance Team will approve compensation and employment policies for the paid staff.

### **b) Annual Budget**

The BLC Finance Team will develop the annual budget and review the financial statements regularly throughout the budget year.

### **c) Financial Accounting**

BLC Finance Team may appoint individuals to receive, care for, and disburse all monies in accordance with church policy. Detailed accounting of all receipts and disbursements, and financial statements will be provided as needed.

## **4) Allocation of Designated Funds**

The BLC Finance Team has the authority to make expenditures from funds contributed and designated for a specific purpose. They may also reject or redirect any designated funds when appropriate as there is no legal obligation to honor a designated gift.

## **5) Debt**

The BLC Finance Team has the authority to approve the borrowing of funds for unforeseen ministry needs. Debt that is approved by this team without the affirmation of the members will never exceed 20 percent of the church's current annual budget for any one project. The borrowing of funds in excess of this limit requires the affirmation of the members.

## **6) Spending Limitations**

The BLC Finance Team has the authority to approve and spend an amount not greater than 10 percent of the total annual budget for any project that was not included in the annual budget. The Oversight Team must be informed of any expenditure from 4 percent to 10 percent of the annual church budget. Any expenditure beyond 10 percent of the annual church budget must be approved by the Oversight Team.

## **7). Legal Roles**

To accommodate legal relationships outside the church, the following people will serve Branch Life Church, a nonprofit, religious corporation, in these legal roles:

### **a. Legal Officers**

The BLC Finance Team will serve as the Legal officers of the organization. Officers will be appointed as follows:

#### **i. President**

The Lead Pastor will serve as the President.

#### **ii. Secretary**

The BLC Finance Team will annually appoint one individual from among its members to serve as secretary.

#### **iii. Treasurer**

The Treasurer will be chosen by the BLC Finance Team.

### **b. Trustees**

The BLC Finance Team for all legal purposes shall constitute the “trustees” as stated in the Articles of Incorporation and will have the authority to direct the execution and delivery of any document required by law. Execution of a document as directed by the Oversight Team is also sufficient to bind the church.

## **ARTICLE 4 – MEMBER MEETINGS**

### **4.01 STRUCTURE**

#### **A. Annual Meeting**

The church year, for fiscal purposes, will be January 1 through December 31. In preparation for the fiscal year, there will be an annual members’ meeting that will take place within three months of the coming fiscal year. At that meeting, members will affirm candidates for the Oversight and Finance Teams.

#### **B. Special Business Meetings**

Other member meetings may be scheduled at any time by the Oversight Team or by 20 percent of the voting members of the congregation who have signed a petition and presented it to the Oversight Team. At least fourteen days prior to the meeting, the date and tentative agenda for the meeting will be sent to the members by postal or electronic mail, or will be publicly announced at a regularly scheduled worship service.

#### **C. Moderator**

The Oversight Team will designate a person to preside at member meetings. The moderator will determine the rules of procedure according to his sense of fairness and common sense. The Oversight Team is the final authority on matters of procedure.

#### **D. Clerk**

A person designated by the Oversight Team will keep minutes of each member meeting.

## 4.02 VOTING

### **A. Process**

All proposals will come from the Oversight Team except for proposals generated by petition of the voting members at least 14 days in advance of the meeting. A two-thirds vote is needed to affirm all decisions, except for the selection of The Oversight Team and the Lead Pastor, which needs a three-quarters vote of affirmation (Article 3, Section 3, B, 1). If a two-thirds affirmation is not achieved, the Oversight Team will reevaluate the proposal. There will be no proxy or absentee voting. Voting will normally be by written ballot. This may vary, however, at the discretion of the Oversight Team. Ten percent of the members constitute a quorum.

### **B. Eligibility**

Any member in good standing who is present at the meeting and is at least sixteen years of age may participate in a vote.

### **C. Decisions**

Affirmation of the voting members is required for the Oversight Team to act on the following decisions.

1. Hiring the Lead Pastor
2. Affirming Elders
3. Affirming the BLC Finance Team
4. Amending the church constitution
5. Incurring indebtedness beyond the limits of the BLC Finance Team's authority
6. Dissolution of the church ministry (Article 6)
7. Any item proposed for a vote at a business meeting

The members entrust the Oversight Team to act on their behalf in all matters not specifically listed above. The Oversight Team may, however, choose to bring other matters to the members for affirmation.

## **ARTICLE 5 – AMENDMENTS**

This constitution may be amended or replaced using the voting process in Article 4.02. The Oversight Team will review this constitution at least every three years to determine where changes may need to be made to ensure its effectiveness.

## **ARTICLE 6 – DISSOLUTION**

In the event that the ministry of Branch Life Church cannot continue, the membership may vote to dissolve the church using the voting process in Article 4.02. All assets of the church will be distributed by the Oversight Team to one or more nonprofit organizations that qualify under the guidelines of Section 501c(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954 or corresponding section of any future federal code, and whose mission is consistent with the spread of the gospel and that of Branch Life Church.

## **ARTICLE 7 – INDEMNIFICATION PLAIN ENGLISH SUMMARY OF WHAT FOLLOWS**

Branch Life Church may choose to protect from damage, loss, or injury any individual who has acted on behalf of the church as a paid employee or as an individual chosen to serve on behalf of the leadership. If the Oversight Team or voting members determine this individual acted in good faith and not in opposition to the best interest of the church, they may choose to “indemnify” that individual to protect

them from liability for any lawsuit or other action taken against them.

#### **LIMITATIONS OF LIABILITY AND INDEMNIFICATION**

The corporation shall indemnify any person who was or is a party or is threatened to be made a party to any threatened, pending, or completed action, suit, or proceeding. This includes any civil, criminal, administrative, or investigative proceeding, whether formal or informal (other than an action by or in the right of the corporation).

Such indemnification shall apply only to a person who was or is a director or officer of the corporation, or who was or is serving at the request of the corporation as director, officer, partner, trustee, employee, or agent of another foreign or domestic corporation, partnership, joint venture, trust, or other enterprise, whether for profit or not for profit.

The person shall be indemnified and held harmless against expenses (including attorney fees), judgments, penalties, fines, and amounts paid in settlement actually and reasonably incurred by him or her in connection with such action, suit, or proceeding, if the person acted in good faith and in a manner he or she reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interest of the corporation or its members. With respect to any criminal action or proceeding, the person must have had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful.

The termination of any action, suit, or proceeding by judgment, order, settlement, conviction, or on a plea of nolo contendere or its equivalent shall not by itself create a presumption that (a) the person did not act in good faith and in a manner that the person reasonably believed to be in or not opposed to the best interest of the corporation or its members or (b) with respect to any criminal action or proceeding; the person had reasonable cause to believe that his or her conduct was unlawful.

Any indemnification under this article (unless ordered by a court) shall be made by the corporation only as authorized in the specific case. The corporation must determine that indemnification of the person is proper in the circumstances because the person has met the applicable standard of conduct set forth in the Article. Such determination shall be made in any of the following ways:

(a) By a majority vote of a quorum of the board consisting of directors who were not parties to such action, suit, or proceeding.

(b) If the quorum described in clause (a) above is not obtainable, then by a committee of directors who are not parties to the action. The committee shall consist of not less than two disinterested directors.

(c) By independent legal counsel in a written opinion. (d) By the Members.

[REFERENCE NOTES]

1. John 17:3; 1 John 5:20
2. Psalm 145:3; Romans 1:19, 11:33-34; 1 Corinthians 2:9-10
3. Acts 17:24-28; Romans 1:19-20
4. Isaiah 40:26; Romans 1:20
5. Psalm 19:2
6. Psalm 19:1
7. Acts 14:17
8. Romans 1:20
9. John 1:1-5, 14; Hebrews 1:1-3
10. John 5:39
11. Psalm 33:11, 119:89; Matthew 24:35; John 10:35, 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-20
12. Isaiah 45:21-22; 1 Thessalonians 1:9; 1 Timothy 2:5
13. 1 Kings 8:27; Psalm 147:5
14. Genesis 21:33; Deuteronomy 33:27; Isaiah 57:15; 1 Timothy 1:17
15. Exodus 3:14; John 5:26
16. Malachi 3:6; James 1:17
17. Psalm 139:7-10
18. John 4:24
19. Exodus 3:14; 1 Corinthians 2:11; Hebrews 1:3
20. Matthew 5:48
21. Isaiah 6:3, 57:15; Psalm 47:8; Habakkuk 1:13; 1 Peter 1:15-16
22. Job 42:2; Jeremiah 32:17; Matthew 19:26
23. Psalm 147:5
24. Genesis 1:1; John 1:3; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16-17
25. Romans 11:33-34
26. Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14
27. John 14:26; Galatians 4:4; Philippians 2:6-9
28. John 3:35; 5:19; 14:10
29. Genesis 1:1; Deuteronomy 32:6; Isaiah 40:28; Matthew 19:4
30. John 3:15; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:7-10
31. John 5:36-38; 1 John 4:14
32. John 14:26
33. 1 Corinthians 6:14; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:20
34. John 5:22, 27
35. John 5:37, 14:16-17; Galatians 4:4; Philippians 2:10-11
36. Isaiah 9:16; Matthew 1:23; John 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:15-16
37. John 1:1-5, 8:58
38. John: 1:3; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:16; Hebrews 1:2
39. Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:20-23; Luke 1:27-31
40. Matthew 8:24; John 4:6, 19:28
41. 2 Corinthians 5:21; Hebrews 4:15, 9:14; 1 Peter 1:19; 1 John 3:3
42. 1 Corinthians 15:3-4; Revelation 5:9-10
43. Acts 2:23; Revelation 13:8
44. 1 Peter 2:24
45. 1 John 4:10
46. Matthew 28:5-7; 1 Corinthians 15:4; 2 Timothy 2:8
47. Acts 1:9
48. John 14:3; Acts 1:11
49. 1 John 2:11
50. Hebrews 4:14
51. Ephesians 1:22-23, 4:15-16, 5:23
52. 1 Timothy 2:5
53. Acts 5:3-4
54. 2 Peter 1:21
55. Acts 5:32
56. John 3:3-6
57. 2 Corinthians 5:5; Ephesians 4:30
58. Romans 8:9; 1 Corinthians 3:16

59. Acts 16:6-7; Romans 8:14  
 60. 1 Corinthians 12:4  
 61. John 14:26, 16:13-14  
 62. Romans 8:16  
 63. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20; Galatians 5:22-23  
 64. John 16:7; Acts 9:31  
 65. 2 Corinthians 4:4; Ephesians 2:2; 2 Timothy 2:26; Hebrews 2:14; 1 Peter 5:8; Revelation 12:9-10  
 66. Proverbs 15:19; Isaiah 14:12-15, 59:1-2; John 1:29, 8:44; 1 John 3:4, 8  
 67. Genesis 1-2; Exodus 20:11; Colossians 1:16  
 68. Genesis 1:27  
 69. Ecclesiastes 7:29; Romans 5:12  
 70. Genesis 3:1-6; Romans 5:12-19  
 71. Isaiah 53:6; Romans 3:9-12, 23, 5:12  
 72. Jeremiah 17:9; Romans 7:14-17; Galatians 5:19-21  
 73. Isaiah 64:6-7; Galatians 3:22-24  
 74. Romans 1:19-21, 2:14-16  
 75. Ephesians 2:8-9  
 76. John 3:3, 6-7  
 77. Ephesians 2:1-3  
 78. Mark 1:15; Luke 13:3, 5; Acts 3:19, 17:30  
 79. John 1:12, 3:16; Acts 16:31  
 80. Romans 5:15-21; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2 Corinthians 5:21  
 81. Acts 20:32; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 6:11; Hebrews 10:10; Jude 1  
 82. Psalm 9:17; Proverbs 14:32; Malachi 3:18; Matthew 25:34-41; Luke 16:19-31; John 8:21; Romans 6:23  
 83. Exodus 20:14; Proverbs 6:24-33; Matthew 5:27-28; Acts 15:20; Romans 7:3, 13:9; 1 Corinthians 5:9, 6:15-20, 10:8; Galatians 5:19-21; James 2:10-11  
 84. Exodus 20:12; Matthew 15:4; Ephesians 5:22-6:4; Colossians 3:17-21; 1 Timothy 5:8; 1 Peter 3:1-8  
 85. Acts 2:41-42, 20:28; Romans 6:1, 4-5, 16; 1 Corinthians 1:2, 5:12, 11:2, 16:1-3; Philippians 1:1, 4:15; 1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:14  
 86. Matthew 28:19; Acts 8:12-13, 36, 38; Romans 6:1-10  
 87. Matthew 26:26-29; Mark 14:12-26; Luke 22:7-23; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34  
 88. Exodus 18:21-22; Matthew 22:21; Romans 13:1-7; 1 Timothy 2:1-3; Titus 3:1; 1 Peter 2:13-17  
 89. Daniel 3:17-18; Acts 4:19-20, 5:17-20, 29  
 90. Matthew 22:14; John 15:16; Romans 8:33, 9:16, 20-24, 16:13; Colossians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:4; 2 Timothy 2:10; Titus 1:1; 1 Peter 1:2, 2:9  
 91. Psalm 89:30-34; Matthew 16:18; John 5:24, 6:3-7, 10:28-29, 14:19, 17:2; Romans 8:1, 29-31, 38-39; 1 Corinthians 1:8; Philippians 1:6; 2 Timothy 1:12, 2:13; Heb. 5:9, 9:12, 13:5  
 92. John 14:3; Acts 1:11; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:28; James 5:8  
 93. 1 Corinthians 15:42-44, 52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 20:5-6  
 94. 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; Philippians 3:20-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18  
 95. Isaiah 9:6-7, 11:1-9, 32:1; Luke 1:32; Acts 2:29-30; Revelation 20:6-7; Mark 13:31; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Revelation chapters 21-22  
 96. John 5:29; Revelation 20:5  
 97. Revelation 20:11-15; John 5:28-29  
 98. Romans 12; 1 Corinthians 12-14; Ephesians 4:11-16  
 99. 1 Corinthians 12:28  
 100. Hebrews 2:4; 2 Corinthians 12:12  
 101. 1 Corinthians 12:31  
 102. Galatians 3:28  
 103. Ephesians 5:23-24; 1 Timothy 2:11-12  
 104. 1 Timothy 3:1-12; Titus 1:6-9  
 105. 1 Timothy 2:12-14  
 106. 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.