



Introduction

If you are reading this, hopefully it means you've prayerfully considered becoming part of our church family. Welcome!

As a way of introduction, let us first explain that most churches have, or should have, as a matter of policy, By-Laws to outline their beliefs and philosophy of ministry. Our By-Laws are no different. Perhaps you've never seen a copy of church By-Laws before, or even knew if your previous church had them. Sadly, most churches, ours included, often write By-Laws and then put them in a filing cabinet never to be read by anyone again.

As we were thinking of a way to provide resource material for those considering fellowshipping with us, we thought what better way to do it than to simply review, update and reproduce our By-Laws, Distinctives and Relational Commitments in a *usable* form.

Source Materials

We have borrowed from the By-Laws of other churches, relied heavily upon *The PeaceMaker Church*, *PeaceMaker Ministries* and the *Institute for Christian Conciliation*, consulted with our own Christian attorney, and most importantly, prayerfully researched the Scriptures on what God might have to say concerning typical issues facing churches. In short, our Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws are simply *our understanding* of our commitments to the four, God-Ordained "*Human Institutions*" (1 Peter 2:13, NASB) of Civil Government, Employer-Employee Relations, Marriage & Family, and to each other as we function as a local Church-Family and a Body of Believers.

Please keep in mind that we are sensitive to the fact that we all come from a variety of backgrounds (e.g., theological, cultural, ministry philosophy, worship styles, church government, etc.). This is simply *our* understanding and ministry calling here at HCCF.

Purpose

Our purpose in creating this booklet is to demonstrate our commitment to promote *loving relationships*, and our heart-felt desire to treat each other in a *biblically-faithful* manner. We have also attempted to clearly define what we believe are the *essentials* and *values* of a genuine, biblically-based, Christ-honoring church. *Essentials* tell us *what* to do. They ensure that worship, instruction, fellowship, and expression are biblically-based. *Values* describe *how* to do it, (E.g., through godly leadership, character, honor, grace, excellence, and accountability).* As such, our first priority will always be *biblical substance* rather than *culture, style* or *programs*.

Scope

The scope of our By-Laws is to address common ministry issues all churches must address at some time. E.g.,

- Our ministry focus & vision,
- Our statement of faith & doctrinal distinctives,
- How we view membership,
- Church government,
- Our desired relational commitments to each other as a church family,
- Our understanding of conflict resolution within the church,
- Our attempt, in conjunction with our Articles of Incorporation, to satisfy both NYS religious corporation laws and various IRS provisions.

Objectives

The objectives of this booklet are to share our philosophy of ministry, and provide an understanding of what you can expect if you decide to fellowship with us here at HCCF. And, like the early church in the Book of Acts, encourage a unity of spirit --- what some would call a *shared vision*, (Acts 2:42-47).

Potential Revisions

Please note that we are not a perfect church and this is not a perfect document. As such, we will attempt to update our By-Laws from time to time as the Lord and circumstances dictate. If new issues or circumstances warrant updating our By-Laws, we will try to do it in a timely manner after prayer, going to the Scriptures and seeking appropriate counsel.

Questions

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact a member of our leadership team. We honestly might not have an immediate answer for you, but we'll do our best to get you one --- or hopefully direct you to where you may be able to find the answer. We do ask the liberty, if needed, to ask that such requests be submitted in writing, and the opportunity to reschedule such discussions for a mutually convenient time so as not to interfere with scheduled times of worship, prayer, Bible study, fellowship, etc. We desire to give you our fullest attention. We also desire to lovingly participate in HCCF church functions, without distraction, for the real purpose of our corporate gatherings --- glorifying God, magnifying His Word and growing in intimacy with both Jesus Christ and each other! Thank you in advance for your gracious understanding.

Conclusion

We hope you will be blessed as you read through this document and recognize how much thought and work has gone into it to make it as *biblical*, *comprehensive* and *practical* as possible. (We encourage you to look up any Scripture references listed).

In His Loving Arms - The Leadership Team of HCCF

Dated: 1/01/2011

* Taken from *Church Family Values*, by Dr. Chuck Swindoll (Insight For Living)

Frequently Asked Questions

- 1) **What is your Statement of Faith or Doctrinal Distinctives?** Please see our Preamble and Statement of Faith (Article-II).
- 2) **How do I become a member?** Please see Article-I, Sections-1 & 2 and Article-III, and any policies we have concerning membership, etc.
- 3) **Do I have to become a “member” to attend HCCF?** No. We welcome those who are blessed with the ministry of HCCF regardless of “membership” status.
- 4) **Will I be treated differently if I simply choose to attend without becoming a “member”?** Not relationally, but you may not have certain “benefits” that members may have. Please see Article-I, Section-1 & 2 and Article-III.
- 5) **How do I cultivate and pursue my “giftings” and/or a vision for ministry at HCCF?** We encourage those who sense a “calling” into a ministry to use their talents and giftings for the Lord.

Existing Ministries: If you are being drawn to an *existing* ministry here at HCCF, we encourage you to speak with that particular ministry team leader about possible opportunities to observe or try it out to see if there is a ministry “fit.”

A New Ministry Vision: If you have a *new* vision for ministry that doesn’t currently exist at HCCF, we encourage you to pray about the Holy Spirit’s leading and then approach our leadership team with a proposal for ministry. We will pray with you and attempt to give you any input we can to help your vision become a reality. We will then prayerful seek how we can draw along side of you to support your personal faith venture. We believe that *where God guides, God provides*. As such, we cannot promise to finance or staff your vision.

- 6) **How soon after first attending HCCF may I begin to serve?** The answer to that depends upon the ministry position sought. For ministries involving teaching, worship or leadership positions, we typically require individuals to fellowship with us on a regular basis for a minimum of 12-18 months. (Some positions such as working with children also require completing a questionnaire and may require a background check). Other ministry or serving positions may be available much sooner.

When evaluating any individual for ministry and/or leadership, we evaluate an individual in the following areas and in the following order as outlined in Scripture: *character, commitment* and then *talents and giftings*.

- 7) **How is HCCF governed?** We believe that the local assembly (e.g., church congregation) should be “Pastor-led” and “Board-ruled.” The New Testament is clear that church leadership is to be led by a plurality of godly leaders under the oversight and watchful care of spiritually-gifted “overseers.” These overseers are given ultimate responsibility and authority to see that the church remains on a true course biblically, that God’s flock entrusted to them are appropriately shepherded, that the body is being fed through accurate, practical biblical teaching, and that the life of the church is being well managed with assistance of other competent and godly leaders.

At HCCF, this God-ordained oversight has been entrusted to our Pastor and the Board of Directors. These Directors are chosen from our Pastors, Elders and Deacons. Those Pastors, Elders or Deacons not specifically on the Board are consulted for non-binding advice. This biblical structure helps, a) provide mutual accountability and encouragement within a plurality of leadership; b) balance individual leader’s strengths and weaknesses; and c) shoulder the responsibilities of ministry.

Major Policy Decisions: Major policy decisions or decisions concerning the future of HCCF, are bathed in prayer with a unity sought among a plurality of leadership before final decisions are made.

Day-to-Day Church Operations: For ease and efficiency, decisions made regarding the day-to-day church operational decisions are often made by our pastor.

Individual Church Ministries: Liberty is also given to each individual ministry leader to seek God’s vision for their particular ministry responsibility, subject to the oversight of our Pastor (or when needed, with the approval of the entire Board).

Please see Article-IV and Article-V.

- 8) **What if I don’t agree with a decision of the church leadership?** We invite the person to have respectful dialogue with our church leadership. We may request that a letter be submitted outlining the concerns. The individual may then be invited to attend a leadership meeting to respectfully present their concerns.

If, after that dialogue has come to a conclusion, and the person either agrees with the decision or agrees to disagree, we ask that individuals trust that God is working through the unified plurality of HCCF leadership. If the disagreement is so great that the individual cannot lovingly and respectfully submit to the decisions and/or leadership of HCCF, we lovingly encourage them to seek a church fellowship where they will be blessed, and can continue to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ.

We also lovingly ask that individuals attending HCCF refrain from attempting to cause divisiveness over the issue or look to draw a following. Please see Article-I, Section-1, H.

- 9) **What if I have a concern or issue with a specific member of the leadership team?** Please see Article-III, Section-2, A & B and Section-7, D.
- 10) **What is HCCF’s position on women in ministry?** Please see Article-IV, Section-3.

11) What is HCCF’s position on “GLBTQ,” gender confusion and related issues?

We believe that God created humans in His image, intentionally male and female, each bringing unique and complementary qualities to sexuality and relationships. Sexuality is a glorious gift from God to be offered back to Him in marriage for procreation, union and mutual delight, or in celibacy for undivided devotion to Christ. Biblical Christianity calls us to proclaim the truth and beauty of God's design and the redemption of sexual brokenness in our lives and culture through Jesus Christ. Please see Article-I, Section-3.

12) What is HCCF’s policy on the consumption of alcoholic beverages?

Members & Attenders: Our “official position” is that the moderate consumption of alcoholic beverages is not a sin issue and is therefore, a personal matter of conscience or preference of the individual believer. The scriptural exceptions would be where an individual engages in drunkenness (which Scripture classifies as sin) or under-age drinking, which is a violation of New York State Law and hence Scripture (Romans 12:1-7).

With that said, we have repeatedly seen the tragic effects of alcohol consumption on individuals and families we have attempted to minister to. As such, we lovingly discourage the use of alcoholic beverages.

Leadership & Those In Visible Ministry: We believe that those who are in a visible church leadership position (e.g., a board member, pastors, elders, deacons, ministry leaders, those ministering to children, or those involved in public worship) are biblically asked to willingly submit to greater discretion, accountability and the “*higher law of love*” so as not to stumble weaker brothers and sisters in Christ. Please see Article-IV, Section-3, Sub-section B, Item-2h.

13) What is your philosophy regarding children on Sunday mornings?

Children under age-10: Our desire is to focus on the *salvation, sanctification* and *consecration* of our children. As such, we have gone to great effort and invested considerable resources to provide Children’s Church programming where our children can learn at an age-appropriate level. We find that this allows them to retain much more and hopefully grow at a faster spiritual rate. We have also found that they enjoy it more than being forced to sit in a service designed for adults. (Those parents who wish to stay with their children in Children’s Church are welcome to do so). Children under age-10 are dismissed to Children’s Church prior to Adult Worship to participate in their own “Kid’s Praise.”

Infants & Toddlers: Parents can either place their child in the nursery/toddler room (we provide complete nursery facilities with a closed-circuit TV) or bring their infant into the Adult Service *with the following sensitivities*. Because we have a heart for moms with infants, we reserve the back row against the wall for families who desire to sit with their infants in the service. If a child begins to become a distraction, we ask that parents lovingly (and as quickly and quietly as possible) remove their child to the nursery.

God's Word tells us that *"I magnify My Word above My own name."* As such, we believe that it is important to provide an atmosphere as free of distractions as possible. Sadly, some parents don't always use good judgment in deciding when their child is becoming a distraction to others --- *or to those attempting to lead worship and teach God's Word.* This can then grieve the Holy Spirit and possibly cause others to miss an opportunity for salvation or repentance. Therefore, if a distraction is such that a worship leader or the pastor is unable to continue, the service may be stopped and the ushers requested to help parents and their infant to the nursery.

Our heart cry is to be the greatest source of blessing to the greatest number of people. We feel we have crafted as loving a compromise position as possible for the benefit of all.

Middle School Students: We also provide an *optional* Junior Church for middle school aged students where they may learn at their own age-appropriate level. They are dismissed from the service *after* the Adult Worship. This class is designed to be a transitional class between Children's Church and participating fully in the Adult Service. At times they will be invited to stay in the Adult Service with their parents (e.g., Communion or special services).

- 14) **How did HCCF get started?** It all began when our pastor and his wife (Bob & Lisa Morgan) started a Friday night home Bible study. As the study began to grow, those attending requested that it be moved to meet on Sunday mornings. Pastor Bob & Lisa then took a step of faith and rented a small building in Honeoye at their own expense.

After outgrowing that building, they then took another step of faith and rented facilities from the Wizard of Clay pottery complex. Pastor Bob continued as a lay pastor while continuing to work a full-time job for the next three years. Simultaneously, he continued to work toward fulfilling requirements for ordination. After completing all requirements for ordination, Pastor Bob was ordained as Pastor. Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws were then filed with New York State making the fellowship a legally recognized church organization. To help with the oversight of the ministry, the Holy Spirit then raised-up a Board of Directors as overseers of the ministry.

Sensing a leading of the Lord, and as requested by those attending the fellowship and supported by our church leadership, Pastor Bob and Lisa then took a further step of faith and went "full-time" in ministry. As the fellowship continued to grow, we finally purchased the current building and renovated it for the use of the church. Pastor Bob and Lisa still currently continue to serve the flock here at HCCF.

- 15) **Are there other sources of information concerning policies and procedures of HCCF?**

Yes, In addition to our basic By-Laws we may have additional policies and procedures and individual forms such as our *"Request To Use Church Facilities"* form, our *"Wedding & Marriage Guidelines"*, etc.

**BY LAWS
OF
HEART CRY CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP**

A New York State Corporation (Church)*
(Rev. Dtd. 01/01/2018)

PREAMBLE

PURPOSE

The purpose of Heart Cry Christian Fellowship is triune:

1. The worship of the Triune God: God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.
2. The edification (“upbuilding”) of the church of Jesus Christ as modeled in Acts 2:42 through:
 - a. The teaching of the Word (the Bible) and the ministry of the Holy Spirit;
 - b. Fellowship with likeminded believers;
 - c. Communion as a memorial of the sacrificial love of God for us;
 - d. Prayer;
 - e. Perfecting the saints for the work of the ministry (Ephesians 4:12).
3. The persuasion of men to repent and confess Jesus Christ as Lord.

*For the purposes of this document,
the words “corporation” and “church” are synonymous.

INTRODUCTION

Fostering Loving, Biblical Fellowship & Community.

We desire to treat each other in a loving and biblically-faithful manner. The following By-Laws (including our Distinctives and Relational Commitments) are designed to help the people who attend our church relate to one another in a way that honors God and promotes authentic relationships. These commitments cover important relational issues, such as peacemaking and reconciliation, marriage and divorce, protecting children from abuse, counseling, confidentiality, and mutual accountability.

This working document is intended to help us build a strong community of faith and fellowship. By *community*, we mean a group of people who have voluntarily joined together to encourage and support one another as we worship God, grow in our understanding of His love for us, and seek to tell others about the salvation and peace they, too, can find through faith in Jesus Christ.

We know that true community and fellowship (“koinonia”) isn't easy to achieve. Each of us brings our own expectations and agendas into the church. This diversity usually leads to rich discussions and creative ministries; but sometimes it can lead to conflict. As James 4:1-2 warns, “What causes fights and quarrels among you? Don't they come from your desires that battle within you? You want something but don't get it.”

That certainly describes us! At times, no matter how hard we try to build a close community of faith, our desires and expectations still clash. That's where these Commitments come in. They pull together key principles from God's Word and serve as our relational guidelines. These Commitments accomplish several important purposes:

- They remind us of our mutual commitment to work together to pursue unity, maintain friendships, preserve marriages, and build relationships that reflect the love of Christ.
- They help to prevent surprises, disappointed expectations, confusion and conflict by describing how we expect to relate to one another within the church.
- They provide a clear track for us to run on when conflict threatens to divide us, and they remind us how to move quickly toward reconciliation.
- They establish guidelines for how our leaders will counsel others, guard confidential information, and protect our children from abuse.
- They define and limit the spiritual authority of church leaders and thereby insure that all members are treated fairly.¹
- Finally, they reduce our church's exposure to legal liability by clearly establishing our relational practices and by affirming our mutual commitment to resolve conflict biblically.²

As you read Article-I, *Relational Commitments*, we encourage you to study the Bible passages that are cited next to particular provisions. We want you to be confident that these Commitments are based solidly on the Word of God (the Bible). If your study does not answer all of your questions and concerns, please do not hesitate to approach our leaders, who will be happy to talk with you about these principles.

As followers of Christ, we will do all we can to encourage those who attend our church to grow in faith and godliness and to live a disciplined life that honors our Lord, Jesus Christ and enhances the witness of His church. We encourage those who are in community with us to regularly attend worship services, find fellowship in a small group, look for opportunities to serve others, and to seek assistance from our leaders as needed. For those who decide to make Heart Cry Christian Fellowship their church home or continue relating to us in any of these ways, we will assume that they have consented to these Relational Commitments, and we will attempt to do our best to lovingly and biblically relate to you accordingly.

¹ When we use the term “leader” in these Commitments, we are referring to the pastors, elders, deacons and Board Members of our

² See www.PeacemakerChurch.net for information on how these Commitments can help to prevent conflict and reduce exposure to legal liability in our church.

Case Study: A Tale Of Two Families.

Two boys, John and Luke, lost their mother at a young age. When they were in their teens, their father was reported to have died when his plane crashed into the ocean. The boys had no other relatives, so two neighboring families took them in.

“The Friendly family” did all they could to make John feel welcome in their home. They gave him his own bedroom, provided his meals, and encouraged him to join in family activities. Not wanting him to feel any pressure, they did not explain to him any of the family rules. Instead they hoped that he would notice how their other children behaved and decide on his own to act the same way.

Not knowing exactly what was expected of him, John frequently disappointed the family by violating unspoken rules. Feeling judged and unconnected to the family, he became increasingly independent. He came and went at any hour, played loud music, and spent long hours in his room with a variety of girls. When Mr. Friendly finally tried to talk with him about his behavior, John said, “I’m not your son, so you have no right to tell me how to live my life. I like having a bedroom and meals whenever I decide to be here, but I’ll still do whatever seems right to me.”

Tensions continued to build, and finally Mr. Friendly asked John to leave. Fortunately for John, there was another Friendly family in town, and they were happy to take him in, but there the cycle started all over again.

John’s brother had an entirely different experience. Luke was taken in by *“the Loving family.”* They wanted him to feel welcome, so they gave him a room, provided meals, and encouraged him to join in family activities. But they also wanted to avoid misunderstandings and conflict. So shortly after Luke arrived, Mr. Loving explained the family rules to Luke, so he would know how to get along with the rest of the family. He said, “Even though you are not my son, I will be glad to look out for you the best I can. But as long as you are in my home, I also will expect you to behave as my other children do.”

Like any normal teenager, Luke sometimes broke the rules. When he did, Mr. Loving sat down with him, pointed out what he’d done wrong, and held him accountable to the same standards he had established for his other children. Luke sometimes resented this discipline, but he eventually realized it was always done in love, and it kept him out of a lot of trouble.

After a few months, Mr. Loving approached Luke and said, “Since you are living here like part of the family, we would like to make it official. If you feel this is where you’d like to stay, we’d like to adopt you and make you our son.”

Luke gladly accepted and formally committed himself to the family. In doing so, he changed from being an orphan who merely resided in the home to being a son who willingly accepted and enjoyed all of the same responsibilities and privileges of his new brothers and sisters.

Suppose that John and Luke's father is rescued from an island two years later. When he is reunited with his sons and hears what has happened to them, which family will he thank the most? The Friendly family, who were kind enough to give John a place to hang out, but could not bring themselves to give him any boundaries? Or the Loving family, who welcomed Luke in, held him accountable to the same rules as the rest of the family, and invited him to be a son?

The answer is obvious. And there is a real Father who one day will evaluate the way we care for the people who come into our church family (Heb.13:17b; 1 Pt. 5:1-4). Therefore, we are glad to welcome people and give them a place to worship, grow and serve. But being "friendly" is not good enough. We want to be loving, as God defines loving (Heb. 12:5-6; 10:24). Therefore, we will encourage everyone who attends our church to live out the biblical principles that are summarized in these Relational Commitments.

Living like an orphan, with its illusion of independence and self-determination, may seem appealing to some. But it cannot compare to the security, privileges, and sense of belonging that come from being a part of a loving, healthy church-family, and living as truly committed brothers and sisters in the family of God. As mentioned, our "heart cry" is to relate with each other in a loving, biblically-faithful manner. Therefore, to help us all avoid confusion and to manage expectations, the principles and practices described in our Relational Commitments have been carefully gleaned from Scripture to help us facilitate just that. In addition, to avoid the trap of being "*respecters of persons*" (Acts 10:34; Jas. 2:1-9, 3:17; 1 Tim.5:21), they shall apply equally to all the people who fellowship at and/or attend Heart Cry Christian Fellowship (both members and attenders).

I

RELATIONAL COMMITMENTS

Article I, "Relational Commitments" is adapted from *The Peacemaker Church*.
Used by permission of Peacemaker® Ministries. Edition 1.1
www.PeacemakerChurch.net

Section 1. General Overview.

A. Our Commitment To A Relational Focus With The Triune God.

We desire to know God the Father through Jesus Christ His Son, and to be conformed to the image of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit. (Jn.14: 5-11; Rm. 8: 28-30 & 12:1-2; 2 Cor. 3:18 & 4:4b; Col. 3:10).

B. Our Commitment To Worshipping In Simplicity, Sincerity, Spirit & Truth.

We desire to grow in intimacy with Jesus Christ; to foster genuine Christian community; to reach out to others; and to worship in simplicity, sincerity, spirit and truth --- where Jesus is glorified, His Word is magnified, His grace and holiness are personified, and the work of the Holy Spirit is recognized in our lives. Our desire is to make disciples (including water baptism) and equip them to be worshippers, to live grace-filled holy lives, and to be fruitful for the Master's use in Christian service & evangelism. (Psalm 138:2; Rm. 12:1; Mt. 5:13-16; 25:31-46; 28:18-20; Rm. 12:1-2; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 5:8; 2 Cor. 1:12; 8:8; 11:3; Eph. 1:3-6; 4:30; 5:27; 6:24; Col. 1:21-22; 3:12-17; Tim. 5:3; Titus 2:7; Jas. 1:27).

C. Our Commitment To God's Word (the Bible).

We believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God. We believe the Bible, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation. We further believe in the inspiration, inerrancy, authority, sufficiency, and the perspicuity of Scripture. Therefore, we embrace the Scriptures in matters of salvation, faith, morals, conduct, and those areas of life and reality which the Bible directly speaks to. We also endeavor to cultivate a Biblical Worldview in our thinking, and in our attitudes, choices and behaviors; and to live our lives in holiness, integrity, humility, graciousness, worship, discipleship, and service as is fitting a true follower of Jesus Christ. (2 Tim. 3:14-17; 2 Pet. 1:19-21; Matt. 4:4; Eph. 4:17-6:4; Col. 3:1-4:6; 1 Pet. 1:13-15; 2:18-5:11; 2 Pet. 1:3-9; Rom. 8:29; 12:1-15:14).

D. Our Commitment To A Scriptural Ministry Focus.

In our various services and functions, we take our example from the early church (as found in Acts 2), and focus on a personal relationship with God through Jesus Christ, and the building up of His Body (the church) through worship, prayer, fellowship, Communion and instruction from God's Word (the Bible). We endeavor to participate in these practices as often as possible and to not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. (Heb. 10:25).

E. Our Commitment To The Five “Solas.”

We believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the only begotten Son of God, and trust Christ alone (Solus Christos) as the one and only mediator between God and man, by faith alone (Sola Fide), through His grace alone (Sola Gratia), as the only means of salvation as presented in Scripture alone (Sola Scriptura), all to the glory of God alone (Soli Deo Gloria). (John 14:6; Acts 4:12; Rom. 1:16-17; 3:9-26; 10:9; Phil. 2:5-11; 3:5-9; Titus 3:3-5; 1 Tim. 1:15)

F. Our Commitment To Cultivating Genuine Christian Community.

We believe that the only basis of genuine Christian community & fellowship --- what the early church called “*koinonia*” --- is His agape love, which is greater than any differences that we possess and without which we have no right to call ourselves Christians. We believe that worship of God is fruitful. Therefore, we look for His fruit (*agape love*) in our lives as the supreme manifestation that we have truly been worshipping Him. (Mt. 7:15-20; Jn. 15:8; 1 Cor. 13; Gal. 5:22-23; Eph. 5:9-11).

G. Our Commitment To Each Other As Church Family.

Of all the “word pictures” used in the New Testament to describe the church (e.g., Body of Christ, Bride, Flock, Temple, etc.) the concept of *family* (e.g., Brethren, Household of God, etc.) is most often used. And as family, we desire to care for one another in agape love and to remember one another in prayer and in sickness and distress; to cultivate civility and courtesy in our attitudes, actions and speech; and to be slow to take offense, but always ready to forgive and seek reconciliation; mindful of Jesus’ teachings to proactively seek it without delay.

(1 Cor. 10:31; Rm. 12:10 & 18; Pr. 25:2; 1 Cor. 11:31-32; 1 Pt. 4:8; Eph 4:26-27; Matt. 18: 15-20; Matt. 5:23-26; 1 Jn. 1:7; Eph 4:15; 1 Tim. 5:19-22).

H. Our Commitment To Liberty Of Conscience & Preserving Unity Of Spirit.

"In the essentials unity, in the non-essentials liberty, and in all things charity."

(Rubertus Meldenius, A.D. 1627)

Having each been given perfect liberty in the Spirit to be fully persuaded in our own minds what we believe concerning the non-essentials of the Christian Faith, we commit to not abusing this liberty by causing confusion through propagating, teaching, or distributing doctrinal or theological beliefs that are contrary to the essential, fundamental doctrines of the historic, evangelical Christian faith (cf., Key Christian Beliefs: Essential Doctrine Made Easy, by Dr. Norman Geisler). We also lovingly ask that any teachings or distinctives contrary to any accepted doctrine, theology, or distinctives as understood by Heart Cry Christian Fellowship not be circulated or proposed to those who attend our church.

HCCF has no desire to police the thoughts of others. As Members and Attenders we are free to express our opinions on doctrinal matters or other matters concerning the church with others at HCCF. However, we will lovingly refrain from opinions leading to attitudes, choices and behaviors that could harm the fellowship of the church by gathering a following to create a splinter group. The following attitudes, choices and behaviors may potentially signal a larger problem:

- Those who attempt to win over others in the body; holding divisive discussions (often called “prayer meetings” or “fellowship”); or “crusading” for their viewpoint.
- Disruptive behavior or divisiveness.
- Holding to a position with such intensity that an individual is simply unable to submit to the Doctrinal Statement, By-Laws, distinctives, policies, decisions and leadership of HCCF.

(Rm. 14:4-5; Acts 2:46; 2 Cor. 3:17 & 13:11; Eph. 4:3; Phil. 1:27; 1 Pt. 3:8; Titus 3:9-11).

I. Our Commitment To Respecting The Privacy Of Others.

We believe that when the Body of Christ is assembled at any church sponsored event (*Sunday mornings in particular*), it is for the expressed purposes of ministry, prayer, fellowship, instruction and the reverential worship of our Triune-God. As such, to protect the integrity of the ministry of Heart Cry Christian Fellowship and the privacy of those that fellowship with us, we do not allow the following activities on church property: solicitations, business prospecting, political activities, fund raising, promoting petitions, recruiting, or proselytizing without the expressed written permission of our church leadership. We also do not allow our church directory or membership list (*past or present*) to be used for any similar purposes, or for any other activities not sanctioned by Heart Cry Christian Fellowship. We ask that times of assembly and our church directory be used only for the expressed purposes of fostering genuine fellowship within our congregation, and to facilitate church sanctioned ministry and activities. (Neh. 13:15-22; Matt. 21:12-13; Mark 11:15-17; Jn. 2:14-16; 2 Pt. 2:13).

J. Our Commitment To Loving, Biblically-Faithful, Conflict Resolution.

We also realize that there is the very rare possibility that on occasions, differences and even a conflict may develop between those who attend the church. In cases where conflict may arise between those attending the church, and in order to make sure that any such conflicts will be resolved in a loving, biblically-faithful manner, if the matter is unable to be resolved lovingly and biblically-faithfully between the parties themselves, or by involvement of the church, we require all of those fellowshipping with us to agree that any dispute that arises with someone who fellowships at HCCF, or with any member of the leadership team, or with HCCF itself, to be settled by mediation and, if necessary, legally binding arbitration in according with the *Rules of Procedure of the Institute for Christian Conciliation*; judgment of an arbitration award may be entered in any court having jurisdiction. (1 Cor. 6:1-10. Also see Section 2 below for a fuller understanding of our biblical understanding in the matter).

(C.F., *Developing The Art Of Gracious Disagreement: Surviving Church Conflict*, RBC Q0906).

K. Our Commitment To Respecting God Ordained Authority.

We believe that the Scriptures outline five, distinct channels of God-ordained authority each with specific, complementary responsibilities and limitations so as to avoid confusion and abuse: personal conscience, the family, the church, civil authorities and employer-employee relations. We are committed to respecting each of these five God-ordained channels of authority in our lives both individually and collectively as a church body.

In matters of faith, morals and biblical conduct, we submit ourselves to the Scriptures, the Holy Spirit, the government, and the discipline and restoration process given by Jesus to His church; promise to pursue its purity and peace; and agree to abide by the policies, By-Laws and distinctives of Heart Cry Christian Fellowship. (Matt. 16:18; 18:15-20; 1 Thess. 5:12-13; 1 Tim. 3:15; 5:17-22; Titus 3: 9-11; Heb. 13:17; Col. 3:15; Rom. 12:18-21).

(C.f., *The Truth Project*, by Dr. Del Tackett, Focus On The Family)

L. Our Commitment To The Ministry Of The Church.

We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in agape love, to strive for the advancement of grace, knowledge, holiness and comfort as members of the family of Heart Cry Christian Fellowship; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline and doctrines; and to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations. (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:9-15; Eph. 4:1-16; Heb. 10:24-25; 12:24-25; 1 Pet. 4:7-11).

M. Our Commitment To Proper Priorities When We Gather.

During regularly scheduled church events we lovingly request permission to participate and focus on the primary purpose for our gathering together: *worshipping Jesus and fellowshiping with our church family*. As such, during regularly scheduled worship, teaching, prayer and fellowship times, etc., we prefer not to conduct church business or entertain doctrinal & ministry philosophical debates, church policy discussions, suggestions, concerns or complaints, etc. We are more than willing to address such issues at regularly scheduled leadership meetings held for these purposes (subject to any established policies and procedures).

N. Our Commitment To The Stewardship Of HCCF Facilities.

HCCF restricts the use of HCCF facilities to events that align with the church's ministry, religious and worship purposes.

Section 2. Commitment to Peacemaking and Reconciliation.

Heart Cry Christian Fellowship is committed to building a “culture of peace” that reflects God’s peace and the power of the Gospel of Christ in our lives. As we stand in the light of the Cross, we realize that bitterness, unforgiveness and broken relationships are not appropriate for the people whom God has reconciled to Himself through the sacrifice of His only Son. (John 13:34-35; Eph. 4:29-32; Col. 3:12-14)

Therefore, we look to the Scriptures and the Holy Spirit for guidance on how we can respond to conflict in a way that will honor God, promote justice, reconcile relationships, and preserve our witness for Christ. As God gives us His wisdom and grace, we are committed to actively teaching and encouraging one another to live out the following principles of peacemaking and reconciliation:

(C.F., *Developing The Art Of Gracious Disagreement: Surviving Church Conflict*, RBC Q0906).

A. Personal Peacemaking.

1. Whenever we are faced with conflict, our primary goal will be to glorify God with our thoughts, words and actions (1 Cor. 10:31).
2. We will try to get the “logs” out of our own eyes before focusing on what others may have done wrong (Matt. 7:3-5). We will acknowledge our own contribution to the situation, and/or our own fallen-ness and vulnerability.
3. We will seek to overlook minor offenses and “cover them over” in love. (Prov. 19:11).
4. We will ask ourselves (if we are able) to refrain from confrontation and trust the work of the Holy Spirit to instruct and redeem the individual(s), and restore the relationship(s).
5. We will refrain from all gossip, backbiting and slander (Eph. 4:29). If we have a problem with others, we will talk *to* them, not *about* them.
6. We will make “charitable judgments” toward one another by believing the best about each other until we have facts that prove otherwise (1 Cor. 13:7).
7. If an offense is too serious to overlook, or if we think someone may have something against us, we will *go* promptly (in person whenever possible) to seek reconciliation (Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15).
8. When we offer a word of correction to others, we will do so graciously and gently, with the goal of serving and restoring them, rather than beating them down (Prov. 12:18; Eph. 4:29; Gal. 6:1).
9. When someone tries to correct us, we will ask God to help us resist prideful defensiveness and to welcome correction with humility (Ps. 141:5; Prov. 15:32).
10. When others repent, we will ask God to give us grace to forgive them as He has forgiven us (Eph. 4:32).

11. When we discuss or negotiate substantive issues, we will look out for others' interests as well as our own (Phil. 2:3-4).
12. We will evaluate if we have a relationship with this person that will bear this confrontation (e.g., family member, friend, co-worker, etc.), or God-ordained authority (e.g., parent, employer, church leader, etc.), rather than meddling.
13. We will clarify if this is a sin or offense explicitly forbidden in Scripture and/or is implicit --- or, if it's simply a cultural, ideological, philosophical, or personal preference.
14. We will make sure we have prayed this through (Eph. 6:8).

B. Assisted Peacemaking.

1. When two of us cannot resolve a conflict privately, we will seek the mediation of wise people in our church and listen humbly to their counsel (Matt. 18:16; Phil. 4:2-3). If our dispute is with a church leader, we will look to other leaders for assistance.

2. When informal mediation does not resolve a dispute, we will seek formal assistance from our church leaders or people they appoint, and we will submit to their counsel and correction (Matt. 18:17-20).

3. When we have a business or legal dispute with another Christian, we will make every reasonable effort to resolve the conflict within the body of Christ through biblical mediation or arbitration, rather than going to civil court (1 Cor. 6:1-8). If the other party attends another church, our leaders will offer to cooperate with the leaders of that church to resolve the matter.

4. If a person coming to our church has an unresolved conflict with someone in his former church, we will require and assist him to make every reasonable effort to be reconciled to the other person before joining our church (Matt. 5:23-24; Rom. 12:18).

5. When a conflict involves matters of doctrine or church discipline, we will submit to the procedures set forth in Section 7 below, *Commitment to Loving Accountability and Church Discipline*.

6. If we have a legal dispute with or within our church and cannot resolve it internally through the steps given above, we will obey God's command not to go into the civil court (1 Cor. 6:1-8). Instead, we will submit the matter to mediation through alternative dispute resolution ("ADR") and, if necessary, legally binding arbitration, in accordance with the *Rules of Procedure for Christian Conciliation of the Institute for Christian Conciliation*, a division of Peacemaker Ministries (www.Peacemaker.net). (For additional understanding please reference "No Suit for You", *Christian Research Journal: Vol. 37/No. 06/2014*, by David Hagopian, an Allied Attorney with Alliance Defending Freedom, "ADF").

7. Above all, we pray that our ministry of peacemaking will bring praise to our Lord Jesus Christ and lead others to know His infinite love and peace.³

Section 3. Commitment To Preserving Marriages.

God designed marriage to reflect the beauty and permanence of Christ's loving relationship with His bride, the church (Eph. 5:22-33; Rev. 19:7). God also designed marriage to provide mutual companionship (Gen. 2:18) through life's joys and difficulties, to create stability for raising and nurturing children, and to give strength and cohesiveness to society in general. Therefore, we believe the Bible teaches that God established human sexuality and marriage, fundamentally and exclusively, to be a life-long covenant-relationship between one man and one woman, as determined biologically/genetically at birth (Gen. 2:18-25; Matt. 19:4-6), and believe that any other variation (e.g., bigamy, homosexuality, transgender, etc.) is sin before God (Lev. 20:13; Rm. 1:24-28; 1 Cor. 6:9). We believe that entering the covenant of marriage and any ceremonies *are a form of worship before God*, and therefore reject any aberrant forms of marriage. While we desire to treat those made in God's image with dignity and respect, understanding Jesus' sacrificial love for us all, we also require members to be living in accord with God's standards based on our understanding found in Scripture as outlined above.

In our society, marriages fail under a wide range of circumstances. Many people have gone through a divorce before having a relationship with Christ, and others have experienced divorce through no desire or decision of their own. Still others may have divorced because of their own wrongful choices, but have since experienced the repentance and forgiveness offered through our Lord, Jesus Christ. *We want ALL of you to know that you are welcome in our church!*

Because our church recognizes both the divine origin of marriage and the devastating effects of divorce, we are deeply committed to preserving marriages and preventing divorce. Toward this end, we will devote a significant portion of our preaching and teaching ministry to strengthening marriages and families.

A. Pre-Marital Preparation.

We require and provide thorough premarital counseling & discipleship to ensure that couples enter into marriage advisedly and are well prepared for its many challenges. There are four possible reasons where we may be unable to endorse, support, or otherwise participate in a couple's desire for marriage:

1. Where both parties have not accepted Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior (2 Cor. 6:14).
2. Where one or both parties are involved in *unrepentant* sin as outlined in Scripture. This includes, but is not limited to, the sin of sexual immorality (Rm. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-11).
3. Where parental support has been withheld for reasonable and legitimate reasons (Eph. 6:1; Col. 3:20).
4. Where church leadership, as led by the Holy Spirit, determines that one or both parties are not biblically qualified, or the couple is deemed not ready to enter into the Covenant of Marriage (Heb. 13:7).

(Please see any other policies we may have as outlined in our church policy manual, our "Marriage Ceremony Guidelines", etc.)

B. Fellowship Groups.

We also encourage couples to nurture their marriages by participating in fellowship groups in which people can grow together in their love for God and for one another (Heb. 10:24-25). As relationships deepen within these groups, we hope that husbands would spur each other on in loving and cherishing their wives, and that wives would encourage one another in respecting and loving their husbands (Eph. 5:33).

C. Biblically-Based Counseling & Discipleship.

Our leaders are committed to providing counsel and support to couples who face marital difficulties. We will discourage couples from using divorce as a way to run away from issues that instead can be resolved through Spirit-guided, biblically-based counseling, repentance, forgiveness and ongoing discipleship.

D. Biblical Separation, Divorce and Remarriage

We recognize, however, that there are times when God permits a believer to seek a divorce without sinning against God or a spouse. Based upon our prayerful study and understanding of Scripture within its historic, cultural and linguistic contexts, we believe divorce may be permissible for the following, three, limited reasons: *

1. *Adultery and Sexual Immorality.* When the other spouse has violated the Marriage Covenant through sexual sin (scripturally, this applies either *prior to* or *after* the marriage). (Dt. 24:1 and affirmed by Jesus in Matt. 5:31-32 & 19: 3-12).

Please note that the Greek word *pornea* translated “fornicators” or “fornication” in the Bible refers to any physical act, or intimacy of a sexual manner, causing sexual stimulation outside of the Marriage Covenant. (It is *not* limited to sexual intercourse). The following relationships and behaviors are biblically considered sin: fornication, adultery, homosexuality, bi-sexuality, pedophilia, incest, bestiality, necrophilia, etc.

2. *Abandonment: Including Emotional & Physical Neglect.* Historically, both Old Testament and early New Testament marriage vows included outlining marital responsibilities as based upon Exodus 21:10-11. These responsibilities included the idea of *provision, protection* and *due benevolence* (conjugal rights of each spouse). Although God originally created these rights for the benefit and protection of the wife in an ancient, male dominated culture (Ex. 21:10-11), New Testament Judaism, the Early church and the Apostle Paul affirmed that they were God's ideal for *mutual* blessing and extended to each spouse (1 Cor. 7:12-16. Also cf. 1 Cor. 7:3-5 & 1 Tim. 5:8). Modern marriage vows still reflect this influence.

3. *Abuse.* This was traditionally and contextually included in, and considered a form of neglect. (Please see item-2 above, “*Abandonment: Including Emotional & Physical Neglect.*” Also cf. Eph. 5:25-29).

If church discipline has been exhausted and has failed to bring genuine repentance, separation and/or divorce may be a biblically permissible option. (Rm. 1:18-32; 1 Cor. 6:9-11 & 7:12-16; Mt. 18: 12-20).

Divorce Is Permissible, Not Required. Even though divorce is *permissible* in these situations, it is not *required*. God patiently bears with our sins, repeatedly calls us to repentance, and freely forgives us when we turn back to Him (Ps. 103:8-12; Isa. 55:7). When divorce becomes an option, an offended spouse can imitate God's love by offering a straying spouse these same evidences of grace (Eph. 5:1-2). This may involve patiently bearing neglect or lovingly confronting serious sin (Col. 3:12-14; Gal. 6:1). In some situations, love may require asking the church to initiate formal discipline to rescue a spouse and a marriage from the devastating effects of unrepentant sin (Matt. 18:12-20).

Involvement Of The Local Church. Just as church leaders are involved in beginning a marriage, we believe they should be involved when it ends. Therefore, when someone is considering divorce, he or she is encouraged to bring the situation to our leaders and cooperate with them as they determine whether grounds exist, promote repentance and reconciliation, and exhaust redemptive discipline, if appropriate. (We will first encourage an attempt to implement biblical restoration as outlined in, "What To Do When Your Spouse Says, 'I Don't Love You Anymore,'" by Dr. David Clarke).

Separated Spouses. Separated spouses who have separated because of unrepentant sin in the relationship, and after attempts of loving, redemptive correction as outlined above ("Involvement Of The Local Church"), or who have filed for divorce, should consider themselves married until the day a civil court issues a divorce decree. Thus they should refrain from dating or any other activity that is inconsistent with being married.

Remarriage. We are always interested in helping divorced people restore their previous marriage if that is possible and appropriate. We will support a decision to pursue a second marriage to a different person *only* when we have determined that it is biblically valid and that every reasonable effort has been made to seek and grant forgiveness of the sins that contributed to a previous divorce.

We believe in those situations where God has provided (not commanded) a biblically permissible reason for divorce, that He also has provided biblical permission (not a command) for remarriage. In 1 Cor. 7:15, Paul addresses specific situations not addressed by Jesus' general principle regarding divorce. Paul *deliberately chooses* to use the wording in a *Jewish divorce document* and gave the "innocent party" in a divorce permission to remarry as long as the new marriage was a biblically-based marriage. He also applied to divorce the *exact language* used in a legal document drafted to set a slave free. (E.g., being "bound" would mean the individual was still married in God's sight. Not being "bound" or "free" meant that the individual was free to remarry.).

God's Grace, Love & Forgiveness. We rejoice that divorce never diminishes God's free offer of love, grace and forgiveness. He cherishes and loves every person who has been unwillingly divorced, as does our church. God graciously extends this same love to those who have wrongly left their marriages. That love moves Him (*and us*) to call them to repentance, to encourage and aid reconciliation when possible, and to gladly restore those who have done all they can to rebuild broken relationships.

* C.f., *What God Has Joined*, (Christianity Today, October 2007), and *Divorce and Remarriage in the Church* (IVP), both by David Instone-Brewer. *Marriage, Divorce, and Remarriage in the Bible*, by Dr. Jay Adams (Zondervan). *The Divorce Dilemma: God's Last Word On Lasting Commitment*, by Dr. John MacArthur (Day One) *The Exemplary Husband*, Appendix-5: Divorce And Remarriage, by Dr. Stuart Scott (Focus Publishing). The IVP Bible Background Commentary: NT, 1 Cor. 7:10-16, by Craig Keener (IVP).

Section 4. Commitment To Protecting Our Children.

Children are a blessing from God, and He calls the church to support parents in their responsibility to train children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Therefore, the church should be a safe and blessed place for children, where they can grow, play, form friendships, and learn to experience and share the love of Christ.

However, since sin affects every person and organization in the world, it is possible that children could be harmed even during church activities. We cannot guarantee that such things will never happen within our fellowship, but we are committed to taking every reasonable precaution to protect our children from foreseeable harm (Proverbs 27:12a). This commitment includes, but is not limited to, the following steps:

1. We do not allow anyone to work regularly with our youth (children or teenagers), unless he or she has regularly attended our church for at least one year. (At the discretion of church leadership, there may be times when we allow those who have attended for at least six months to serve if previously known and approved by church leadership).
2. We require all of our youth workers to complete an application and screening process.
3. We require that, whenever practicable, youth workers serve in teams of two or more and be visible to other workers.

If a child is harmed in our church, we will take immediate steps to inform the parents, to accept responsibility for our role in the situation, and to hold offending youth workers fully responsible for their actions. We will also evaluate our practices and procedures, considering changes that might reduce the likelihood of such harm to children in the future.

Section 5. Commitment To Biblical Counseling.

All Christians struggle with sin and the effect it has on our lives and our relationships. Whenever believers are unable to overcome sinful attitudes or behaviors through personal efforts, God calls them to seek assistance from other believers, and when needed from church leaders, who have the responsibility of providing pastoral counseling and oversight (see Rom. 15:14; Gal. 6:1-2; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; Heb. 13:17; James 5:16). Therefore, this church encourages and enjoins its people to seek counsel from and confess sins to each other and to our leaders.

We believe that the Bible provides thorough guidance and instruction for faith and life (2 Tim. 3:16-17). Therefore, our counseling is based on scriptural principles rather than those of secular psychology or psychiatry. Unless they specifically state otherwise, none of those who counsel in this church are trained or licensed as psychotherapists or mental health professionals, nor should they be expected to follow the methods of such specialists.

God calls our leaders to set an example for us “*in speech, in life, in love, and in faith and purity*” (1 Tim. 4:12). Therefore, we expect them to treat counselees with every respect and courtesy, and to avoid even the appearance of impropriety or impurity during counseling (Eph. 5:3). We also expect counselees to promptly report to the leadership team any conduct that fails to meet this standard.

To prevent our leaders from being placed in situations that might compromise their pastoral commitments, we, the members and attenders of this church, agree that we will not try to compel them to testify in any legal proceeding or otherwise divulge any confidential information they receive through pastoral counseling or ministry (Prov. 11:13, 25:9).

There are occasions when our leaders do not have sufficient time to meet with every person who asks for counseling. At such times we expect our leaders to give first priority to people who are members and actively fellowship at the church (Gal. 6:10), and to serve those who only attend the church by referring them to another source of godly counsel. (Please see Article-III, *Membership*, Sections-1 & 2).

Section 6. Commitment To Confidentiality.

The Bible teaches that Christians should carefully guard any personal and private information that others reveal to them. Protecting confidences is a sign of Christian love and respect (Matt. 7:12). It also discourages harmful gossip (Prov. 26:20), invites confession (Prov. 11:13), and thus encourages people to seek needed counseling. Since these goals are essential to the ministry of the Gospel and the work of the local church, all members and attenders are expected to refrain from gossip and to respect the confidences of others. In particular, our leaders will carefully protect all information that they receive through pastoral counseling, subject to the following guidelines.

Although confidentiality is to be respected as much as possible, there are times when it is appropriate to reveal certain information to others. In particular, when our leaders believe it is biblically necessary, they may disclose confidential information to appropriate people in the following circumstances:

1. When a leader is uncertain of how to counsel a person about a particular problem and needs to seek advice from other leaders in our church or, if the person attends another church, from the leaders of that church, or when it is deemed necessary, to contact outside professionals (Prov. 11:14);
2. When the person who disclosed the information, or any other person, is in imminent danger of serious harm unless others intervene (Prov. 24:11-12);
3. When a person refuses to repent of sin and it becomes necessary to promote repentance through accountability and redemptive church discipline (Matt. 18:15-20); or,
4. When leaders are required by law to report illegal or illicit activities, or suspected abuse (Rom. 13:1).

Section 7. Commitment To Loving Accountability And Church Correction.

Because of our desire to be as loving and as biblically-faithful as possible, like all of our Relational Commitments, the principles and practices described below apply to all the people who attend our church (both members and attenders). (Jas. 2:1&9, 3:17; 1 Tim.5:21).

A. Accountability and Correction Are Signs of God's Love.

God has established the church to reflect His character, wisdom and glory in the midst of a fallen world (Eph. 3:10-11). He loves His church so much that He sent His Son to die for her (Eph. 5:25). His ultimate purpose for His church is to present her as a gift to His Son; thus Scripture refers to the church as the “bride” of Christ (Rev. 19:7). For this reason the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are continually working to purify the church and bring her to maturity (Eph. 5:25-27).

This does not mean that God expects the church to be made up of perfectly pure people. He knows that the best of churches are still companies of sinners who wrestle daily with remaining sin (1 John 1:8; Phil. 3:12). Therefore, it would be unbiblical for us to expect church members to live perfectly. What we can do, however, is confess our common struggle with sin and our mutual need for God's mercy and grace. We also can spur one another on toward maturity by encouraging and holding each other accountable to love, seek after, and obey God with all of our hearts, souls, minds and strength, and to love others as we love ourselves (Mark 12:30-31; Heb. 10:24-25).

The Bible sometimes refers to this process of mutual encouragement and accountability as “discipline.” The Bible *never* presents church discipline as being negative, legalistic or harsh, as modern society does. True discipline originates from God Himself and is always presented as a sign of genuine love for His children. *“The Lord disciplines those He loves”* (Heb. 12:6). *“Blessed is the man you discipline, O LORD, the man you teach from your law”* (Ps. 94:12). *“Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline”* (Rev. 3:19).

God's discipline in the church, like the discipline in a good family, is intended to be primarily positive, instructive and encouraging. This process, which is sometimes referred to as “formative discipline,” involves preaching, teaching, prayer, personal Bible study, small group fellowship and countless other enjoyable activities that challenge and encourage us to love and serve God more wholeheartedly.

On rare occasions God's discipline, like the discipline in a family with growing children, also may have a corrective purpose. When we forget or disobey what God has taught us, He corrects us. One way He does this is to call the church to seek after us and lead us back onto the right track. This process, which is sometimes called “corrective” or “restorative” discipline, is likened in Scripture to a shepherd seeking after a lost sheep.

If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, I tell you the truth, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off (Matt. 18:12-13).

Thus, restorative or corrective discipline is never to be done in a harsh, vengeful or self-righteous manner. It is always to be carried out in humility and love, with the goals of restoring someone to a close walk with Christ (Matt. 18:15; Gal. 6:1), protecting others from harm (1 Cor. 5:6), and showing respect for the honor and glory of God's name (1 Pet. 2:12).

Biblical discipline is similar to the discipline we value in other aspects of life. We admire parents who consistently teach their children how to behave properly and lovingly discipline them when they disobey. We value music teachers who bring out the best in their students by teaching them proper technique and consistently pointing out their errors so they can play a piece properly. And we applaud athletic coaches who diligently teach their players to do what is right and correct them when they fumble, so that the team works well together and can compete for the championship.

The same principles apply to the family of God. We, too, need to be taught what is right and to be lovingly corrected when we do something contrary to what God teaches us in His Word. Therefore, we as a church are committed to help one another obey God's command to be "*self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined*" (Titus 1:8).

B. Most Corrective Discipline Is Private, Personal and Informal.

God gives every believer grace to be self-disciplined. "*For God did not give us a spirit of timidity, but a spirit of power, of love and of self-discipline*" (2 Tim. 1:7). Thus discipline always begins as a personal matter and usually remains that way, as each of us studies God's Word, seeks Him in prayer, and draws on His grace to identify and change sinful habits and grow in godliness.

But sometimes we are blind to our sins or so tangled in them that we cannot get free on our own. This is why the Bible says, "*Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently*" (Gal. 6:1). In obedience to this command, we are committed to giving and receiving loving correction within our church whenever a sin (whether in word, behavior or doctrine) seems too serious to overlook (Prov. 19:11).

If repeated private conversations do not lead another person to repentance, Jesus commands that we ask other brothers or sisters to get involved. "*If he will not listen, take one or two others along*" (Matt. 18:16). If informal conversations with these people fail to resolve the matter, then we may seek the involvement of more influential people, such as a small group leader, Sunday school teacher or church leader. If even these efforts fail to bring a brother or sister to repentance, and if the issue is too serious to overlook, we will move into what may be called "formal discipline."

C. Formal Corrective Discipline May Involve the Entire Church.

If an individual persistently refuses to listen to personal and informal correction to turn from speech or behavior that the Bible defines as sin, Jesus commands us to "*tell it to the church*" (Matt. 18:17a). This first involves informing one or more church leaders about the situation. If the offense is not likely to cause imminent harm to others, our leaders may approach the individual privately to personally establish the facts and encourage repentance of any sin they discover.

The individual will be given every reasonable opportunity to explain and defend his or her actions. If the individual recognizes his sin and repents, the matter usually ends there, unless a confession to additional people is needed.

If an offense is likely to harm others or lead them into sin, or cause division or disruption, our leaders may accelerate the entire disciplinary process and move promptly to protect the church (Rom. 16:17; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; Titus 3:10-11).

As the disciplinary process progresses, our leaders may impose a variety of sanctions to encourage repentance, including but not limited to private and public admonition, removal from office, withdrawal of normal fellowship, and, as a last resort, removal from membership including withholding of the Lord's Supper (Matt. 5:23-24; 2 Thess. 3:6-15; Matt. 18:17).

If the straying individual does not repent in response to private appeals from our leaders, they may inform others in the church who may be able to influence that individual or be willing to pray for him or her, or people who might be harmed or affected by that person's behavior.⁴ This step may include close friends, a small group, a Sunday school class, or the entire congregation if our leaders deem it to be appropriate (Matt. 18:17, 1 Tim. 5:20).⁵

If, after a reasonable period of time, the individual still refuses to change, then our leaders may formally remove him or her from membership and normal fellowship. They also may inform the church body of their decision and instruct the congregation to treat the individual as an unbeliever. This means that we will no longer treat him as a fellow Christian. Instead of having casual, relaxed fellowship with the individual, we will look for opportunities to lovingly bring the Gospel to him, remind him of God's holiness and mercy, and call him to repent and put his faith in Christ (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:5; 1 Tim. 1:20; Rm. 16:17-20).

We realize that our natural human response to correction often is to hide or run away from accountability (Gen. 3:8-10). To avoid falling into this age-old trap and to strengthen our church's ability to rescue us if we are caught in sin, we agree not to run away from this church to avoid corrective discipline. Therefore, we waive our right to withdraw from membership or accountability if discipline is pending against us.

Although individuals are free to stop attending the church at any time, those that fellowship with us agree that a withdrawal while discipline is pending will not be given effect until the church has fulfilled its God-given responsibilities to encourage repentance and restoration, and to bring the disciplinary process to an orderly conclusion, as described in these Commitments (Matt. 18:12-14; Gal. 6:1; Heb. 13:17; 1 Timothy 5:20).

If an individual leaves the church while discipline is in effect or is being considered, and our leaders learn that he or she is attending another church, they may inform that church of the situation and ask its leaders to encourage the individual to repent and be reconciled to the Lord and to any people he or she has offended. This action is intended both to help the individual find freedom from his sin and to warn the other church about the harm that he or she might do to their members (see Matt. 18:12-14; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 3 John 1:9-10).

Loving restoration always stands at the heart of the disciplinary process. If an individual repents, and our leaders confirm his or her sincerity, we will rejoice together and gladly imitate God's forgiveness by restoring the person to fellowship within the body.

(See Matt. 18:13; Luke 15:3-7, 11-32; 2 Cor. 2:5-11; Col. 3:12-14). In all disciplinary actions, we seek the heart of God and the "*spirit of the law*" which brings life rather than the "*letter of the law*" which brings death (2 Cor. 3:6).

People who have been excluded from or are under church discipline of another church will not be allowed to participate in the regular fellowship of our church, or to become members, until they have repented of their sins and made a reasonable effort to be reconciled, or our leaders have determined that the discipline of the former church was not biblically appropriate (Romans 16: 17-20).

As we pursue the blessings of accountability and church discipline, we will hold fast to the promise of Scripture: "*God disciplines us for our good, that we may share in His holiness. No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it*" (Heb. 12:10-11).

A Procedural Exception: An exception to the above process of "proportional escalating responsiveness" described above is where someone is causing division and promoting dissention within the church body itself though "*foolish disputes,*" "*contentions,*" or "*strivings about the Law*" (e.g., introducing teachings and distinctives not accepted by HCCF), etc. In a case where the church is at risk of being harmed, Scripture admonishes that after the first and second warning by church leadership, such an individual is to be rejected from fellowship (Titus 3:9-11; 1 Tim. 6:3-5; Rm. 16:17-20; Prov. 22:10). *

Please note: "*If rebuke is required it should come from the authority of church leadership and should be directed against confirmed substantive error, not disagreement over method or minor variation in doctrine --- and it should come from those qualified to give it*" (*The Vertical Church*, by Dr. James MacDonald, page-126).

* C.f., *Comments on Titus 3:9-11 in The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: Titus*, by Dr. John MacArthur (Moody), *Handbook Of Church Discipline*, by Dr. Jay Adams, (Zondervan) chp-10 on *Divisive Persons*.

D. Practical Considerations.

The following are practical considerations in implementing church discipline on a Biblical basis (Adapted from *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, Pages 296-307, by Platt, Akin & Merida. Holman Reference):

1. Why don't more churches engage in this process of accountability and loving correction designed to promote positive, biblical life-change, and to protect the church and their people? The reasons primarily seem to be:
 - a. Confusing human sentimentality for God's love and fear of offending others. Sentimentality is the love of men divorced from the love of truth. We erroneously place human love over God's love and fail to confront as well as comfort, to admonish as well as encourage;
 - b. Biblical illiteracy. We simply don't know what Scripture teaches;
 - c. A worldly compromising in our churches;

- d. A focus on *quantity* over *quality*; of filling the pews and collection plates over the *purity* and *protection* of Christ' church.
2. Scripture describes the types of individuals who are to be lovingly confronted --- for the benefit of all:
 - a. *The foolish.* Those who engage in foolish debates, quarrels and disputes. Paul calls these things “*worthless*” and “*unprofitable*;”
 - b. *False teachers* and those *propagating false doctrine.* Those who subvert the Fundamentals of the Faith and sound doctrine. (We're not speaking here of secondary issues where there is room for gracious disagreement);
 - c. *The divisive;* those causing *factions* and *division* within the church. “*There is a difference between needing to divide and loving to divide. A divisive person loves to fight.... Those who are divisive by nature lust for the fray, incite its onset, and delight in being able to conquer another person. For them victory means everything. So in an argument they twist words, call names, threaten, manipulate procedures, and attempt to extend the debate as long as possible and along as many fronts as possible. As a result the same voices and personalities tend to appear over and over again, even though the issues change....*” (1 & 2 Timothy and Titus, by Hughes and Chapell, Page-34).
 - d. Those whose sin is *public, habitual, serious* and *unrepentant.*

Bottom line: these types are often “*a person who is quarrelsome and stirs up factions through erroneous opinions, a man who is determined to go his own way and so forms parties and factions.*” (Titus and Philemon, by Hiebert, page-75). These types are “*a law unto themselves and have no concern for spiritual truth and unity.*” (Titus, by John MacArthur, Page-164)

3. What is to be done?

- a. *They're to be warned --- and concerns are to be addressed quickly in the initial stage when sin is discovered.* This allows the issue to be dealt with as a Biblical precept or principle rather than personality battles, which may develop as a result of delaying. We may extend the grace of patience as we seek the repentance of the one in sin, but we must be clear, above board and timely.
- b. After a first and second warning *they are to be “rejected.”* These types are not to be debated --- but denounced and dismissed.
- c. *Pray for and seek their restoration.* (Please note: restoration to fellowship may not mean a restoration to leadership. God has a higher standard for those in leadership.)

- d. Church Discipline should involve all church leadership as well as the entire congregation. Church discipline is no place to go it alone, is often a lose-lose situation, and may involve risk of verbal, emotional and even physical abuse. Even Paul sent Titus reinforcements when Titus had to confront those causing problems in the church at Crete (Titus 3:13).
5. Why must this be done? Paul points out that these types can be *destructive* and *dangerous*, and that God's church and people are to be *protected*.

(C.f. *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, Pages 296-307, by Platt, Akin & Merida. Also Mt 18:15-20; Rm 16:17-18; 1 Cor 5:1-13; 2 Cor 2: 5-11; 2 Cor 13:1-13; Gal 6:1-2; 2 Thes 3:6-12, Titus 3:9-15.)

E. Accusations Made Against Leadership.

The leaders of our church (Directors, Pastors, Elders, Deacons) recognize that God has called them to an even higher level of accountability regarding their faith and conduct (James 3:1; 1 Tim. 5:19-20). Therefore, they are committed to listening humbly to loving correction from each other or from any member in our church, and, if necessary, to submitting themselves to the corrective discipline of our body.

Private or “personal” offenses between a leader and a member of the congregation are encouraged to be dealt with in a private, one-on-one manner as outlined in Section-2 above, *Commitment to Peacemaking and Reconciliation*. Offenses arising as a result of the leader’s “positional” office in the performance of his or her responsibilities and/or enforcement of HCCF policies, or questions concerning their qualifications for leadership, shall be addressed before the Board of Directors.

1. *Accusations Made*: Because those in leadership often become a special target and receive undue criticism, Scripture admonishes us to guard against frivolous, spurious and false accusations. We will not receive an accusation against someone on our leadership team without the charges being submitted in writing, signed by the accuser(s), with not less than two material witnesses (Dt. 19:15; 1 Timothy 5:19). We will then prayerfully and biblically attempt to “prove all things” (1 Thess. 5:21). Accusations specifically concerning the Senior Pastor shall also be subject to Article-V, Section-4, Sub-section E, *Removal Of The Senior Pastor*.

Under no circumstances will those making accusation(s) or those the accusation(s) are made against, be allowed to “*lord over*” others involved in the proceedings. To “*lord over*” (1 Peter 5:3) in the original language implies an attempt to “*dominate or control a person or an event through manipulation, intimidation and fear.*” (E.g., behaving like a bully).

2. *Addressing Proven Accusations:* If an accusation against an individual in leadership is found to be true and warrants loving, biblical correction, we will give the individual an opportunity to repent. If they repent and the matter does not biblically disqualify them from leadership, the matter shall not be made public, be considered closed, and the leader shall remain a leader in good standing.

If the situation is such that it disqualifies an individual from holding a leadership position (e.g., sexual immorality, financial malfeasance, or theological heresy), the leader shall be asked to step down from their leadership position. If there is true repentance, the situation permits and the Holy Spirit directs, the Board of Directors reserves the option to allow the individual the opportunity to resign from their position without making their sin publicly known (Pr. 10:12; Mt. 1:19; Jas. 5:20; 1 Pt 4:8).

If however, the individual refuses to repent of their sin, refuses to step down from their leadership position when requested, or the situation doesn't permit the private covering-over in love, leadership may solicit the public support of the congregation for their loving, biblical, corrective support to encourage repentance, and if required, including open, public rebuke (1 Tim. 5:20).

3. *Addressing False, Frivolous or Spurious Accusations:* If accusations are found to be without merit, or are determined to be evil surmisings, vain imaginations, misrepresentations, malicious gossip, malignity, character assassination through innuendo or outright slander, those making the charges will be given an opportunity to repent and ask forgiveness of those they have made unfounded accusations against. If these false accusations became public, those having made the unmerited accusations will be required to apologize publicly before the whole congregation, and any others that the leadership of the church deems appropriate. If those in error and/or sin refuse to apologize privately (and publicly if needed), they themselves will be subject to loving, corrective discipline.

If making false, frivolous or spurious accusations becomes a repeated behavioral pattern (three or more times), the individual under question will be subject to ejection as outlined under Titus 3: 9-11. (Please see "A Procedural Exception" above).

4. *Addressing Doubtful Disputations & Matters of Personal Preference:* Where individuals have concerns or have chosen to take offense over non-biblical matters, non-behavioral matters, issues where they do not have all the facts, or philosophical issues, we will lovingly listen for insight to be gleaned. However, we encourage individuals to remember that Hebrews 13:17 states, "*Obey them that have rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.*"

Additional Footnotes:

¹ Adapted from *The Peacemaker: A Biblical Guide to Resolving Personal Conflict*, by Ken Sande (Baker Books, 3rd Ed. 2004).

² For example, it is not uncommon for a person to attend a church, develop relationships of trust, persuade people to give him money to invest, and then fail to return the money as promised. Senior citizens are particularly vulnerable to these schemes, and many people have lost much of what they had saved for retirement. When such sinful men are discovered, they usually leave a church, but continue to prey on members who have not heard about their schemes. If our leaders found such a man in our church, they would call him to repent and confess his wrongs. If he refused, they would bring him under formal discipline, and also warn the congregation not to trust him with their money.

³ If our leaders inform our entire congregation about a disciplinary situation, they have discretion whether to divulge the individual's name. This decision usually will depend on a variety of factors, such as: how widely known the situation already is; whether there might be people in the congregation who could persuade the individual to repent; or whether the congregation needs to be on guard against potential harm he might cause (see previous footnote). Even if our leaders decide it is not necessary to identify an individual specifically, they may still inform the congregation of the general situation and the disciplinary steps they have followed. This general information can help to enlist wide prayer support, let the congregation know that our leaders are obeying the Lord's command to seek after those who stray, and warn people who may be flirting with secret sin that they, too, may face discipline if they do not turn back to God.

⁴ For example, if we confronted a man in our church for seducing young women, or for acting inappropriately around little children, or for sowing gossip and division, and he left and started attending another church, we would consider it our duty to urge the leaders of that church to counsel with him and to protect their people from his harmful behavior.

Suggested Reading *The Master's Plan for the Church*, Appendices 4-6, by John MacArthur (Moody Press) and *Christ-Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in 1 & 2 Timothy and Titus*, Pages 296-307, by Platt, Akin & Merida (Holman Reference)

Article I, "Relational Commitments" is adapted from *The Peacemaker Church*.
Used by permission of Peacemaker® Ministries. Edition 1.1
www.PeacemakerChurch.net

II STATEMENT OF FAITH & DOCTRINAL DISTINCTIVES

“In the essentials unity, in the non-essentials liberty, and in all things charity.”
(Rubertus Meldenius, A.D. 1627)

Section 1. We Believe And Teach The Following Essential Doctrines Of The Historic, Christian Faith. (Cf., *Key Christian Beliefs: Essential Doctrine Made Easy*, by Dr. Norman L. Geisler. Rose Publishing)

The Unity & Tri-unity Of God: We believe that there is one living and true GOD, eternally existing in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, equal in power and glory; this triune God created all, upholds all, and governs all.

The Scriptures: We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the Word of God and are without error in the original manuscripts. We thus believe in the inspiration, inerrancy, authority, sufficiency and perspicuity of Scripture in the rule of faith, practice and conduct. (Cf., *Knowing The Truth About The Reliability of the Bible*, small booklet by John Ankerberg & John Weldon, and *The Battle For The Bible: defending the inerrancy of Scripture*, by Lindsell).

God The Father: We believe in God the Father, an infinite, personal Spirit, perfect in Holiness, wisdom, power, and love; that He concerns Himself mercifully in the affairs of men; that He hears and answers prayer; and that He saves from sin and death all who come to Him through faith in Jesus Christ.

God The Son (Jesus Christ): We believe in Jesus Christ, God's only begotten Son, conceived without sin by the Holy Spirit. We Believe in His virgin birth, sinless life, miracles, and teaching, His substitutionary atoning death, bodily resurrection, ascension into heaven, perpetual intercession for His people, and His future, personal, visible return to earth.

God The Holy Spirit: We believe in the Holy Spirit, who came forth from the Father and Son to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgment; and to regenerate, sanctify and empower all that believe in Jesus Christ for ministry. We believe that the Holy Spirit indwells every believer in Jesus Christ and that He is an abiding Helper, Teacher, and Guide.

The Nature Of Man: We believe that all people are sinners by nature and choice, and therefore, are under condemnation; that God regenerates by the power of the Holy Spirit through grace, those who by faith repent of their sins and confess Jesus Christ as Lord.

Christ's Future Return & The Destinies Of All Mankind: We believe in the personal, visible return of Christ to the earth and the establishing of His Kingdom, in the resurrection of the body, the final judgment and eternal blessing of the righteous, and the endless suffering of the wicked.

Creeeds: We believe that the essential, key beliefs of the historic, evangelical, Christian faith are reflected in the Church's ancient statements of faith called "creeds." These include what are called as the "Apostles Creed," "Nicene Creed," "Athanasian Creed" and the "Creed of Chalcedon."

Section 2. Non-Essential, Doctrinal Distinctives We Are Persuaded Of.

The following are the Doctrinal Distinctives we are persuaded of as members of the church family of HCCF. We recognize that genuinely, sincere Believers may disagree with various points of nonessential doctrinal & theological distinctives. As such, HCCF recognizes diversity among Christians in nonessential areas.

In those areas which HCCF does not have a doctrinal or theological position, we do not press for uniformity in those areas, and leave these more obscure and debatable teachings to individual Believers to sort out on their own. Rather than taking an “official” position, we encourage people to search the Scriptures, seeking synthesis (balance & harmony of biblical truth), mutual understanding, humility and agape-love. Additionally, we seek to respect one another’s differences without a quarrelsome, arrogant or divisive spirit, and allow for freedom of conviction on all other doctrinal matters, provided that any interpretation is based upon a responsible understanding of Scripture alone (*Sola Scriptura*), and that no such interpretation or understanding becomes an issue which hinders our unity, fellowship and the ministry to which the Holy Spirit has called us to as members of the Universal Church or as members of the church family of HCCF.

Ordinances: We believe that Jesus committed two ordinances to the church: Water Baptism and the Lord's Supper (Communion). We believe in Baptism by immersion and Communion, open to all regenerated believers regardless of membership or denominational persuasion.

The Church: We believe in the ministry, fellowship and authority of the local church. We also believe in the universal church, the living spiritual body, of which Christ is the head, and all regenerated persons are members.

Pre-tribulation Rapture Of The Church & A Futuristic Premillennial Kingdom Of Christ: We await the pre-tribulation rapture of the church, and we believe that the Second Coming of Christ with His saints to rule on the earth will be literal, personal, pre-millennial and visible. (Cf., *The Millennial Kingdom: A Basic Text In Premillennial Theology*, by Dr. John E. Walvoord, and *Christ's Prophetic Plans: A Futuristic Premillennial Primer*, MacArthur & Mayhue [General Editors]).

Laying On Of Hands: We believe in the laying on of hands for, a) the ordination of Pastors, Elders, and Deacons, etc., b) for the Baptism of the Holy Spirit, and c) for receiving Divine Healing from the Holy Spirit.

The Believer's Empowerment: We believe that Jesus Christ “baptizes” the seeking believer with the Holy Spirit and empowers the believer for service, often subsequent to regeneration.

Gifts of the Holy Spirit: We believe in the present ministry of the Holy Spirit and in the proper exercise of all the biblical gifts of the Holy Spirit as mentioned in Scripture. (Cf., *Living Waters: The Power of the Holy Spirit in Your Life*, by Pastor Chuck Smith)

Section 3. Doctrines and Distinctives We Must Lovingly Reject.

Unscriptural Doctrines, Dogmas, Teachings, “Fables” & “Doubtful Disputations”: We lovingly reject any and all doctrines, dogmas and teachings not supported by Scripture (*extra-biblical*), and in particular those that contradict Scripture (*un-biblical*). In evaluating any doctrine or teaching, great care will be given to understanding the total harmony of Scripture (*biblical synthesis*) as well as appropriate historical, cultural, linguistic and Scriptural contexts. We also must lovingly reject “fables” (stories), “vain jangling” (fruitless discussions) and “doubtful disputations” (can’t be proven or disproven) which “minister questions” (produce speculations) rather than “godly edifying” of sound doctrine.

Unscriptural Methodologies: We believe that although the Gospel message in itself never changes, that the Holy Spirit and Scripture do leave great latitude in methodologies to proclaim that message, and often in addressing various issues and concerns that arise within the church. However, we must lovingly reject *un-biblical* methodologies that actually *contradict* a Scripturally-based approach. We must also lovingly reject as *extra-biblical* any methodologies that attempt to replace God’s Word and the work of the Holy Spirit with human ingenuity and “works of the flesh.” This includes those who proclaim an adherence to biblical “orthodoxy” (right believing), yet fail to adhere to biblical “orthopraxy” (right practices in line with genuine orthodoxy); who by neglect or by design, fail to actively teach the fundamentals of the Christian Faith.

Eisegesis Rather Than Exegesis Approaches To Understanding Scripture: *Exegesis* is an *objective* approach attempting to understand and apply Scriptural truth by extracting *from* the text. Great emphasis is placed upon accuracy by attempting to understand what the text is actually saying based upon context: grammatical, linguistic, historic, cultural, etc. *Eisegesis* is a *subjective* approach which isn’t overly concerned about accuracy. It gives great “liberty” to reading *into* the text what the reader might desire it to say and mean (see “Christian Experiential Mysticism” under *Neo-Gnosticism* for an example).

False Ecumenicalism: We lovingly reject any false ecumenicalism which seeks to compromise biblical truth and doctrine for the sake of unity, and also claims that “doctrine divides,” (especially when considering the key, essential fundamentals of the Christian Faith). Rather, we believe that there is no unity apart from biblical truth and doctrine, and it is a departure from these that is actually the cause of so much division and disunity. (Cf. *The Basis of Christian Unity*, by Dr. D Martin Lloyd Jones. Banner of Truth).

Refuted Early Church Heresies: Such as *Universalism* (belief that everyone will be saved), and *Syncretism* (belief that all truth claims are equal and that all roads and religions ultimately lead to God, Heaven and eternal life). Rather, we believe that Jesus Christ and the teachings of the Bible are the only true means unto salvation. *Tritheism* (belief in three gods), *Monophysitism* (belief in the confusion or co-mingling of the two natures of Christ), *Nestorianism* (belief that the two natures of Christ are independent or loosely united), *Arianism* (belief that Jesus is created and not divine), *Adoptionism* (belief that Jesus was merely a man who was adopted into the Godhead as Son), *Apollinarianism* (belief that Jesus is partially human), *Annihilationism* (belief that some souls are destroyed).

Pseudo-Christian Cults: We lovingly reject the teachings of Pseudo-Christian Cults (e.g., Mormons, Jehovah's Witnesses, Oneness Pentecostalism, Moonies, The Way, Disciples of Christ, etc.) which deny one or more of the key essentials of the historic, evangelical, Christian faith.

Theological Liberalism: We lovingly reject Theological Liberalism which denies one or more of the key essentials of the historic, evangelical, Christian faith.

Post-Modernism: We lovingly reject a Post-Modernistic worldview and its tendency to dismiss the possibility of any sure and settled knowledge of the truth. Rather, we believe that a firm foundation of truth can be found in the study of *General Revelation* (God's Creation, Rm. 1:18-23), *Special Revelation* (the Scriptures, 2 Tim. 3:16-17), and *Specific Revelation* (the person of Jesus Christ, Jn. 14:6). As such, we must lovingly reject many of the presuppositions, theology (or lack of theology) of the Emerging Church Movement.

Open Theism: We lovingly reject Open Theism and consider it an affront to God's majesty, omnipotence and perfections. We lovingly reject the belief that God is not All-knowing and that God must "learn" as events unfold. Rather, we believe that God is omniscient (All-knowing) and has both complete knowledge (past & present), and foreknowledge (future). We further believe that God can not and need not learn, as He Himself is the originator and source of all knowledge and wisdom. Thus, He is immutable.

Dominion and Kingdom Now Theology: We lovingly reject Dominion and Kingdom Now Theology as an artificial attempt to use whatever means possible to usher in Christ's Kingdom on earth. Rather, we believe that His true kingdom will not be established until His return at His Second Coming and His physical, Millennial Reign here on earth.

Replacement Theology: We believe in the perspicuity of Scripture. E.g., that the Bible says what it means and means what it says. Therefore, we lovingly reject Replacement Theology whereby scriptural texts, which clearly speak of Israel, are spiritualized so they can be interpreted as speaking about the church. We also reject all teachings (both Catholic and Reformed) that Israel has been replaced by the church, that God has abandoned the Jewish people, that He no longer has a gracious plan for their future, or that they have no role in future prophecy. We also strongly reject the anti-Semitism that has often and historically been the fruit of this doctrine. Rather, we believe that Jew and Gentile alike are guilty before God personally and collectively for the death of Jesus Christ, that God has a gracious plan for all people if received, and that Israel biblically has a role in future prophecy.

Positive Confession And Faith Movement Teachings: We lovingly reject the "name it and claim it", health and wealth doctrines that teach that God can be commanded to heal, work miracles or bestow blessings according to man's commands. Rather, we believe that God is All-wise, All-powerful and All-good, and works all things according to His own counsel, for His own purposes, for His own glory, and for our best good.

Hyper-Calvinism: We lovingly reject Hyper-Calvinism as a fatalistic view that leaves no room for human free will. Specifically, we lovingly reject the belief that Jesus' Atonement was limited, that God's wooing grace cannot be resisted, or that God has unlovingly elected and predestinated some people to go to Hell. Rather, we believe that anyone who wills to come to Christ may do so.

Baptismal Regeneration: We believe that baptism is simply an outward demonstration of faith for what has already transpired in the heart. Although we believe that baptism is a required act of obedience, we lovingly reject that baptism has any intrinsic merit for providing salvation in itself.

King James Only Dogmatism: We have great respect for the KJV translation of the Bible and primarily use it. However, we must lovingly agree to disagree with those who have equated tradition and personal preference with biblical orthodoxy. After carefully studying both sides of the KJV Only debate, we have concluded that those who dogmatically hold to the use of the KJV only often do so more out of emotionalism and a limited understanding of linguistics and textual expertise, rather than a well researched and factually balanced position. However, we do encourage those desiring to *seriously study* Scripture to use a translation based upon a "*formal equivalency*" (word-for-word translation --- e.g., KJV, NKJV NASB or ESV), rather than a "*dynamic equivalency*" (thought-for-thought translation --- e.g., NIV or NLT).

Roman Catholicism: Although the Roman Catholic Church holds with many of the key essentials of the historic, Christian faith, we must lovingly reject those dogmas, doctrines and teachings which are based upon the traditions of men, papal pronouncements and church councils rather than upon God's Word (the Bible), and in many cases *contradict* or even *deny* Scriptural truth. E.g., *Rome As The One True Church, Papal Infallibility, Multiple Mediators And Praying To Dead Saints, The Virgin Mary As "Co-Redemptrix", Transubstantiation & The Eucharist, The Sacrifice Of The Mass, Veneration Of Angels & Apparitions, Purgatory, Indulgences, Praying For The Dead, The Sacraments As A Means of Obtaining Special Merit, Venerating Relics, Amulets, Using Icons In Worship, The Confessional, Extreme Unction, etc.*

(For a more complete understanding of the official teachings of the Roman Catholic Church please see official Catholic publications, *The Baltimore Catechism* and *The Manual of the Purgatory Society*: with the imprimatur of Cardinal Hayes. For a better understanding how many of these teachings fail to line up with *biblical* teaching, please see *Roman Catholicism*, by Loraine Boettner, and *The Fatal Flaw*, by James R. White.)

Secular Psychological Theories: We lovingly reject many secular psychological theories for two predominant reasons. (a) Much "science" within the social sciences (e.g., anthropology, psychology and sociology) is often based more on "opinion research" than actual "empirical research." As such, the apostle Paul called these types of things "*vain imaginations*" (Romans 1:21) and "*science falsely so called*" (1 Timothy 6:20). (b) Many of these theories are typically based upon unbiblical presuppositions and worldviews. Often, these theories and presuppositions have been proven to be re-packaged theological heresies refuted by the early church and the great, historic, church counsels. E.g., Cognitive Psychology = Stoicism, Jungian Psychology = Gnosticism & Hinduism, Humanistic Psychology = Epicureanism, Enlightenment,

Rationalism & 19th Century Theological Liberalism, Behavioral & Biological Psychology = Radical Materialism & Reductionism, Existential Psychology = Existentialism. In addition, many newer psychological theories and forms of Psychotherapy embrace generic, New Age spiritualities.

Neo-Gnosticism: We lovingly reject all forms of Gnosticism including its modern, most common three manifestations as Neo-Gnosticism. E.g.,

- 1) *Moralistic Therapeutic Deism (“MTD”)*: We lovingly reject Moralistic Therapeutic Deism consisting of “*god-lite generic god-talk, feel-good pop-psychology, self-help platitudes, and the power of positive thinking (including the power to ‘think and grow rich’)*.” We believe this approach subtly replaces the God-centered Gospel of Jesus Christ with a man-centered “gospel of self-esteem,” and relies more on secular psychology than Biblical truth. (Unfortunately, and often unwittingly, much of this can be observed in many “Seeker-Friendly” and “Purpose-Driven” type of church methodologies).
- 2) *Christian Pragmatism:* We lovingly reject methodologies that attempt to fill church pews and collection plates by any way possible, such as entertaining the masses rather than telling them of their need for a Savior and their need for genuine, biblical repentance and holiness. We also lovingly reject attempting to minimize talk of the Cross, the Atonement, the Blood of Christ, the need for genuine repentance and soul-saving faith, and clearly communicating both the glories of Heaven and the terrors of Hell, rather than risk “offending people” or making them feel “uncomfortable” in their sin. (Unfortunately, and often unwittingly, much of this can be observed in many “Seeker-Friendly” and “Purpose-Driven” type of church methodologies).
- 3) *Christian Experiential Mysticism:* We lovingly reject an over-emphasis on spiritual gifts, experiential signs, and wonders to the subservience or even exclusion of genuine, Biblically-based teaching. This includes *extra-biblical* and often *un-biblical* metaphysical practices and experiences such as:
 - *The “New Spirituality.”* These practices often integrate panentheism (God in all) and pantheism (all is God) philosophies of Eastern Spiritualities and New-Age occult practices. E.g., Breath-Prayers, Lectio Divina and Contemplative Prayer (all forms of “Christianized” Transcendental Meditation, which attempts to create altered states of consciousness and obtaining a bio-physical alpha-state) as found in some Spiritual Formation practices of the Emerging Church. We also lovingly reject embracing varieties of mysticism such as tantra yoga, kundalini, karma meditation, sexual transformation through mysticism, reiki or quantum touch, etc. Unfortunately, many of these practices are also being practiced by some groups of Emergents.

- *The “Hyper-Charismania” Movement* which promotes human prophecy that supersedes the Scriptures or claims superior authority, spirituality or knowledge than the Apostles and authors of the New Testament. We also lovingly reject such movements as the “Toronto Blessing,” “Holy Laughter,” “Cleansing Streams,” “Holy Ghost Gold Dust,” forced vomiting to exercise demons, “generational curses,” or that genuine Christians “*sealed with the Holy Spirit*” can be demon possessed.

III MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Qualifications And Reception To Participating Membership.

General Membership. In the early church requirements for “membership” focused on the basics: *belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, baptism, obedience to and acting on biblical truth with an emphasis on doctrinal purity and holiness of life, sharing their faith, and serving the physical and spiritual needs of both believers and unbelievers.* Membership focused on simplicity, but wasn’t a spectator sport designed for consumers. (Cf., “*Know What You Believe: Connecting Faith and Truth,*” by Paul Little. Pages 124-126).

As such, General Membership of this church corporation shall be open to any believing and confessing Christian, who 1) acknowledges and accepts Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord; 2) who has followed Christ in the Ordinance of Water Baptism; 3) who has fellowshipped with us at least one (1) year; 4) who is active in sharing their faith; 5) who is active in Christian service; 6) who faithfully supports the ministry of HCCF with their tithes and love offerings; 7) who are free from any disqualifying issues (e.g., unresolved or on-going church discipline, etc.); 8) who is willing to subscribe to the policies, By-Laws, Relational Commitments and Doctrinal Distinctives of this corporation; 9) who has successfully completed any prescribed courses and qualifications outlined in any existing church policies for membership; and 10) is free from causing dissention and strife within the church, and who desires to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of love and peace. Confirmation of membership is in no way binding to the individual or Heart Cry Christian Fellowship.

Voting Membership. Voting Membership of this church corporation shall consist of the Board of Directors (also referred to as “Directors,” “Board,” or “Trustees”), and each shall be subject to the provisions and qualifications as outlined in our By-Laws (Articles-IV & V). As voting members, Directors shall be entitled to a vote in any matters of business of the church. All rights and powers shall be held by the Board of Directors. (Heb. 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1-5; Acts15).

Attendees: Because we desire to relate with each other in a loving, biblically-faithful manner and not be “*respecters of persons*” (Acts 10:34; Jas. 2:1-9, 3:17; 1 Tim.5:21), the principles and practices described in Article-I, *Relational Commitments* shall apply to all the people who attend Heart Cry Christian Fellowship (both members and attendees).

Section 2. Benefits Of Membership.

We encourage Members and Attendees alike to *pray, invest* (time, talent and treasure) and *invite* others to worship and fellowship with us here at HCCF. We also encourage Members and Attendees alike to invest their spiritual gifts where they might be blessed, and be a blessing to others (e.g., children’s church, coffee bar, helping hearts & hands, visitations, etc.)

Members in good standing, in addition to participating in normal church activities:

1. Will be given precedence when requesting biblical counseling, benevolence support, or other assistance from our church leadership (when their time or church resources are limited) over requests from people who are not members of the church (Gal. 6:10).
2. May have the opportunity to participate in and have a copy of our church directory (1 Tim. 5:22; Gal 2:4; 2 Pt. 2:1-3), as well as have the opportunity to review church financial records with our church treasurer and participate in congregational meetings (2 Cor. 8:20-21), and borrow from our church home schooling library, etc.
3. May have opportunities to serve in church leadership (e.g., home & small group leaders, worship team leaders, deacons, elders, board members, etc.), subject to any applicable provisions in this document.

(Please see HCCF Church Policy Manual for any additional policies and procedures).

Section 3. Membership Rolls.

Positional Members: Positional Membership rolls (e.g., all Born-Again Believers) are permanently kept in the Lamb's Book of Life (Phil. 4:1-3; Rev. 3:1-6, 13:1-9).

Participating Members and Attenders: A record of Participating Members and Attenders who support the ministry financially will be kept as required for the IRS by the Treasurer.
(Please see HCCF Church Policy Manual for any additional policies and procedures).

Section 4. Annual Congregational Meeting.

The annual meeting of the congregational members of this corporation shall be held on the last Wednesday of April each year at 7:00 pm at the principal office of this corporation, or at any other time and at any other place determined by a resolution. No notice need be given if the meeting is held on the date and at the time immediately above stated, at the principal office of the corporation.

Section 5. Special Congregational Meetings.

Special meetings of congregational members of the corporation for any purpose or purposes may be called at any time by the president of the corporation or by any three (3) Directors.

Notice of the time and place of a special meeting of the congregational members shall be given by either conspicuously posting the same at or near one or more of the entrances to the congregational place of worship, placing it in the church bulletin, and/or by announcement in the regular Sunday service next preceding said meeting.

IV GOVERNMENT

Section 1. The Headship of Christ.

The government of this church shall be focused on seeking and maintaining the Lordship and direction of Jesus Christ over His Body. All those in authority shall continually seek His mind and will, through His Spirit and the Word of God in all actions and decisions.

Section 2. The Oversight of His Body by the Pastor And Directors.

The Board of Directors (also referred to as Directors, Board or Trustees) herein, headed by the Senior Pastor (also referred to as President or Lead Elder) and comprised of Pastors, Elders and Deacons, shall be the governing body of the church.

We believe that the local assembly (e.g., church congregation) should be “*Pastor led*” and “*Board ruled*.” Three practical reasons exist for a plurality of leadership: a) providing for mutual accountability and encouragement; b) balancing individual strengths and weaknesses; and c) lightening ministry responsibilities.

We also recognize that God has appointed the Senior or Lead Pastor as the primary, God-Ordained, “*Overseer*” or “*Bishop*.” As such, we recognize the Pastor as being “*first among equals*,” not in the sense of an autocrat, but by allowing this distinction to encourage him to use his “*Grace-Gifts*” as Lead Pastor-Teacher to their fullest potential, under the mutual accountability and encouragement of a plurality of leaders. (See *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call To Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, by Alexander Strauch, page-48).

Section 3. Directors, Pastors, Elders and Deacons.

A. Their Ministry.

1. The Directors shall oversee and rule the ministry of the church by precept and example under the leadership of the Senior Pastor. A Pastor, Elder or Deacon who is on the Board of Directors, has all voting privileges, and shall at all times have the right to appropriate any funds to the area or areas of most need, notwithstanding any previous designations of those funds, and subject to any policies, procedures and spending limits established by the Board. (Please see HCCF Church Policy Manual for any additional policies and procedures regarding the appropriation of funds).
2. Subject to limitations of the Articles of Incorporation, other sections of the By-Laws and of New York law, all corporate powers of the corporation shall be exercised by or under the authority of, and the business and affairs of the corporations shall be controlled by the Directors. Without limiting the general powers, the Directors shall have the following powers:

- a. To appoint and remove all other officers, agents and employees of the corporation, prescribe such powers and duties from them as may not be inconsistent with law, the Articles of Incorporations or the By-Laws, ratify their compensation and require from them faithful service.
 - b. To conduct, manage, and control the affairs and business of the corporation, and to make rules and regulations not inconsistent with law, the Articles of Incorporation, or the By-Laws.
 - c. To borrow money, and incur indebtedness for the purposes of the corporation and for that purpose cause to be executed and delivered, in the corporate name, promissory notes, bonds, debentures, deeds of trust, mortgages, pledges, or other evidence of debt and securities.
3. A Pastor, Elder or Deacon who is not officially on the Board, is a non-voting leader, who is called upon for non-binding advice, counsel and services.
 4. Pastors, Directors, Elders and Deacons shall pray together regularly, seeking the mind of God. They shall meet regularly to review the progress of the execution of day-to-day functions. They shall gather to pray and review this progress, informally, as frequently as needed for mutual counsel.
 5. A Deacons' primary function is to carry out, under the Pastors' (and Board's) oversight, those tasks and ministries vital to the health and ministry of the church, so that Pastors and Elders may focus on their primary calling (Acts 6:1-6).

“Deacons are always in close relationship with the shepherds of the church. Like shepherds, they are required to meet specific qualifications. Like the shepherds, they must be officially examined and approved before they can serve. Like the shepherds, they hold an official position of trust in the congregation. Unlike the shepherds of the church, however, deacons do not teach or govern as part of their position. They are servant-officers who relieve shepherds of the multitude of practical duties that are required in caring for a congregation....The shepherd-elders must give their primary attention to teaching and leading the people. Deacons must give their primary attention to caring for the people’s physical welfare.... We must not forget that the real treasures of the church are its people, not its pews and buildings.”

(Chp-10, pages 156-157, “Minister Of Mercy: The New Testament Deacon”, by Alexander Strauch.)

B. Qualifications for Directors, Pastors, Elders and Deacons.

Leaders must be members of the church who are *willing, available, committed, qualified* and *tested*. (1 Timothy 3:1-16; 4:22 and 1 Peter 5:1-4). The primary qualifications of those in church leadership have little to do with financial success, influence or “likeability.” Rather, a true “*calling*” is based upon both general and specific traits as outlined in Scripture. Generally;

Deacons & Deaconesses: Moral Authority (integrity of character), *Spiritual Maturity* (Spirit- Filled with a solidly Biblical-Worldview, e.g., “thinks biblically”), *Emotional Stability* (issues of temperament), and a *corporate recognition by church leadership* that the individual is genuinely “called” by God.

Board Members (chosen from our Deacons, Elders & Pastors): All of the above --- plus --- the “Grace-Gifts” of “Governments” & “Administrations” (those qualities associated with leading and management oversight skills).

Pastors & Elders: All of the above --- plus --- they must have the additionally recognized “Grace-Gift” of *Teaching*. It is important to understand that one can have the Grace-Gift of teaching without being in church leadership, but an individual cannot be an Elder or Pastor-Teacher without it.

“The office (of church leadership) *is of divine appointment, not a human invention”* (Matthew Henry). As such, he is to be a man called to submit his life to a higher standard of accountability.

Before looking at those qualifications specific to those desiring a position in church leadership, it’s important to examine what *every* Christian should be striving to be --- and *not* to be.

1. The Fruit Of The Spirit: What EVERY Christian Should Be Striving To Produce, With The Help Of The Holy Spirit (See Galatians 5:22-26). (Terms used are from the KJV).

- a. *“Love.”* We believe that the ultimate “fruit” of the Holy Spirit is love, and that all other descriptions of the Fruit of the Spirit are actually defining what genuine, biblical, agape love from the Holy Spirit should look like. Agape love in itself is an unconditional, sacrificial love that in its purest form is a supernatural love imparted by God Himself as we grow in the sanctification process and into the likeness of Christ. (Jn. 15:13; Rm. 5:8; 1 Jn. 3:16-17). Please c.f. 1 Corinthians 13.
- b. *“Joy.”* Not to be confused with happiness based upon outward circumstances, but a happiness that comes from a relationship with God that transcends our circumstances. It is a happiness and thankfulness that rests in the unchanging promises of God and eternal spiritual realities. (1 Pt. 1:8; Jn. 16:20-22; Rm. 14:17; Phil. 4:4).
- c. *“Peace.”* Like joy, peace is not related to our outward circumstances, but an inner calm from confidence in our saving relationship with Christ. (Jn.14:27; Rm. 8:28; Phil. 4:6-9).
- d. *“Long-Suffering.”* A patience which refers to the ability to endure injuries inflicted by others and the willingness to accept irritating or painful situations. (Eph. 4:2; Col. 3:12; 1Tim. 15-16).
- e. *“Gentleness” or kindness.* A tender concern for others, reflected in a desire to treat others gently, just as Jesus treats us. (Mt.11:28-29; 19:23-14; 2 Tim. 2:24).
- f. *“Goodness.”* Moral and spiritual excellence manifested in active kindness. (Rm. 5:7; 6:10; 2 Thess. 1:11).

- g. “*Faith*,” or more accurately, faithfulness. It is the characteristic of loyalty and trustworthiness. (Lam. 3:22; Phil. 2:7-9; 1 Thess. 5:24; Rev 2:10).
- h. “*Meekness*.” A humble and gentle attitude that is patiently submissive in every offense, while having no desire for revenge or retribution. It is also used in the NT to describe three important attitudes: *submission to the will of God* (Col. 3:12), *teachability* (James 1:21), and *consideration of others* (Eph. 4:2).
- i. “*Temperance*,” or self-control. Restraining the passions and appetites. (1 Cor. 9:25; 2 Pt. 1:5-6).

2. Specific Qualifications For Church Leadership (See 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). (In attempting to look at specific traits, please note that we have attempted to combine related qualifications listed in Scripture when appropriate to do so. Terms used are from the KJV).

Scripture uses *various terms* to describe the *multi-functional characteristics* of church leaders. E.g., 1) as “*Elders*” they are to be men who are both spiritually mature and emotionally stable; 2) as “*Overseers*” they are to be gracious guardians with leadership skills; 3) as “*Stewards*” they are to be skilled managers with a high sense of diligence and stewardship before God; 4) as “*Pastor-Shepherds*” they are to have a shepherd’s-heart caring for God’s flock; all while remembering that they themselves are 5) simply “*Servants*.” (“*The Pastor: A Guide For God’s Faithful Servant*,” Jim Vogel Editor).

Specific descriptions found are:

- a. “*Blameless*” or above reproach. There must be no truthful accusation that can be made concerning the moral character of someone in church leadership that will bring reproach against Christ and His church. Paul gives a list of examples of the types of issues that may disqualify someone from a spiritual, leadership position in the church. It doesn’t mean someone obtaining perfection as there is no sinless perfection until we reach Eternal Glory in Heaven, but one held to a higher standard of accountability.
- b. “*The husband of one wife*” (literally = “*a one woman man*.”) Although there have been various understandings of this term, the one, common, consistent, understanding historically has included:
 - Being free from sexual immorality (including pornography). If married, he must be committed to his wife in thought, word and deed.

- Being free from any outstanding issues of divorce that must first be addressed for possible disqualifications. We do not understand this to *necessarily* restrict a man who has been divorced and remarried from holding a position in leadership. Specific circumstances would need to be investigated. (E.g., did the divorce happen before or after coming to Christ? Was it a “biblically-allowable” divorce? Is there a repeated pattern of divorce which would bring into question an individual’s temperament or judgment? Etc.). (See Article-III, Section-3, D).
- c. *“Vigilant” or Temperate.* Literally in Greek it originally meant “*wineless*,” but came to mean “*able to keep his fleshly appetites and passions under control and keep his head in all situations.*” He must be stable, well-balanced, alert, watchful and clear-headed. (Please see item-b below for our understanding concerning the use of alcoholic beverages).
 - d. *“Sober”.... “Grave.”* He is to have the right priorities, be sober-minded and serious about the work of the Lord and the ministry of the church (e.g., sensible, self-disciplined, chaste, and self-controlled over sensual desires). “*He is an individual who has wisdom that’s been tempered by pain and experience. Grace with discernment.*” (Dr. Chuck Swindoll). He must be serious-minded and noble. He is not to be flippant, dishonoring himself or others (e.g., foolish jesting, coarse jesting, sarcasm, etc.), shallow or overly talkative, having little respect because he is not one to be taken seriously, or having a surface religion only. This doesn’t mean he is to be without humor and never smiling. It simply means he is serious-minded and committed to Christ and the ministry and mission of the church. He does not cheapen the ministry or the Gospel by foolishness, folly or sin.
 - e. *“Of Good Behavior” “Just”.... “Holy.”* He is respectable (e.g., well-behaved, orderly, composed, solid, and honest). One who has good conduct, and whose character and behavior stands as a model for others. He doesn’t embrace evil, but rather those things pleasing to God. He is honest, upright and fair. There is no deception, lying, cheating, stealing, meanness, misbehavior or irresponsibility in his dealings with God or men. He is pure, clean, moral and unpolluted from the filth of sin.
 - f. *“Given To Hospitality”.... “A Lover Of Good Men.”* He is to be open to strangers, friendly, caring and available, with an open heart, home and wallet to believers who are in genuine need. He seeks opportunities to provide for those in need (e.g., the historic context were persecuted Christians in need). He is also to be a lover of good things and good people. He demonstrates active love to *all* people while ministering to their physical, emotional and spiritual need.

- g. *“Apt To Teach” “Holding To The Mystery Of The Faith In A Pure Conscience”.... “Holding Fast The Faithful Word As He Has Been Taught, That He May Be Able By Sound Doctrine Both To Exhort And To Convince Gainsayers.” “The phrase ‘apt to teach’ is never used to speak of the gift of teaching or the office of a teacher. It is not saying a leader must necessarily be a great Bible teacher. It is saying he must (personally) be teachable as well as being able to communicate biblical truth to others. The word conveys not so much the dynamics of his teaching as his sensitivity to other people.” (The Master’s Plan for the Church,” by John MacArthur; Copyright 2008, chp-8, page 115, Moody Press).*

A Pastor and Elder in particular must personally be teachable, think biblically and be able to instruct, to encourage, to admonish (counsel) and to rebuke themselves and others from God’s Word. This must be reflected in the way he lives, and in the counsel he gives to others and for conducting the affairs of the church. All leaders in the church (including Deacons) must know and believe the fundamentals of the historic, Christian faith and be able to communicate them to others. (Cf., *Essential Doctrine Made Easy*, by Dr. Norman L. Geisler, Rose Publishing, as well as our *Statement of Faith & Doctrinal Distinctives*)

- h. *“Not Given To Wine.”* The Greek *“paroinos”* means *“one who doesn’t drink”* or *“doesn’t linger long over wine.”* Leaders are not to be addicted to alcohol or drugs of any kind. Grammatically this isn’t simply prohibiting drunkenness. It refers to one’s associations. He doesn’t frequent bars, pubs, nightclubs, cocktail parties, etc.

For those serving in church leadership, our understanding is that it doesn’t prohibit a glass of wine or beer with a meal, but a church leader isn’t to have a reputation as a *“drinker;”* his judgment must never be clouded by alcohol. This was also the same advice given by King Lemuel’s mother to him because he had the responsibility for leading Israel (Prov. 31:4-7).

Please note though that when wine was used in ancient cultures, a) it was used to purify drinking water because the water supply was often inadequate and dangerous, b) was mixed proportionately of two parts wine to three parts water, c) was most often consumed with meals, and d) drunkenness was considered socially unacceptable.

As a loving and biblical way of providing guidance, the scriptural principle of *“first use”* teaches us to observe when something is first introduced in the Bible. It often gives important insight how God thinks about something. Sadly, the first recorded incidence of drinking wine led to drunkenness, nudity and family shame. Its second use, as found in Scripture, led to drunkenness, sexual defilement and two pregnancies from incest.

The first use of “*strong drink*” (e.g., “distilled spirits” or “hard liquor,” including what we would call “mixed drinks”) was in prohibiting its use by *religious leaders*. Furthermore, unless used medicinally, Scripture repeatedly warns against consuming wine and strong drink for *anyone* as unwise.

We would also question the prudence, lack of love and “calling” to *spiritual* leadership within the church by consuming *any* alcoholic beverages in public which could “*stumble*” a weaker Christian observing (especially young people, or someone recovering from alcoholism and/or drug abuse). A leader’s life-style (and that of any family members living in his home) must be radically different so as to lead others to Christian *holiness* --- not to potential carnality, sin *or harm*. As such, we lovingly ask prudence and wisdom (and encourage abstinence) of anyone in a visible church ministry (e.g., leadership, worship, teaching, children’s church, etc.). Rather than enforcing “legalism,” it is our love for Christ, *and others*, which allows us to *willingly* submit our personal, Christian liberty in this area to God’s Word and “*the higher law of love.*”

As a final point, we lovingly understand there may be circumstances where individuals may seek the help of medical professionals where psychiatric drugs (e.g., tranquilizers, anti-depressants or mood stabilizers) are prescribed on a short-term basis. We will lovingly and respectfully support an individual and their physician’s decision to do so, and will lovingly grant a sabbatical from leadership during the period of time they are dependent upon any psychiatric drugs. In considering the qualifications of church leaders, we must lovingly, tenderly and biblically question a man’s ability to serve in *spiritual* leadership as an overseer of God’s church who is habitually dependant upon psychiatric drugs on an ongoing basis to function “normally.”*

* Please reference: “*Your Drug May Be Your Problem: How and Why To Stop Taking Psychiatric Medications*, by Peter R. Breggin, M.D. & David Cohen, Ph.D. (Da Capo), and “*Blame It On The Brain? Distinguishing Chemical Imbalances, Brain Disorders, and Disobedience*,” by Edward T. Welch, M.Div., Ph.D. (R&R). *Depression: A Stubborn Darkness*, by Edward Welch, M.Div., Ph.D., chp-21 “Medical Treatments” (Vantage Point).

- i. “*Not A Striker*”.... “*Patient*”.... “*Not A Brawler*”.... “*Not Self-Willed*”.... “*Not Soon Angry*.” Scripture also tells us we are to be “*swift to bear, slow to speak, slow to wrath*” (James 1:19). He must not be self-centered, quick tempered or hot-headed. In addition, the Greek word for “*anger*” (orge = where we get ogre) refers to a long-lasting anger deeply rooted; an anger that refuses to forgive once offended. This would also include “*maliciousness*” where someone desires to somehow punish or injure someone as a result of their own malicious disposition.

Leaders are not to “*lord over God’s heritage*” (1 Peter 5:3). To “*lord over*” suggests an attempt to “*dominate or control a person, or an event, through manipulation, intimidation and fear.*” E.g., behaving like a bully. Fathers are also not to “*provoke their children to wrath, but bring them up in the nurture and admonition of the Lord*” (Ephesians 6:4). Since church leaders are to conduct themselves tenderly as “*spiritual parents*” to the congregation, they should also model this same attitude.

He must not be self-willed, stubborn, unyielding, overbearing, arrogant, self-assertive, head-strong, independent, ungracious to those who have a differing opinion, harsh, fault-finding, critical, condemning, etc. He should not be “*legalistic*” attempting to “*spy out our liberty which we have in Christ Jesus, that (he) might bring us into bondage.,*” by attempting to impose his own personal preferences, convictions and private interpretations of Scripture on others. We’re told not to place ourselves under “*subjection,*” to legalists in any respect or to even give them a hearing (Gal. 2:4-5).

Therefore, a leader is:

- *Not Verbally Abusive.* He’s to be peaceful --- not self-willed, nor combative, contentious, quarrelsome, argumentative, divisive, etc.
 - *Not Emotionally Abusive.* Rather he’s to be gentle, kind, forbearing, gracious, polite, considerate and quick to pardon without holding a grudge.
 - *Not Physically Abusive.* He’s not given to acts of physical violence.
- j. “*Not Greedy Of Filthy Lucre.*” He must not be covetous or materialistic. He is to be motivated by love of God and love of God’s people --- not money, possessions, power or prestige. We would also include “*Envy,*” and “*Jealousy*” where a man covets or resents God’s blessings on someone else (e.g., relationships, possessions, status or even their ministry position within the church). As an act of faith and obedience in recognizing God’s sovereignty over our lives, we believe *all* Christians should “*tithe*” (10%) of their gross income to the local assembly they are attending. As such, those in church leadership should model this to the flock and lead by example here at HCCF.
- k. “*One That Rules Well His Own House, Having His Children In Subjection With All Gravity*” ... “*Having Faithful* (believing and reflected in their conduct) *Children, Not Accused Of Riot* (debauchery) *Or Unruly* (rebellion against God’s Word).” A man’s ability to lead, manage and instruct must first be proven in his home. He must manage his own household well. Relationally he must command his home with dignity (without “*lording over*” them – see “*i*” above). E.g.,

- *His Wife* --- must have respect for him and be willing to follow his leadership in the home. If married, his wife should also possess godly character. As such, his wife must also be “grave” (dignified), *not slanderers*” (or a malicious gossips), “sober” (stable character with balanced judgment), “faithful in all things” (loyal, trustworthy and reliable to Christ, her marriage, her family and the church).
- *His Children* --- (grammatically and linguistically suggesting those children living at home under his authority, Alexander Strauch from *Biblical Eldership*) must demonstrate honor and respect towards the things of God, their parents and other God-ordained authority. At times, we *all* fall into sin; the focus here is a child living in a “practiced life-style” of carnality, godlessness, willful disobedience, rebellion and sin. “The contrast is not between believing and unbelieving children, but between obedient, respectful children and lawless, uncontrolled children. The terms ‘dissipation’ or ‘rebellion’ stress the children’s behavior, not their eternal state.” (*Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call To Restore Biblical Church Leadership*, by Alexander Strauch, page-229).
- *Financially* --- he must be a good steward (diligent) by providing for his family and avoiding financial mismanagement. Obviously, such issues as excessive debt, bankruptcy, etc., would disqualify an individual from church leadership.

Bottom Line: “If he is over his head in debt, if his children are rebellious, or his business affairs are not above reproach, he cannot be an Elder” (*The Master’s Plan for the Church*, by Dr. John MacArthur, page-213).

(Again, this could also include any outstanding issues of divorce that must first be addressed for possible disqualifications. See Item-2b above).

1. “A Good Report Of Them Which Are Outside.” He must have a good reputation among non-believers (e.g., gracious, honest, honorable, etc.). He is to be honest, upright, fair, above board in his behavior and dealings with God and men. There is no deception, lying, cheating, stealing, meanness, misbehavior or irresponsibility.
- m. “Nor Double-Tongued.” He’s not a gossip or tale-bearer, and understands the necessity for confidentiality. He also doesn’t play politics and doesn’t say one thing to one person while saying something different behind their back. We would also include the following unbiblical behaviors:
 - “Vain Imaginations.” Becoming consumed with worthless fantasies about God, our lives and others. Rather than “taking every thought captive” as the Bible commands us, we feed any *negative preconceptions* we have about people, places, programs and proposals.

- “*Evil Surmisings.*” The sin of judging others by attributing malicious motives to what others say or do --- *whether or not any really exist.* Perception becomes its own reality. E.g., we’re convinced they’re up to something but we just can’t prove it. Someone demonstrating a pattern of choosing to *take* offense when none was meant to be *given.* (Jesus and the Apostle Paul *both* condemned this heart attitude as evil).
 - “*Malignity.*” Malicious craftiness including *malicious gossip.* It intentionally puts the worst, negative spin on people and events attempting to make them look as bad as possible for malicious purposes. Thomas Jefferson once encouraged James Madison, “*Malice will always find bad motives for good actions*” (Malignity is closely related to “*vain imaginations*” and “*evil surmisings.*” Taken together, they often result in “fishing expeditions” and “witch hunts” attempting desperately to “uncover dirt.”).
 - “*Backbiters.*” These are those who are open in their slander; publicly flaunting false charges.
 - “*Whispering*” (secret gossip) is the most insidious form of slander. It doesn’t make outright accusations, but like malignity seeks to do damage through *innuendo* and *veiled comments.* We subtly plant and water a *seed of doubt.* Also like malignity, it lacks *Christian integrity, courage and love.* In his Bible commentary on Romans, C.E.B Cranfield states that backbiters, malicious gossips, and whisperers all “*seek to destroy others reputations by misrepresentation, but whisperers are more dangerous because against them there is virtually no human defense.*”
- o. “*Not A Novice*”... “*And Let These First Be Proved.*” “*It takes time for a man to mature as well as time to observe his life and evaluate his qualifications.*” (*The Master’s Plan for the Church*, by Dr. John MacArthur, page-213). He must be a mature, spiritual, believer: spirit filled and grounded in the Scriptures having been tested as to faithfulness and his qualifications (literally “*tested and continually being tested.*”).
- *Deacons.* Shall be men having demonstrated consistency and regularity in attendance, having fellowshipped with this local assembly for a minimum of two (2) years. He must be a man with the attitude of a *dulos* (“bond slave”), having a proven servant’s heart by demonstrating his willingness to serve Jesus and His Church in the least of tasks and ministry opportunities, and having undergone formal training, testing and observation for a period of time of not less than one (1) year.

- *Elders (Lay Pastors)*. Are men who have met the qualifications of a Deacon, and have first served faithfully as a Deacon with this local assembly for a minimum of one (1) year, and have completed any additional, studies and requirements to become an Elder.
 - *Directors*. Having a board with board members is an accommodation to the laws of the land. They may be selected from existing HCCF Deacons, Elders and Pastors, or qualified men holding one of these positions from outside Heart Cry Christian Fellowship. Any outside directors must meet any and all biblical qualifications outlined in HCCF's By-Laws, and be approved by a majority vote of the existing Board of Directors. Whenever possible, first consideration will be given to qualified men within HCCF. (Please see Sub-sections C & D below and Article -V, Officers).
- p. A Pastor, Elder, Deacon or Board Member is elected by a majority vote of the serving Directors, as hereafter provided, after first being presented to the General Membership to determine if there are any reasons why a nominee is not biblically qualified (as understood by HCCF) to hold a leadership position. (Please see Article-I, Section-7, Sub-section D, Accusations Against The Pastor Or A Member Of Our Leadership Team).
- q. We desire always to please Christ and to bless those involved in ministry. As such, if a Director, Pastor, Elder or Deacon is married, we believe that he and his wife should be of one mind concerning his qualifications, appointment, service and responsibilities. As such, we will seek his wife's input, approval and support (Genesis 2:24; Amos 3:3; Eph. 5: 21; 1 Pet. 3:7).
- r. Please see HCCF Leadership Manual for any further clarifications on our understanding of the qualifications, selection, roles and responsibilities of Directors, Pastors, Elders and Deacons. Also please c.f., *Who Qualifies To Be A Church Leader?* RBC Q0903, *The Master's Plan for the Church*, Dr. John MacArthur (Moody), *Biblical Eldership: An Urgent Call To Restore Church Leadership*, Alexander Strauch, *Ministers Of Mercy: The New Testament Deacon*, by Alexander Strauch, *Pastoral Ministry: How To Shepherd Biblically*, by Dr. John MacArthur, Chp-5: The Character of a Pastor (Nelson), *The Preacher's Outline & Sermon Bible: 1 Timothy & Titus* (LMW), *The Bible Expository Commentary: 1 Timothy & Titus*, by Dr. Warren Wiersbe (Cook), *The Bible Knowledge Commentary: 1 Timothy & Titus*, by Walvoord & Zuck (Cook), *Thru The Bible: 1 Timothy & Titus*, McGee (Nelson). Also, *The Biblical Position On Divorce and Remarriage: The Elder's Perspective of Grace Community Church*, Dr. John MacArthur, Pastor. Cf., *Is It Possible To Restore A Pastor Who Has Sinned Sexually?* by John Piper (desiringGod.org).

C. Number of Directors, Pastors, Elders and Deacons.

The Board of Directors shall consist of a maximum of eleven (11) and a minimum of seven (7) members. There shall be no set minimum or maximum number of Pastors, Elders or Deacons required. The office of a Director, Pastor, Elder or Deacon shall only be filled as needed and as led by the Holy Spirit.

D. Election and Term of Office of Directors.

Directors shall, except as otherwise required by law, or by the Certificate of Incorporation, be elected by the majority vote of the entire Board of Directors of the corporation for three (3) year terms. Nominations shall be made by the Senior Pastor (President). Whenever any corporate action, other than the election of Directors, is to be taken by vote of the Directors, it shall, except as otherwise required by law or by the Certificate of Incorporation, be authorized by a majority vote of the Directors present at a meeting of Directors, provided that the Directors present constitute a quorum of the entire Board.

E. Election and Term of Office of Elders and Deacons.

Elders will be nominated by the Senior Pastor and elected by a majority vote of the serving Directors. Elders shall be elected for a one (3) year term. Elders serving on the Board of Directors shall serve for a three (3) year term to correspond with their term on the Board.

Deacons will be nominated by the Senior Pastor and elected by a majority vote of the serving Directors. Deacons shall be elected for a one (1) year term. Deacons serving on the Board of Directors shall serve for a three (3) year term to correspond with their term on the Board.

F. Vacancies on Board of Directors, Elders and Deacons.

A vacancy on the Board of Directors shall be filled by the Senior Pastor and ratified by a majority of the remaining Directors then in office even though less than a quorum. A successor Director so elected shall serve for the unexpired term of his predecessor.

A vacancy left by an Elder or Deacon shall be filled by the Senior Pastor subject to ratification by a majority of the remaining Directors then in office even though less than a quorum. The office of Elder or Deacon shall only be filled as needed and as led by the Holy Spirit.

G. Meeting of Directors.

The annual meeting of the Directors for the election of Directors and all special meetings of Directors for that, or for any other purpose, may be held at such time or place, within or without the State of New York, as shall be stated in the Notice of Meeting or in duly executed Waiver or Waivers of Notice thereof.

An annual meeting of the Directors commencing with the year of incorporation shall be held as soon as the Annual Financial Statements have been prepared by independent, outside financial preparation, no later than May 1, on any day (except Saturday, Sunday or a holiday) in that period, at which the Directors shall review the annual report presented by the President and Treasurer, and shall transact such other business as may properly be brought before the meeting.

Written notice of the place, date and hour of the annual meeting, shall be given personally or by mail to each Director, not less than ten (10) nor more than fifty (50) days prior to the meeting. If mailed, such notice is given to a Director when deposited in the United States mail, with postage thereon prepaid, directed to each Director at his respective address appearing on the record of Director, or, if he shall have filed with the secretary a written request that notices to him be mailed to some other address, then directed to him at such other address.

Other than the annual IRS meeting taking place in November to discuss the Pastor's compensation and review any other employee compensation, Members of the Board of Directors may participate and act at meetings through the use of a conference telephone or other communications device by means of which all persons participating in the meeting can communicate simultaneously with each other. Participation in such meeting shall constitute attendance and presence in person at the meeting of the Board of Directors or Directors so participating.

In addition, any action required or permitted to be taken at any meeting of the Board of Directors may be taken without a meeting provided that a majority of Directors consent thereto in writing or by electronic transmission. Any such action shall only be effective upon a vote either in writing or by electronic transmission (e.g., e-mail) of a majority of Directors.

H. Special Meetings of Board of Directors.

Special meetings of the Board, for any purpose or purposes, may be called by the Senior Pastor (President) on two (2) days' written notice to each Director. Special meetings shall be called by the President, in like manner and on like notice, on written request of two (2) Directors. Written notice of a special meeting of Directors, stating the place, date and hour of the meeting, the purpose or purposes for which it is called, shall be given, personally, by telegram, e-mail, or by mail, to each Director. If mailed, such notice is given to a Director when deposited in the United States mail, with postage thereon prepaid, directed to the Director at the address as it appears on the record of Directors, of, if he shall have filed with the secretary a written request that notices to him be mailed to some other address, then directed to him at such other address.

I. Quorum.

At all meetings of the Board of Directors, except as otherwise provided by law as to certain transactions, the presence of not less than a majority of the total number of the Board shall be necessary and sufficient to constitute a quorum for the transaction of business and the vote of majority of the Directors present at the time of the vote, if a quorum is present at the time, shall be the act of the Board of Directors. A majority of the Directors present, whether or not a quorum exists, may adjourn any meeting to another time or place, without notice other than announcement at the meeting.

J. Removal.

Directors and Elders (other than the Senior Pastor), may be removed from office *with cause* (e.g., sexual immorality, financial malfeasance, unrepentant theological heresy, are no longer in agreement with HCCF By-Laws and Distinctives, or if his wife and/or children are no longer blessed with his serving at the church), or *without cause* by the vote of a two-thirds (2/3) majority of the Directors. The Senior Pastor (President) may only be removed as provided for in Article VI, Section 4, Subsection E.

It shall be the prerogative of the Senior Pastor, after counseling with the Directors, to ask for the resignation of a Deacon if found guilty of sexual immorality, financial malfeasance, theological heresy, are no longer in agreement with HCCF By-Laws and Distinctives, his wife and/or children are no longer blessed with his serving at the church, or he is not in harmony with the ministry of the church as directed by the Senior Pastor

(Amos 3:3; Heb. 13:17).

K. Compensation.

A Director, Elder or a Deacon shall receive no compensation for their service as Directors, Elders or Deacons. A Director, Elder or a Deacon may also serve as an officer of this church for which they may be compensated.

Section 3. Deaconesses.

Traditionally, there have been three understandings of who is addressed in 1 Timothy 3:11. E.g., a) Some believe it refers to a group of mature women who work alongside and support the male Deacons of the church (a “*Complimentarian*” approach). b) Others believe it speaks of an official office and position within the church comprised of female Deacons or “Deaconesses” with authority over the affairs of the church (a modernist “*Equalitarian*” approach). c) And lastly, others believe it refers to the wives of the Deacons.

As Alexander Strauch points out concerning these interpretations, “*First Timothy 2:9-15 and 3:1-5 must never be isolated from each other or be allowed to contradict each other.*” Since Paul earlier in 1 Timothy 1:12 restricts women from exercising authority over or instructing men, we lovingly reject the modernist “*Equalitarian*” view that this is an official office or position with authority over the affairs of church. However, we believe that the ambiguity linguistically, grammatically and contextually, allows a possible understanding of either a mature woman who serves with and supports the male Deacons in their ministry roles in the church, a “*Complimentarian*” approach, *or more likely*, as referring to the wives of the Deacons. As such, we lovingly and cautiously attempt to apply both understandings.

(See “*Ministers Of Mercy: The New Testament Deacon,*” by Alexander Strauch, Chapter-10)

We believe that the Bible, and nature, firmly establishes a pattern for male leadership in the home as well as in the church. This appears to specifically apply to those functions associated with Apostles, Pastors and Elders in overseeing the church, and in their responsibility to be the primary, congregational teachers. We also believe this is the pattern for Deacons in their role within the church. (1 Timothy 2:9-15 & 3:1-2)

However, we are also persuaded that Scripture, as supported by early church history (both church and secular records), demonstrates that other positional giftings in the church are open, as God sees fit, to women serving in the Body of Christ (e.g., missionaries, evangelists, teachers of women and children, and as “Deaconesses” as defined above.

A. Their Ministry.

1. Although the Bible gives us limited guidance as to specific ministries Deaconesses were involved in, historically Deaconesses often played the role of caregivers, helpers, teachers of children, and disciplers of (mentoring) other women. They were also often active in benevolence, missions and evangelism. However, that role was as a supportive role to the God-ordained male leadership within the church, and did not extend to exercising authority over, or formally teaching men in the church.
2. Although not a direct reference to Deaconesses, we believe that Titus 2:4-5 is appropriate to reference as an example of the ministry of a Deaconess both through instructing other women and by personal modeling of life-style. E.g., Deaconesses should teach the younger women to be sober (temperate), to love their husbands, to love their children, to be discrete, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands (respectful, supportive, submissive), that the Word of God be not blasphemed (dishonored).

3. Although 1 Timothy 5:10 refers to the character of those widows being considered for benevolence support from the church, we believe that the same character traits and heart for ministry should be found in a Deaconess. E.g., well reported of for good works, a faithful and godly mother having raised faithful children, is hospitable, washes the saints feet (assumes the role of a bond slave to serve those in the church), relieves the afflicted (serves those in need), diligently follows every good work (E.g., cf. Dorcus in Act 9:36-39).
4. Please note, the position of “Deaconess” does not constitute, qualify as an official position on HCCF’s “Board.” (1 Timothy 2:9-15 & 3:1-2)

B. Their Qualifications.

1. A Deaconess shall be a woman who has fellowshiped with Heart Cry Christian Fellowship for a minimum of two (2) years having demonstrated a submissive spirit, is respectful of church leadership, has a servant’s heart, and has demonstrated appropriate leadership among the women of the church.
2. In 1 Timothy 3:1 “*wives*” (literally = “women”) can apply to the wives of those men in leadership, or due to the use of the term “*even so*” (or “likewise), may also apply here to a third category of servants; in this case, Deaconesses. As such, Deaconesses should be grave, not slanderers (free of malignity, malicious gossip and character assassination), sober (stable and serious), faithful in all things (caring for both the things of Christ and the things of their family). “*The Greek word for ‘malicious gossip’ (or ‘slanderers’) is ‘scandalmongers.... Information that begins as innocent rumor can become a real problem.’* (The Master’s Plan for the Church, by John MacArthur, page 101).

In addition, Paul warns about those who go from house to house as “*idle, tattlers and busybodies.*” Now people can go from house to house without ever leaving home. “*It’s easy for...people with too much time on their hands to get caught up in talking about what’s going on, especially since they can use modern technology like cell phones, emails, and instant messaging (or Face Book)*” (ibid).

3. Titus 2: 4-5 instructs us that keeping a godly home with excellence for one’s husband and children is the Christian woman’s first, non-negotiable responsibility. As such, any ministry for the church or others should come only after their ministry to Christ by fulfilling their responsibilities to be keepers at home. We therefore believe that Deaconesses should model those characteristics outlined in Titus 2: 4-5.
4. Titus 2:3 also instructs that women in mentoring and discipleship positions be in good behavior (reverent toward God, personally being honorable, dignified, sensible and spiritually healthy), holy, not false accusers, not given to much wine (not drinkers or drug users. We must also lovingly and biblically question an individual’s ability to lead by example who is dependant upon anti-depressants or mood stabilizers to function normally.) In addition, they should be teachers of good things (those things that please God, particularly those things in the following verses, e.g., Titus 2:4-5).

5. As with Directors, Pastors, Elders and Deacons, we desire always to please Christ and to bless those involved in ministry. If a Deaconess is married, we believe that she and her husband should be of one mind concerning her qualifications, appointment, service and responsibilities. As such, we will seek her husband's input, approval and support (Genesis 2:24; Amos 3:3; Eph. 5: 22-24; 1 Pet. 3:1-6).
6. Please refer to HCCF Church Policy and Leadership Manuals for any additional clarifications on our understanding of the qualifications, selection, roles and responsibilities of Deaconesses. (Also, please c.f., *Who Qualifies To Be A Church Leader?* RBC-Q0903, *What Does God Expect Of A Woman?* RBC-Q0505, *What Does The Bible Say About Women In Ministry?* RBC-Q0905, *The Master's Plan for the Church*, by Dr. John MacArthur, and *Ministers Of Mercy: The New Testament Deacon*, by Alexander Strauch)

C. Number of Deaconess.

Although we do not necessarily see the need to fill this position in a formal and officially recognized capacity, if and when Deaconesses are recognized and appointed, there shall be no set minimum or maximum number of Deaconesses required. The office of a Deaconess shall only be filled as needed and as directed by the Holy Spirit.

D. Election and Term of Office of Deaconesses.

Deaconesses will be nominated by the Senior Pastor, after counseling with the Pastor's wife, and elected by a majority vote of the serving Directors. Deaconesses shall be elected for one (1) year terms.

E. Special Meetings.

Deaconesses are not required nor expected to attend regularly scheduled leadership meetings of the Directors, Pastors, Deacons and Elders unless specifically requested or invited to do so. Because of loving sensitivities to their responsibilities at home, we will attempt to keep any such meetings to a minimum, and with the loving support and approval of their husbands (Eph. 5: 22-24; 1 Pet. 3:1-6).

F. Removal.

It shall be the prerogative of the Senior Pastor, after counseling with the Directors, to ask for the resignation of a Deaconess if she (or her husband and/or children) are no longer blessed with her serving, or are not in harmony with the ministry of the church as directed by the Senior Pastor (Amos 3:3; Heb. 13:17).

G. Compensation.

Deaconesses shall receive no compensation for their service as Deaconesses.

V
OFFICERS OF THE CHURCH

Section 1. Officers.

The officers of this corporation shall be a President, Vice-President, Secretary and Treasurer and such other officers as the Board of Directors may appoint. One person, other than the President, may hold more than one of these offices.

Section 2. Election.

The Board of Directors shall elect by simple majority the officers of the corporation to serve for terms of one (1) year.

Section 3. Vacancies.

A vacancy in any office because of death, resignation, disqualification, removal or otherwise, shall be filled by the Board of Directors, by a majority vote.

Section 4. President (also referred to as Senior or Lead Pastor or Lead Elder).

Subject to ratification by the Board of Directors, the Senior Pastor shall be Chief Executive Officer and President of the corporation. He shall have general supervision, direction, and control of the business and affairs of the corporation. He shall be responsible for presiding over all meetings of the members, Directors, and shall have such other powers and duties as may be prescribed from time to time by the Board of Directors.

A. His Ministry.

1. The Senior Pastor shall minister unto the Lord in regular personal worship and praise. He shall give himself to the ministry of the Word and prayer ^(Acts 6:4) and seek to walk uprightly before the Lord in his personal life. He shall seek the mind of God.
2. The Senior Pastor shall be the teaching-shepherd of the church. He shall give considerable time to the study of the Word and shall teach the Scriptures to the flock by precept and example. He shall aim to feed the flock, equip the saints for ministry and guard the church against the attack of the enemy.

3. The Senior Pastor shall be the President of the corporation, its Chief Executive Officer, Chairman and Lead Elder of the Board of Directors. He shall oversee the business of the church on a daily basis and give leadership to the Associate and Assistant Pastors, the Elders, the Deacons, the general church body and its ministries. The Senior Pastor shall have general supervision of the entire church and charge of all services, gatherings and meetings.
4. Please see HCCF Leadership Manual for more clarification on our understanding of the qualifications, roles and responsibilities of Pastors, Elders and Deacons. Also see *The Master's Plan for the Church*, by Dr. John MacArthur (Moody).

B. His Qualifications. (See 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

1. The Senior Pastor shall be generally qualified according to the qualifications for Directors, Pastors and Elders.
2. The Senior Pastor shall be a Spirit-gifted teacher of the Word, an ordained pastor of good reputation, Biblically conservative in theology, Christ-centered, Spirit-filled, and willing to serve a non-denominational church without promoting denominational interest.

C. His Appointment.

1. In the event the Senior Pastor should voluntarily resign or vacate the position, the Senior Pastor shall nominate his successor. The nominated successor shall then be subject to ratification by the Board of Directors.
2. In the event of a vacancy and the Senior Pastor is unable to nominate a successor, the Directors shall constitute a nominating committee. This committee shall seek, find and nominate a candidate. They shall seek first among the Associate or Assistant Pastors from within the fellowship. Elections shall be by three-fourths (3/4) vote of the Board.

D. His Compensation.

The Senior Pastor's initial compensation shall be specified by the Directors at the time of his calling. The church shall provide to the extent possible, adequate salary, housing allowance, health insurance, expense allowance, contributions to a retirement fund, conference funds, vacation time, continuing education and other special funds as needed for the Senior Pastor's ministry. The church shall also defray the cost of sending the Senior Pastor to out-of-town conferences, conventions or missionary trips attended for the church, as approved by the Directors at meetings held prior to or within ninety (90) days after the conference, convention or missionary trip.

Removal Of The Senior Pastor.

1. In the event the Senior Pastor shall be accused of misconduct, the matter shall be initially reviewed by the Board of Directors. No such charges shall be heard by the Board of Directors unless said charge(s) are made in writing and the same being signed by the accuser(s) and with not less than two (2) material witnesses. If allegations are deemed to have merit, either the Board of Directors or the Senior Pastor, may seek the counsel of and activate a special Board of Overseers.
2. If the Board of Overseers is activated for matters of discipline and/or rehabilitation, the Senior Pastor shall submit himself to the Board of Overseers, which shall investigate allegations of pastoral misconduct and recommend actions for the discipline and/or rehabilitation of the Senior Pastor pursuant to the criteria and procedures set forth below.

- a. Board of Overseers

Eligibility for Nominations. An individual is eligible for nomination to the Board of Overseers if he:

- (A) Is the Senior Pastor of a respected congregation with similar theological and philosophical distinctives.
- (B) Meets the following Biblical qualifications for an Overseer as outlined in Article-IV, Section-3B.
- (C) Is willing to serve as an Overseer at his own expense pursuant to the guidelines set forth below.
- (D) Nominations and Confirmation: The Senior Pastor shall nominate five (5) members of the Board of Overseers, one of whom the Senior Pastor shall designate as the Chairman. These nominations are subject to the confirmation by the Board of Directors.
- (E) Role: The Board of Overseers has no authority in Heart Cry Christian Fellowship except for the duration of its activation by the Board of Directors, and then only for the discipline and/or rehabilitation of the Senior Pastor, as permitted under these By-Laws.

- b. Activation of the Board of Overseers: The Board of Overseers shall be activated at the discretion of either the Board of Directors or the Senior Pastor pursuant to the following procedures:
 - (A) Call of Special Meeting of the Board of Directors. Upon determination by two (2) or more Directors that the Senior Pastor has committed: 1) sexual immorality, 2) financial malfeasance, 3) theological heresy (collectively and individually, “pastoral misconduct”), said Directors shall call a special meeting pursuant to Article-II, Section-5, except that notice of such a meeting shall state that the meeting will address potential pastoral misconduct and that the notice is to be treated confidentially.
 - (B) Conduct of Special Meeting of the Board of Directors. Upon convening the special meeting, the Directors shall present their allegations and any factual evidence to the full Board and the Senior Pastor. The Senior Pastor shall be given an opportunity to answer the allegations, after which the Board of Directors shall vote on whether the Senior Pastor has committed pastoral misconduct. In the event of a “no” vote, the special meeting shall be concluded. In the event of a “yes” vote, the Board of Directors (or the Senior Pastor) may choose to notify the Chairman of the Board of Overseers, by telephone and by mail, that the Board of Overseers is being activated. Regardless of the results of the special meeting, the minutes of the meeting shall be confidential and shall not be published nor made available to third parties who are not Directors.
- 3. Conduct of the Activated Board of Overseers. Upon notification of the activation of the Board of Overseers, the Chairman of the Board of Overseers shall contact the remaining Overseers and coordinate a meeting of the Board of Overseers, in Naples, New York as soon as reasonably feasible to investigate the alleged pastoral misconduct. In all its actions, the Board of Overseers shall be presided over by its Chairman and shall make its recommendations by a majority vote. After its initial meeting, the Board of Overseers shall conduct a timely and thorough investigation into the alleged pastoral misconduct and make its determination upon the preponderance of the evidence. If the Board of Overseers shall determine that pastoral misconduct has occurred, it shall then recommend an appropriate disciplinary and/or rehabilitative action required – up to and including permanent removal as Senior Pastor. The Board of Overseers shall report its determination and any recommended disciplinary and/or rehabilitative action to the Board of Directors.

4. Implementation of Board of Overseers' Prescribed Action. After prayerfully considering the findings and recommendations of the Board of Overseers, the Board of Directors will determine *if, how, or to what extent*, to execute and implement the prescribed disciplinary and/or rehabilitative action as recommended by the Board of Overseers. The Board of Directors shall also act to fulfill any administrative and/or pastoral duties abandoned due to the Senior Pastor's discipline and/or rehabilitation. The Board of Overseers shall be deemed deactivated upon its report to the Board of Directors, notwithstanding any voluntary involvement by individual Overseers in the Senior Pastor's discipline and/or rehabilitation.
5. The Senior Pastor may only be removed by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the Board of Directors. The decision of the Board of Directors shall be final.

Section 5. Associate and Assistant Pastors.

A. Definitions.

Associate Pastor: An Associate Pastor is a non-ordained, pastor in training who has yet to fulfill all the requirements of HCCF for ordination into the pastorate, and the Board of Directors as led by the Senior Pastor, does not sense a strong leading of the Holy Spirit for full ordination.

Assistant Pastor: An Assistant Pastor is a pastor who has completed all requirements as outlined by HCCF for ordination, and in whom the Board of Directors as led by the Senior Pastor, senses a strong leading of the Holy Spirit for full ordination.

B. Their Ministries.

1. An Associate or Assistant Pastor shall minister unto the Lord in regular worship and praise. He shall give himself to the ministry of the Word and prayer (Acts 6:4) and seek to walk uprightly before the Lord in his personal life. He shall seek the mind of God.
2. The Senior Pastor shall define an Associate or Assistant Pastor's ministry upon his appointment. He shall serve under the Senior Pastor's direction and with the Senior Pastor in the teaching of the Word.
3. Please refer to HCCF Church Policy and Leadership Manuals for any additional policies and procedures.

C. Their Qualifications.

An Associate or Assistant Pastor shall meet the same qualifications as the Elders and Senior Pastor.

Before ordination, an Assistant Pastor shall be subject to an examination by the Senior Pastor, Board of Directors and invited guest pastors. This examination shall consist of both a theological and practical examination, and any other requirements established by the Senior Pastor and the Board of Directors.

D. Their Appointment.

The Senior Pastor shall nominate and the Directors shall vote upon confirmation by a two-thirds (2/3) vote, their recognition of an Associate or Assistant Pastor's calling to share in the ministry of Heart Cry Christian Fellowship.

E. Their Compensation.

The Associate or Assistant Pastor's compensation shall be specified by the Pastor to be ratified by the Board of Directors at the time of their calling. For a full-time Associate Pastor, the church shall provide to the extent possible, adequate salary, housing allowance, health insurance, expense allowance, contributions to a retirement fund, conference and continuing education funds and vacation time. For a part-time Assistant or Associate Pastor, the church shall provide as seems appropriate to the Elders.

F. Removal.

It shall be the prerogative of the Senior Pastor, after counseling with the Directors, to ask for the resignation of Pastoral Associates or Assistants if found guilty of sexual immorality, financial malfeasance, theological heresy, are no longer in agreement with HCCF By-Laws and Distinctives, their wife and/or children are no longer blessed with his serving at the church, or they are not in harmony with the ministry of the church as directed by the Pastor (Amos 3:3; Heb. 13:17).

Section 6. Vice-President.

In the absence or disability of the President, the Vice-President shall perform temporarily all the duties of the President and in so acting, shall have all the powers of the President until the Directors fill the vacancy. The Vice-President shall have such powers and perform such other duties as may be prescribed from time to time by the Board of Directors.

(Please refer to HCCF Church Policy and Leadership Manuals for any additional policies and procedures).

Section 7. Secretary.

The secretary shall keep a full and complete record of all the proceedings of the Board of Directors, shall keep the seal of the corporation and affix it to such papers as may be required in the regular course of business, shall prepare and make service of such notices as may be necessary or proper, shall supervise the keeping of the records of the corporation, and shall discharge such other duties of the office as prescribed by the Board of Directors.

(Please refer to HCCF Church Policy and Leadership Manuals for any additional policies and procedures).

Section 8. Treasurer.

The Treasurer shall receive and safely keep all funds of the corporation and deposit them in a bank or banks. Those funds shall be paid out only on checks of the corporation, and signed by any one of the following: the President, Vice-President, Secretary or Treasurer, or by such officers as may be designated by the Board of Directors.

(Please refer to HCCF Church Policy and Leadership Manuals for any additional policies and procedures).

VI RITES OF ORDINATION

Section 1. Principles of Ordination.

The candidate for ordination recognizes that only our Sovereign Holy God can truly call and ordain His children for service in the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

The calling of a minister is not the result of a title; rather the title is a result of His calling. This calling is recognized as from the true and living God.

It is man's privilege and specifically the privilege of the overseers of the true church of Jesus Christ to ratify the ordination of God when such is obviously placed upon a man's life.

The purpose of this Article is to provide for the ordination rites of ministers of the Gospel of Heart Cry Christian Fellowship.

Section 2. Qualifications for Ordination.

The qualifications for ordination are as follows:

- A. A candidate for ordination must be a "Born Again" believer in Jesus Christ as described by our Lord in the third chapter of the Gospel of John.
- B. A candidate for ordination must subscribe to the Statement of Faith as described in the Preamble of these By-Laws.
- C. A candidate must have completed four (4) years of Bible Study or the equivalent as designated by the Directors.
- D. A candidate shall have evidenced the obvious calling of God upon his life to the satisfaction of the Directors.

Section 3. Procedures for Ordination.

- A. Each person fulfilling the above qualifications and upon his presentation to the Board of Directors of this body, will receive full consideration for ordination into the ministry of the Gospel of Jesus Christ by Heart Cry Christian Fellowship.
- B. The Board may make exceptions of these qualifying standards wherein the unanimous opinion of the Board and under the strong, compelling convictions of the Holy Spirit such exception is according to the Will of God and consistent with His Word.

- C. Upon approval by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Board of Directors, the candidate will be ordained as a minister of the Gospel with the right to perform ministerial functions in accordance with the laws of the land and the ordinances of God's Holy Word with all prerogatives of such a calling and office.
- D. All candidates, successful or otherwise, will be notified of the Board's decisions in writing within one (1) week of the final Board action.

Section 4. Certificate of Ordination.

The following is the text of the Certificate of Ordination to be issued to each successful candidate.

CERTIFICATE OF ORDINATION

This is to certify that Pastor _____ was duly ordained by Heart Cry Christian Fellowship as a minister of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He has completed all studies and has met all the requirements of this body for recognition of such office, further, by rite of ordination this date he is duly ordained to perform all ministerial functions without limit as accorded by the laws of the land and in compliance with the ordinances of God's Holy Church as set forth in Holy Scripture. We now pray for God's divine Blessing and the power of the Holy Spirit upon him.

Given this _____ day of _____, _____.

Heart Cry Christian Fellowship

PRESIDENT

SECRETARY

with headquarters in Naples, New York

**VII
AMENDMENT OF BY LAWS**

These By-Laws may be amended or replaced and new By-Laws adopted by two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Board of Directors.

**VIII
PRINCIPAL OFFICE**

The principal office for the transaction of the business of the corporation is fixed and located at Heart Cry Christian Fellowship, 7609 County Road 36, Naples, New York 14512. The Board of Directors* may at any time or from time to time change the location of the principal office from one location to another in the county. *(*For the purposes of this document, the terms "Board of Directors," "Board," "Director" and "Trustee," are synonymous).*

**IX
ANNUAL ACCOUNTING PERIOD**

The annual accounting period for this corporation shall begin on the first day of January and shall end on the last day of December.

**X
NAME CHANGE**

A name change was approved by the Board of Directors changing the name from *Calvary Chapel of the Bristol Hills* to *Heart Cry Christian Fellowship*. This name change was accepted and time stamped on November 21, 2008 by the Ontario County Clerk's Office. It was also accepted by the IRS in a letter (reference # 0423206372 LTR 252C EO) dated February 23, 2009.

XI MISCELLANEOUS

Section 1. Execution of Documents.

The Board of Directors may authorize by majority vote any officer or officers, agent or agents, to enter into any contract or execute any instrument in the name of and on behalf of the church and such authority may be general or confined to specific instances. Unless so authorized, no officer, agent or other person shall have any power or authority to bind the church by any contract or engagement or to pledge its credit or to render it liable for any purpose or to any amount.

Section 2. Construction; Definitions.

Unless the context otherwise requires, the general provisions, rules of construction and definitions contained in the New York Religious Corporations Law and the Not-For-Profit Corporation Law shall govern the construction of these By-Laws.

Section 3. Revisions.

The board may appoint an individual(s) with the power to make revisions to these By-Laws made necessary because of punctuation, spelling, or other errors of grammar or expression. Such revisions shall be effective immediately and shall be permanent subject to revocation by the Board at any duly called Board Meeting. All other changes to the By-Laws must first be approved and ratified by the Board.

Section 4. Inspection of By-Laws & Articles of Incorporation.

The church shall keep in its principal office the original or a copy of its Articles of Incorporation (filed with the Ontario County Courthouse in Canandaigua, New York) and By-Laws, as amended to date, certified by the Secretary, which shall be open to inspection by the members at all reasonable times during the office hours. (Please note that Articles of Incorporation were originally filed under the name of Calvary Chapel of the Bristol Hills. Please reference Article-XI).

Section 5. Dissolution.

In the event that Heart Cry Christian Fellowship dissolves as a church and ceases to exist, subject to oversight provisions as established by New York State and as outlined in our NYS Articles of Incorporation, assets are to be distributed as follows:

1) If the church building and its property are sold, a) all outstanding debt and financial obligations are first to be paid off; b) an amount equal to two-year's severance pay (including medical insurance) is to be set aside for the pastor and his wife; c) any proceeds left after paying off said obligations, along with any cash balances of the church, shall be distributed equally to Samaritan's Purse, Hope Int'l, Medical Ambassador's Int'l, Wycliffe Bible Translators FBO: Rob & Carol McKee, and Missionaries Jeff & Laura Wilson;

2) In the event the church building and property cannot be sold, it is to be offered to the Town of Naples for use as a new town hall and for use by the Naples Community (including civil, social and religious groups).

Section 6. Appropriation of Church Funds: Spending Limits & Approvals

This policy is established by the Board to clarify HCCF By-Laws, Article IV, Section 3, Sub-section A, item 1.

The following guidelines have been established to enhance ease of managing the business affairs of the church while maintaining appropriate accountability in the appropriation of funds.

- 1) The Senior Pastor has the right to appropriate funds subject to the following limitations on a per expenditure basis (e.g., project, item or event):
 - a) Up to \$500.00 without prior approval of the Treasurer or Board of Directors;
 - b) Amounts of \$501.00 - \$2,500.00 shall be reviewed with the church Treasurer;
 - c) \$2,501 shall be reviewed and approved by a majority of the Board of Directors.
- 2) All other expenditure requests shall be submitted to the Pastor for his consideration and approval subject to the above parameters.
- 3) All Church Auxiliaries created and recognized under Article VII are established with the understanding that they will be financially self-supporting. Each auxiliary shall be required to manage and account for their own funds. As such, the church will have no responsibility or liability for any cash management requirements of a Church Auxiliary.

Section 7. Pastoral Honorariums and Special Love Offerings

To maintain the integrity of HCCF and as in compliance with IRS Tax Law, all Pastoral Honorariums and Pastoral Love Offerings shall be processed through normal payroll.

Section 8. Benevolence Fund

HCCF, in the exercise of its religious and charitable purposes, has established a benevolence fund to assist persons in financial need. The church welcomes contributions to the fund. Donors are free to suggest beneficiaries of the fund or of their contributions to the fund. However, such suggestions shall be deemed advisory rather than mandatory in nature. The administration of the fund, including all disbursements, is subject to the exclusive control and discretion of the church board. The church board may consider suggested designations, but in no event is it bound in any way to honor them, since they are accepted only on the condition that they are merely nonbinding suggestions or recommendations. As a result, donors will not be entitled to a return of their designated contributions on the ground that the church failed to honor their designations.

Donors wishing to make contributions to the benevolence fund subject to these conditions may be able to deduct their contributions if they itemize their deductions on their federal income tax return. The church cannot guarantee this result and recommends that donors who want assurance that their contributions are deductible seek the advice of a tax attorney or CPA. Checks should be made payable to the church, with a notation that the funds are to be placed in the church benevolence fund.*

Before an applicant can receive help from the benevolence fund, applicants must: 1) verify that they are considered, per IRS guidelines, a member of a *“valid charitable class;”* 2) provide proof that a genuine need exist; and 3) provide proof that they do not have available resources to meet their needs (e.g., payroll stubs, bank accounts, IRA’s, retirement plans, etc.).

The Pastor may authorize up to \$150.00 per benevolence request per applicant. Funds above that amount must be approved by the full Board. Requests for benevolence will be considered in the following priority: 1) HCCF Members (as define by HCCF By-Laws); 2) attenders of HCCF who have not become official members; 3) Born-Again Christians not attending HCCF who reside in the surrounding communities; 4) Non-Christians who reside in the surrounding communities; and 5) all others.

Those making multiple requests for benevolence must first undergo financial counseling, and be approved by the full Board of HCCF.

* (Above language taken with permission from the *“Church & Clergy Tax Guide,”* by Richard R. Hammar, JD.,LL.M., CPA.,)

(Please see HCCF Church Policy Manual for any additional policies and procedures).

Section 9. Requests For Short-Term Mission Funding

If the church has the money, we will match up to \$100.00 EARNED by anyone who is a member (please see By-Laws) towards a mission trip on a onetime basis.

Evaluation Criteria:

- Do they and their family meet “Membership Requirements?”
- Is it genuine missions? E.g., is it a vacation in disguise or simply an organization trying to offload their responsibility in paying a fair wage?
- What “ministry work” will they be actually be involved in/conducting?
- Is it something that “fits” philosophically with our vision as a church?
- Has the church ever supported this individual on a mission trip before? How many other S.T. mission trips have they already been on?
- Sourcing:
 - ✓ How much of their own way have they *earned*?
 - ✓ How much have they collected from others?
 - ✓ How much support has their own family provided?
- Are they here to serve the church when help is asked for (e.g., chore days, Children’s Church, etc.).
- If asked, are they willing to do a short presentation when they get back?

Section 10. Membership Directories, Solicitations and Related Activities

Membership Directories (past or present) are the property of HCCF and are for the expressed purpose to facilitate church ministry and fostering fellowship within the congregation. To protect the privacy of those who fellowship at HCCF, we do not allow solicitations, business prospecting, political activities, fund raising, promoting petitions, distribution of the directory to individuals who do not fellowship and regularly attend HCCF, or any other non-HCCF sanctioned activities without the *expressed, written permission* of HCCF.

Section 11. Auxiliaries

An auxiliary organization shall exist only with the approval of the Pastor and Directors and shall be subject to the By-Laws of the church. Any organization, group or club consisting of members of the church and formed primarily for a church activity, may apply to become an auxiliary of the church.

(Please see HCCF Church Policy Manual for any additional policies and procedures).

Section 12. Use of Church Facilities

The use of any and all church facilities shall be restricted to church related functions designed to fulfill the core mission of the church, or upon review and approval of the Board, by those who are members of HCCF. Church facilities are not available to outside organizations or by those who are not Members of HCCF. In addition, any use of church facilities exclude activities that may cause HCCF or the Pastor to violate any and all federal, state and local Public Accommodation Laws (see “Section 13. Bathroom Facilities”). E.g., activities where the general public is invited or solicited onto church property to participate in events unrelated to the core mission of HCCF.

Section 13. Bathroom Facilities

HCCF’S multiple occupancy bathrooms are designed for single-gender (“sex”) use only. *“Sex” as defined by hard science, is determined by biological gender (chromosomes and anatomy) as identified at birth.* God’s Word also teaches that *physical privacy* and *modesty* spring from the physical conditions and unique characteristics of the individual sexes. (Gen 1:27; Mt 19:4).

Section 14. Immunizations & Children’s Church

HCCF is not responsible for any illnesses as a result of parents who choose not to immunize their own children, or families exposed to families who fail to immunize.

Section 15. References & Recommendations

HCCF officially limits any recommendations and references to actual facts; we do not render any opinions as to character, abilities, emotional stability, etc. We also no longer participate in completing references for “Concealed Carry” permits. However, individual church leaders and members are free to make any references or recommendations they choose, but not in an any official capacity representing the church.

Section 15. Submitting Questions & Concerns

The following policy has been instituted to address questions & concerns from congregation members:

- 1) We ask that no questions, concerns or business issues be addressed during scheduled times of church worship, prayer, fellowship, Bible studies, home groups, etc.. We ask that church leadership be allowed the same courtesy to worship and fellowship without distraction, as others attending regularly scheduled church activities.
- 2) We will attempt to arrange a mutually convenient time for all parties to meet. However, at the discretion of any Elder or Deacon receiving the question, the individual making the request may be requested to attend a regularly scheduled meeting of HCCF's full church leadership.
- 3) When requested, individuals making inquiry may also be requested to submit all questions and concerns in writing along with the reason(s) for the individual(s) questions and concerns.

ADDENDUM: PASTOR'S PERSONAL PASTORAL POLICIES

The following are personal policies that our pastor, Pastor Bob Morgan, engages in.

- 1) **References.** Pastor Bob does not make personal references and only makes references based upon factual information. He doesn't offer opinions or judgment calls.

He also no longer gives references for *Concealed Carry Permits* for firearms.

- 2) **Second Marriages.** Although HCCF recognizes that not all divorces bar individuals from remarrying, Pastor Bob does not personally marry individuals who have been divorced and are seeking to remarry another individual.
- 3) **Ecumenicalism.** Pastor Bob does not engage in Ecumenical activities where he deems other pastors, individuals or organizations have drifted from Biblical Orthodoxy and/or Orthopraxy.
- 4) **This is not to be considered a complete or comprehensive list.** Pastor Bob reserves the right to follow the dictates of his conscience and his understanding of Scripture guide his decisions within the parameters outlined in our By-Laws.

CERTIFICATION

I, the undersigned, do hereby certify:

1. That I am the duly elected and acting Secretary of *Heart Cry Christian Fellowship*, a New York State corporation: and
2. That the foregoing By-Laws constitute the By-Laws of said corporation as duly adopted at a meeting of the Board of Directors held on the 12th day of April, 2017.

Date Approved
For Entry

Martin DeLong
Secretary
Heart Cry Christian Fellowship