

A Manual of Procedures

for

Seventh Day Baptist Churches

With An Account of Their Basis in

Seventh Day Baptist Polity and Beliefs

Rodney L. Henry

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The Committee on Faith and Order

Seventh Day Baptist General Conference of USA and Canada

Janesville, Wisconsin

1999

with additions through June 2011

PREFACE

Twenty-five years have passed since the last revision of the Manual of Procedures for Seventh Day Baptist Churches. During that time, a new Statement of Belief was adopted, and several denominational procedures were revised, especially those concerning the ordination and accreditation of pastors and the reception of new churches into the General Conference. The need for a new Manual of Procedures is evident. Recognizing this need, the General Conference took the following action in 1993: "We urge the Faith & Order Committee to proceed aggressively in development of a new Seventh Day Baptist Manual of Procedures for Seventh Day Baptist Churches." Therefore, the committee has prepared this manual for the use of the churches, pastors, members and other persons seeking information about Seventh Day Baptists.

At the request of the Committee on Faith and Order, Rodney L. Henry served as the primary writer for this document, with all members of the committee contributing to content, format and style of writing. Older manuals were studied, along with actions more recently adopted by the General Conference concerning denominational beliefs and practices. Much of the material from the 1972 manual, as well as newer material flowing from actions of the General Conference, is included in this revised manual. Scripture quotations are from the New International Version.

This 1997 manual is presented to Seventh Day Baptists with the prayer that God will be honored and His kingdom's work, as done by Seventh Day Baptists, blessed through its use.

The Committee on Faith and Order

Dale E. Rood, Chairman
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Daytona Beach, Florida
March 17, 1997

PREFACE TO THE 1998 REVISION

After the Committee presented the new manual to General Council, it went to General Conference for review by the Committee on Reference and Council at the 1997 sessions. Conference recommended a six-month period during which churches could review the draft prior to its publication. Following that six-month period, the Committee on Faith and Order reviewed all suggested changes, including ten from the General Council, and completed the final revision and edit.

We appreciate the time and thoughtful review by all those who contributed. It is a stronger document, even more representative of Seventh Day Baptist practice. As with all previous manuals, this one is more descriptive than prescriptive of Seventh Day Baptist procedures. It describes the general practice of the churches, often providing more than one example or model. Material which comes from official action of the General Conference is clearly documented. It is prescriptive only in such cases as requirements for Conference membership or requirements for accreditation of ministers by the Conference.

The manual's purpose is to provide helpful guidance to the churches. Like its predecessors, it will undergo future revision, as practices and needs for guidance change. Therefore we always welcome feedback as to the manual's accuracy and usefulness.

The Committee on Faith and Order

Janet Thorngate, Chairman

Salem, West Virginia
May 20, 1998

PREFACE TO THE 1999 REVISION

Following six months additional input from individuals and churches, further revisions were made to the manual. This is the final version of July, 1999.

The Committee on Faith and Order

Janet Thorngate, Chairman

Salem, West Virginia
July 27, 1999

PREFACE TO THE 2004 REVISION

Since the printing and distribution of the 1999 edition, three substantive changes have been made in the Manual by official action of the General Conference.

1. Three pages have been added to **Appendix 2, Guidelines for Calling a Pastor**. The additions constitute procedures to assist churches that are considering calling pastors who have not previously been Seventh Day Baptists. These changes were made by action of General Conference in 2003: pages Appendix J2-8 through J2-10.
2. Appendix 6--Membership Guidelines has been completely rewritten. The old appendix 6 (4 pages) should be removed and replaced with the new **Appendix 6--Conference Membership Procedures** (6 pages). The substitute appendix was adopted by General Conference in 2003: pages Appendix J6-1 through J6-6.
3. A new appendix, **Appendix 10--Procedures for Investigating Member Churches** (2 pages) was adopted by General Conference in 2003: pages Appendix J10-1 and J10-2.

As we have noted before, the manual's purpose is to provide helpful guidance to the churches. Like its predecessors, it will undergo future revision, as practices and needs for guidance change. Therefore we always welcome feedback as to the manual's accuracy and usefulness.

The Committee on Faith and Order

Alan Crouch
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June 2004

PREFACE TO THE 2011 REVISION

There have been several changes to the Manual since the 2004 edition. These have come about as a result of official action of the General Conference. The major changes are as follows:

1. Accreditation requirements were changed.
2. A deadline for applications for accreditation was added by General Conference action in 2006
3. Appendix 6 was updated in 2008 by General Conference action.
4. Appendix 6 was renamed J6.1, and section J6.2 (Conference Membership Responsibilities) was added in 2010 by General Conference action.
5. Appendix 5 (Sample Constitutions and By-Laws) has been expanded to now include five examples instead of three. The old Milton, Wisconsin Church documents have been replaced by the new Milton Church documents. In addition, the documents from the Dodge Center, Minnesota Church have been included, as well as a modified template from the Southern Baptist Convention. This template was modified with permission from Shannon White and Clark Berryman of the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, Alpharetta, Georgia.
6. Appendix 8 has been divided into J8.1 (Articles of Incorporation)) and J8.2 (By-Laws). J8.2 will continue to be updated as necessary based on General Conference action.

The purpose of the Manual has always been, and continues to be, the provision of guidance to the Churches. Feedback on its usefulness and accuracy is therefore always welcomed.

The Committee on Faith and Order

Virginia Burdick

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A Christian Church

The Church: Universal and Local

We believe that the church of God is all believers gathered by the Holy Spirit and joined into one body, of which Christ is the head. We believe that the local church is a community of believers organized in covenant relationship for worship, fellowship and service, practicing and proclaiming common convictions, while growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We believe in the priesthood of all believers and practice the autonomy of the local congregation, as we seek to work in association with others for more effective witness. (Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Belief, 1987)

The word *church* translates the Greek word *ekklesia* (a compound of the words *ek*, "from, out from," and *kaleo*, "to call"), which was used to denote political assemblies in Greek society.¹ In the New Testament it is used of the church, since the church is made up of those God has called out and gathered together in Christ²: believers. God calls people to salvation through the Gospel (2 Thes. 2:13-14), making them into one body in Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit (1 Cor. 12:13). That body of believers is what is called the church (Col. 1:18; 1 Cor. 12:27). As such, the church is both universal and local. It is made up of the believers in every age since its birth at Pentecost, and in every place around the world. In this sense, it is a "universal" church. When Christ promised to build his church down through history (Matt. 16:18), he was speaking of the church in this sense. But since each local congregation of believers is an expression of the universal church in a given place, each local congregation is also the church (Rom. 16:5). It is in local congregations that believers are able to experience the community life³ to which God has called them in the church.

The Nature of the Church of which the Local Congregation is an Expression

The New Testament speaks of the church in a variety of ways, using a number of descriptive titles which help define how local congregations ought to think of themselves and function. Among them, are the following:

1. The people/nation of God (Eph. 2:19a; 1 Pet. 2:9)
2. The body of Christ (1 Cor. 12:12-31; Eph. 1:22-23, 4:15-16; Col. 1:18,24)

¹ Cf. Lothar Coenen, "Church, Synagogue," The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, ed. Colin Brown (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), Vol. I, p. 291. "In general usage, *ekklesia* had lost some of its etymological force of 'called out.' Yet there is good possibility that something of this meaning pertains to the special group composing the Christian church (Acts 15:14; Rom. 9:24). They are 'called out' from previous relationships so as to constitute a body with special relation to God (cf. 1 Cor. 10:32)," Robert L. Thomas, *1 Thessalonians*, in The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Vol. 11, ed. Frank E. Gaebelin (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), p. 238.

² "Coming together (*synago* as in the LXX) must be reckoned an essential element in *ekklesia* (cf. 1 Cor. 11:18)." Brown, p. 299.

³ See "The Formation of a Covenant Community," p. B-1 below.

July, 1999

3. God's household (Eph. 2:19b, 1 Tim. 3:15)
4. God's workmanship (Eph. 2:10)
5. God's family (Eph. 3:15)
6. A royal/holy priesthood (1 Pet. 2:5,9; Rev. 1:6)
7. A holy temple/dwelling of God (1 Cor. 3:16-17; Eph. 2:20-22; 1 Pet. 2:5)
8. The bride of Christ (Eph. 5:25-33)
9. The pillar and foundation of the truth (1 Tim. 3:15; Eph. 2:20)

The first two descriptive titles above have been particularly important to Seventh Day Baptists, as they have sought Scriptural guidance in the organization of their local churches and general conference of churches.

The Church as the People of God

The heart of the Bible message to mankind is that God wants for himself a people for his own possession. God desires to bring people into relationship with himself, such that they can be called his people. The church is the people of God (Eph. 2:19; 1 Pet. 2:9-10) who have come to God through Christ. Therefore, anyone who has not personally received Christ is not part of the church, and all who have received Christ share a common identity as God's people. They *are* the church. For this reason Seventh Day Baptists have insisted that membership in a local congregation be extended only to believers (Acts 2:41), and that it is the community of those believers, not a hierarchy of ordained priests, that really constitutes the church (1 Cor. 12:27). The New Testament⁴ speaks of the close relationship of believers in the church by comparing it to the way the diverse parts of the human body depend upon each other and work together as one, under direction of "the Head" (Christ, Eph. 4:15-16).

The Church as the Body of Christ

The "body of Christ" is the most familiar picture of the church in the New Testament. The apostle Paul uses this expression fifteen times to describe the unity individual believers have with Christ and (because of Christ) with each other in the church. The common relationship with Christ as Savior and Lord is what the church is built upon. So he is spoken of as the "Head" of the body, and all spiritual unity, growth and direction in the church come from him (Eph. 4:15-16). This is why Seventh Day Baptists deny that any human leader can claim to be the head of the church. That role is reserved for Christ, who has promised ordinary believers: "Where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them" (Matt. 18:20). Therefore, Seventh Day Baptists believe the congregation has all the spiritual authority it needs to determine the will of God and govern its own activities, toward the end of honoring Christ and accomplishing God's will. Individuals or groups who claim to have authority over the congregation fail to understand its fundamental nature as the body of Christ.

It is clear from the analogy of the body, that the heart of the church's strength is not in the church's common beliefs, the effectiveness of its programs, the ability of its leaders or the comprehensiveness of its constitution and bylaws. The heart of the church's strength is in the personal relationship each member has with Christ, and in the responsiveness of the congregation as a whole, to him. The living Christ himself, who has promised to be present with his people, gives the church its life. Membership in the church is, therefore, more than a call to belong to a human

⁴ See references in, "2. The body of Christ," above.

institution or organization. It is a call to join other believers in a living relationship with Jesus Christ, by which the will and work and presence of Jesus is made known in the world. As the body of Christ, the church is called to act in behalf of Christ, with each member functioning in a unity like that of the organic unity of the parts of the human body. This calls for the humility and self-discipline of each member, as each one seeks to serve the interests of the body as a whole. It means giving up an independent spirit and learning interdependence, belonging to each other (Rom. 12:5), submitting to each other in love, and making, "every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:3). Because the body of Christ has only one head, the Lord Jesus Christ, all other members are equal in status and importance, even though they differ in terms of their gifts,⁵ their ministries, and the results of their ministries.

Seventh Day Baptists have drawn two fundamental conclusions about the functioning of the local church from the Scriptural description of the church as the body of Christ:

1. Ministry is not the responsibility of one person or "minister," but the natural function of all the members in the church. All members are gifted to serve, and ministry is the responsibility of the whole body of Christ.
2. Some members of the body are called to leadership roles, but that does not make them more important than other members of the body, or authorize them to domineer or carry out their ministry without accountability to the body as a whole (See also 3 John 9-11; 1 Pet. 5:3-4; 1 Tim. 5:19-20).

Clergy and Laity

In light of the above conclusions, Seventh Day Baptists believe "clergy" and "laity" represent, "different kinds of service" (1 Cor. 12:5), not a distinction between the elite and the ordinary. All members are needed in the body. However, Scriptural examples commend the practice of ordaining pastors, members of the diaconate and missionaries. Scripture also lists special qualifications for those who would serve in the diaconate or pastorate⁶ (1 Tim. 3, Titus 1). In practical terms, this means pastors and deacons and missionaries are formally "set apart" (Acts 13:2) for their work in a way other ministers are not. But the purpose of setting them apart for their work is to confirm their call to it, not create an elite group within the body.

⁵ Interest in, and study of, the subject of spiritual gifts has been brought to the forefront in this century. Material written on this subject falls into two categories: that which teaches that some of the gifts have fulfilled their purpose in the first century of the church's history; that which teaches that all of the gifts still have a purpose in the church today, and are therefore available today. Though there may not be agreement among Seventh Day Baptists on the number, nature or specific purpose of spiritual gifts, there is agreement that spiritual gifts are important to the health and growth of the church. Seventh Day Baptists understand, first, that spiritual gifts are characteristic of the body of Christ; second, that they are given to each member of the body of Christ; and third, that they vary from member to member. (See 1 Cor. 12:1-11.)

⁶ Although the NT uses the terms "overseer" or "elder" to designate the office, and "pastor" to describe one of the chief ministries of the office-holder, Seventh Day Baptists (along with many other Christian groups today) use the term "pastor" to designate the office of the spiritual leader of a congregation. Retired pastors present in the congregation are often designated "elders." The terms "overseer" and "elder" are used interchangeably in Acts 20: 17, 28; Tit. 1:5-7; 1 Pet. 5:1-2. In Acts 20 the "elders" are referred to as "overseers" and told to be "shepherds" ("pastors"). Since all of them are told to do this, pastoring must have been assumed to be fundamental to the office (giving some support to the modern practice of designating the office itself as "pastor"). "Pastors and teachers" is used as a joint designation (ie. "pastor-teachers") in Eph. 4:11 for those gifted for the office.

The Purposes of the Local Church

The following purposes describe the mission God has given the local church to fulfill in the power of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:18-20; Acts 2:42; Rom. 15:5-6; Eph. 4:11-16; 2 Pet. 3:18).

1. Worship. Worship is a response to who God is, what he has done, and what he continues to do in the lives of his people. Worship is both an individual and a corporate response to God. After opportunities for individual and family worship during the week, Seventh Day Baptists look forward to gathering on the Sabbath in the name of Jesus, expecting God's presence to fill their worship experience. Corporate worship strengthens their relationships with God and his people.

2. Fellowship. Fellowship comes from the Greek word, *koinonia*, which means, "association, communion, fellowship, close relationship," or (abstractly), "(brotherly) unity."⁷ Fellowship is a loving closeness church members have with each other because of their common life in Christ.⁸ It is expressed in a devotion to one another, a unity in work and worship, and a partnership in fulfilling the purposes of the church. The success of the church is dependent upon all of these things. Fellowship in the church is based upon the love of which Christ spoke: "A new commandment I give to you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another. By this all men will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another" (John 13:34-35).

3. Service. The church serves Christ, its Head, acting in his name to accomplish his will in the world by the power of the Spirit and to the glory of the Father. This service (Greek: *diakonia*,⁹) includes the ministry of the members to each other -- building the body (Eph. 4:12-13; 2 Cor. 9:12-13; James 1:27), acts of mercy to outsiders (Luke. 10:25-37; Gal. 6:10), and service to the gospel in the world (2 Cor. 8:18, and see also Rom. 15:16-17).

4. The practice of common convictions. Both believing and living by the truths of Scripture are essential to the life of the local church. The two must be inseparably linked, so that the message which the church proclaims is not different from the message to which its members' lives give testimony (Luke 8:21; James 1:22; 3 John 3; 1 Tim. 3:15).

5. The proclamation of common convictions. The church must help its members come to their own Scriptural convictions (2 Tim. 3:14-15), toward the goal that the church will be united in proclaiming the truth (1 Cor. 1:10; Acts 20:27; Jude 3), especially the truth of the Gospel: "We believe that Jesus Christ commissions us to proclaim the Gospel, to make disciples, to baptize and to teach observance of all that He has commanded. We are called to be witnesses for Christ throughout the world and in all human relationships" (Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Belief).

⁷ William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, "*koinonia*," *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (trans. of German work by Walter Bauer), (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), def. 1, pp. 439-440.

⁸ "It denotes the unanimity and unity brought about by the Spirit... The 'right hand of fellowship' (Gal. 2:9) given to Paul and Barnabas by James, Peter and John was not just a handshake over a deal but mutual recognition of being in Christ." Johannes Schattenmann, in Brown, NIDNTT, Vol. 2, pp. 642-643.

⁹ "Service, office, aid, support, distribution (of alms, etc.), office of a deacon," Brown, p. 544. See also *diakonos*, "servant, deacon" (Brown, p. 544) and this word's relevance to the Christian (as explained in Brown, p. 548): "*diakonos* is concerned with his service for the church, his brothers and fellow-men, for the fellowship, whether this is done by serving at table, with the word, or in some other way. The *diakonos* is always one who serves on Christ's behalf and continues Christ's service for the outer and inner man; he is concerned with the salvation of men... This concern with God's salvation includes body and spirit. Hence, Paul was as concerned with the collection (2 Cor. 8:4; 9:1, 12f.; in each case *diakonia*...) as with the Gospel." Note: these words sometimes appear in modern translations as "minister" (Rom. 15:16, NIV) or "ministry" (2 Tim. 4:11, NIV).

6. Growth in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. The effectiveness of the church depends upon the closeness to Christ, and growth in Christ, of all members (Eph. 4:15-16; 2 Pet. 3:18).

The Organization of the Local Church

Each local Seventh Day Baptist church is organized to accomplish the above purposes in light of the following principles:

1. The local church as a covenant community of believers
2. The priesthood of all believers
3. The individual believer's liberty of thought and freedom of conscience
4. The autonomy of the local church and the association principle

These principles will be discussed in the next three chapters of this manual. Seventh Day Baptists believe the congregational form of church government best serves to fulfill the divine purposes for the church which are reflected in these principles. Therefore, the question of how local churches are organized is important to them. They believe it is one of the things which determine whether the local church is just a religious organization, or it is a genuine expression of the body of Christ (and therefore, genuinely the church). Since the church is always emerging to become in maturity and fullness what it is by its nature and purpose, faithfulness to the divine purposes is crucial to the spiritual identity, health and growth of the local church.

Seventh Day Baptists have never believed that either Scripture or common sense commends the building of an extensive ecclesiastical structure. Therefore they have always aimed at simplicity in the organization of their local churches, associations and general conference of churches. However, they have not believed that it honors God for the church to function in completely spontaneous, unorganized ways. They have seen the need for the church to have some form of recognized, agreed upon structure, in accordance with the Scriptural counsel: "Everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way" (1 Cor. 14:40). This is consistent with the example of the early church, as described in the Book of Acts. The early church was "organized," too. It had an identifiable set of common beliefs and purposes (Acts 2:41-47), selected certain of its members to do particular tasks (Acts 6:1-6; 13:1-3), and held meetings for the purpose of receiving reports or resolving problems (Acts 14:26-27; Acts 15:1-30).

For Seventh Day Baptists, the question has not been whether the church should be organized or unorganized, but rather what kind of organization is best for the church.

A Baptist Church

Seventh Day Baptists are Baptists. They hold to the traditional Baptist distinctives described in this chapter because they believe them to be the most consistent with the Scriptural concepts outlined in the previous chapter.

The Local Church as a Covenant Community of Believers

In post-biblical church history, the idea grew up that a priest, properly ordained by Roman Catholic authority, exercising that authority within a hierarchy of priests, and rightly administering the sacraments, was essential to the establishment of a church in any particular place. Furthermore, under the parish system, anyone born in the ministry area of such a church was automatically made a member through infant baptism and was later “confirmed” into formal church membership upon reaching a certain age of maturity. Along with other Baptists, Seventh Day Baptists reject these ideas and practices because they are contrary to what Scripture teaches. A local church is a covenant community of believing disciples of Jesus Christ, not a station for receiving the sacraments, an outpost in a human authority structure, or a congregation of those who have received a baptism administered apart from saving faith.

The Membership of the Local Church: Regenerate and Baptized

Since the body of Christ is made up of believers, the local church ought to have a regenerate membership (members must be born-again believers and give evidence of this through a public profession of faith in Christ and a sincere Christian life). Since the local church is formed by the response of discipleship which believers offer to God, each member ought to be baptized. Ordinarily, baptism is the first step of discipleship a new believer takes after receiving Christ as Savior. In the responsibilities Jesus gives the church in Matthew 28:19, baptizing people is the first one he mentions, as a follow-up to making disciples. In theological terms, then, membership in the local church ought to be restricted to regenerate, baptized people. But the mere existence (or meeting) of such people in a certain place does not automatically constitute them a local church.

The Formation of a Covenant Community

The local church becomes a reality when a group of baptized believers unite in common beliefs and purposes, and in a common commitment to God and each other. All of these elements are part of the pattern for the local church given in Acts 2:42-47, and are reflected in the five general purposes Seventh Day Baptists have identified for the local church. (See the previous chapter of this manual). The church covenant is where these elements come together in a formalized statement which expresses the discipleship commitments of each member, and is the basis for the establishment of a new local church.

Among Seventh Day Baptists, a church covenant is a solemn agreement before God and his people that articulates the responsibilities of all the members of the local church. By agreeing to the covenant, people testify to their acceptance of these responsibilities and pledge themselves to be (to a certain extent) responsible to, and for, the other people of God who are members of the same

covenant community. In analogy to the covenants of the Old Testament between God and Israel, the Baptist concept of covenant includes the ideas of a solemn agreement, responsibilities consequent to that agreement, and commitment to God and an identified community of his people. That last point deserves emphasis. The Bible does not teach the people of God to be a loosely organized collection of autonomous individual believers with no sense of community. It teaches the importance of individual believers being in right relationship with each other in the community of God's people, as well as with God.

Seventh Day Baptist church covenants have usually been brief and simple. They express the basic discipleship commitments of the congregation, not the specifics of its organization or common beliefs. But the local church covenant is always entered into in the context of shared convictions about these other important aspects of the church's identity. All Seventh Day Baptist churches today approve a separate constitution and bylaws and statement of belief (or vote affirmation of the denominational one). This was not such a wide-spread practice in early Seventh Day Baptist history, but even then, church covenants reflected a community of believers who shared common convictions about their beliefs and practices. Rev. James Bailey comments about this context of shared convictions in the American churches, and how it delayed the necessity of drafting a statement of belief for the General Conference, as well:

The General Conference was organized when the denomination it represented was small. Six of its eight churches had a common origin. The first of these came off from a Baptist church in Newport, R.I., bringing the faith of the Baptist denomination with it. Five others were the outgrowths of this church. The other two had a similar origin, and held the faith of the Baptist church. The standards of the Baptists were received, with the single exception of the doctrine of the perpetuity of the Sabbath of Creation and of the Fourth Command. It was not, therefore, deemed necessary that the Conference should establish a system of faith, as a doctrinal basis, on which to build (p. 85) ...The increase of the denomination from those who were persuaded to keep the commands of God and the faith of Jesus, made it necessary to define the common faith of the churches (p. 86) ...In the Conference of 1821 twenty-nine churches were represented. For twenty years, the Conference had had an average increase of one church per year. Many of the members, and some of the ministers, were from other denominations. It, therefore, seemed expedient that there should be some general standard of faith, expressive of the particular and general faith of the denomination, as a safe-guard against the introduction of error, from those coming from other churches (p. 93).¹

The Priesthood of All Believers

According to Revelation 1:6 Jesus has made his people to be, "a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father." Peter says the same, when he says that the church is, "being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5). These texts speak of the church as a whole (as a "kingdom" of priests, with individuals being built, "into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood"). Therefore they apply to

¹ History of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference: From its Origin, September, 1802, to its Fifty-Third Session, September, 1865 (Toledo, Ohio: S. Bailey & Co., 1866), pages as noted.

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every member of the church, not just to clergy only; and to ministry offered in the context of the church, not in isolation, somewhere else. Believers are first built into a “spiritual house” (the church), which is the context for their priestly service. Then they become, together, a “priesthood” in the ministry of the church, not individual “priests” to their own families (for example). As a priesthood they are not intermediaries between God and mankind (1 Tim. 2:5), but rather those qualified to offer sacrifices. Peter makes it clear that all believers are qualified to offer, “spiritual sacrifices” and “declare the praises” of Christ (1 Pet. 2:5,9).

Among Baptists, the universal priesthood of believers has historically included two concepts. First, the individual believer has direct access to God, through Christ as High Priest. Therefore no human, “priestly” intermediary is needed (Heb. 10:19-22). Each believer is “his own priest,” in a manner of speaking. Second, all members of the church are responsible for the ministry of the church. (See the discussion of the “body of Christ” in the previous chapter of this manual).

Because believers have direct access to God, through Christ, it has been the practice of Seventh Day Baptists to: receive the communion cup personally (“we all partake,” 1 Cor. 10:17, and see v. 21), pray to God and confess sins to God directly (1 Jn. 1:9 mentions no human intermediary), and find God’s blessings through obedience and faith (James 1:25, Eph. 1:3) -- as opposed to the practice of having a priest receive the communion cup for the people, hear their confession and pronounce them forgiven, and “dispense Grace” to them through various blessings, anointings and rites. Seventh Day Baptists have also believed that, though the Sabbath Day and the Lord’s Supper are especially meaningful for worship and communion with God and God’s people, believers may approach God at any time and place, without a prescribed ritual.

The Individual Believer’s Liberty of Thought and Freedom of Conscience

Seventh Day Baptists consider liberty of thought under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to be essential to Christian belief and practice. Therefore we encourage the unhindered study and open discussion of scripture. We uphold the individual’s freedom of conscience in seeking to determine and obey the will of God. (From the introduction to the Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Belief)

Seventh Day Baptists, with other Baptists, believe that it is a fundamental right of every believer to study Scripture with the help of the Holy Spirit, free from the coercion of a government or even a church structure. Baptists emerged from an environment of intolerance from the government and the established church. Therefore, Baptists hold dearly the freedom to study Scripture for themselves, without hindrance, and to give open discussion to Scripture, with the goal of determining and obeying the will of God. Seventh Day Baptists share, with Baptists and others, a belief in the separation of church and state.

The concept of liberty of thought is based on the Scriptural teaching of the competency of the believer before God. Believers have the mind of Christ (1 Cor. 2:16) and need not be dependent upon any human teacher (1 Jn. 2:27), even though the ministry of Godly teachers is beneficial to them (Rom. 12:7, Col. 2:7, Tit. 1:9). Jesus taught that the believer would know the truth, and that the truth would set him free (Jn. 8:32). For this reason, Seventh Day Baptists do not impose any required study materials upon local churches in their General Conference. As a service to the

churches, a limited number of instructional materials (particularly Sabbath-related materials) are offered for their voluntary use.

The concept of freedom of conscience is a consequence of the truth that each believer is ultimately accountable to God for his faith and practice (Rom. 14:10-12, 1 Cor. 4:3-5), not to any human authority. The contrary belief has been the source of persecution throughout church history. For Seventh Day Baptists, this principle has been most obvious in a refusal to lay down any system of rules for individual behavior. They have recognized that sincere, Godly Christians may differ in their understanding of both the finer points of meaning, and the practical implications, of a particular passage of Scripture. For example, matters such as what is appropriate and what is not appropriate to be done on the Sabbath Day are left up to the individual church member. That is not to say that Seventh Day Baptists approve any and all behavior as being appropriate for the Sabbath. Neither is it to say that pastors aren't free to address such issues in sermons, or that the diaconate may not see fit to warn a member about his Christian walk. It is to say that church authority is not used to impose a particular set of Sabbathkeeping practices upon individual members. Such matters are not unimportant, by any means, but it is left up to the individual member to answer to God for his behavior. Only in cases where a member's behavior is in obvious and flagrant disregard of his covenant commitments, will a Seventh Day Baptist church take actions other than the offering of warnings and encouragement. (See the description of "Church Discipline" given in the "Church Membership" chapter of this manual.)

Liberty of Thought and Freedom of Conscience in Context: Liberty is Not License

For Baptists and Seventh Day Baptists, liberty is not license. Scripture, the covenant community, the Holy Spirit, and reason are the boundaries within which Seventh Day Baptists seek to exercise the principles discussed above. These four boundaries² are safeguards which help prevent individual "liberty of conscience" from becoming license.

1. Scripture. "We believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and is our final authority in matters of faith and practice" (Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Belief). In seeking answers about right belief and right behavior, the ultimate authority to which the believer may appeal is the Bible. Among Seventh Day Baptists, the Bible is the agreed upon standard for evaluating doctrine and lifestyles.

2. The Covenant Community. A person joining a Seventh Day Baptist church is joining a covenant community and solemnly agrees to live up to the responsibilities laid out in its covenant. This is not a covenant of the denomination or of any association of churches. Therefore, the individual member is not directly accountable to the denomination or to associations of churches for his beliefs or behavior, but rather to the local church. However, in joining in the covenant of the local church, a person is agreeing to the limitations placed on individual liberty which are part of the covenant commitments and is agreeing to be subject to the discipline of that church, with respect to the fulfillment of those commitments. At the same time, the covenant community of the local church (of which the individual is a member) is itself accountable in a limited way to the regional association of churches and to the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, in which it holds membership. At the time it was received into membership of the General Conference, for instance, an examination was made of its covenant, statement of faith and its constitution and bylaws to ensure

²Pastor Kenneth Chroniger identified these boundaries in a presentation to the 1995 S.D.B. Pastor's Conference.

that these were in harmony with the beliefs and polity of the Conference. Radical departures from the beliefs and practices a local church represented to be its own at the time it was welcomed into the Conference might necessitate a review of its membership status.

3. The Holy Spirit. “But when he, the Spirit of truth, comes, he will guide you into all truth...” (Jn. 16:13). The Holy Spirit has an active role in the life of the individual believer and the congregation of believers to bring out the truth of Scripture.

4. Reason. Jesus reminded his followers: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and *with all your mind* and with all your strength” (Mark 12:30, boldface added). It is with their minds that believers, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, can grasp the truths and life-implications of Scripture. It is reason which allows them to study, compare, evaluate and draw conclusions about the teachings of the Bible in this process.

The Autonomy of the Local Church and the Association Principle

As mentioned in their Statement of Belief, Seventh Day Baptists, “practice the autonomy of the local congregation.” This means that each congregation has complete authority over, and responsibility for, its own affairs (within the laws of its state and nation). No group, denominational or otherwise, is recognized as having authority to dictate how a local Seventh Day Baptist church should be run. Each congregation determines its own worship, programs and organization. Baptists acknowledge no head of the church other than Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:23). Furthermore, they give allegiance to God when there is a clear and unavoidable conflict between his authority and the authority of secular governments (Acts 5:29). However, the autonomy of the local church is held in tension with a similarly Scriptural and Baptist tradition of local churches working in association with other churches to better accomplish the work of the Kingdom.

The fact that the church is universal as well as local implies that no local church exists in isolation. Scriptural examples abound, of churches consulting one another (Acts 15), working together (2 Cor. 8), recognizing the ministry of those from other churches who come to strengthen and encourage them (1 Thes. 3:2), and supporting workers who minister beyond the boundaries of their own local congregations (Phil. 4:15-18). All of this is in recognition of the fact that the NT church was more than just, “the church at Corinth,” or “the church of the Thessalonians.” At the same time, it was simply, “the church” (Eph. 1:22-23, Eph. 3:21, and Col. 1:24-25 clearly refer to the universal church, not any particular local church).

Congregational Polity

Many of the principles discussed in this and the previous chapter demonstrate that congregational self-government is the form of church government (or “polity”) which has the greatest support in the teaching of Scripture. Equality of the members of the body of Christ, Christ’s headship of his body, and the teaching about the priesthood of all believers support the idea that the congregation ought to rule itself, and not be dictated to by a single official or committee. However, congregational polity is found in Scripture as a broad concept and must be understood as such. Seeking a detailed organizational model for a “New Testament church” in Scripture is impossible for several reasons. Forms of organization were evolving, rather than fully developed, so officers and procedures were adopted which fit the growing needs of the churches (Acts 6 & 15). Also, the

details given about these forms of organization are sketchy. For example, those who argue that local churches today should have multiple elders, rather than a single pastor, can point to the many plural references to “elders.” But, on the other hand, it is just as likely that the “elders of the church” which Paul summoned from Ephesus (Acts 20:17) were leaders of many individual house-churches in that large city, rather than the multiple elders of a single congregation. Scripture leaves room for plenty of flexibility in developing specific methods for implementing broad principles like congregational polity.

While the details are limited, it is clear that the early church functioned according to congregational polity. Even during the time of the uniquely authoritative apostles (who laid hands on those ordained, for instance) final decisions were still taken only with approval of the church as a whole. It was the church which had authority to decide theological issues (Acts 15:22) and cases of discipline (Matt. 18:17) and to send missionaries (Acts 13:1-3) and receive their reports (Acts 14:26-27). The basis for this authority was the promise of Jesus himself to be present and guide even two or three believers in determining the will of God (Matt. 18:20).³ Scripture also denies that believers are to be dependent on any spiritual “father” (Matt. 23:9) or bossed around by those serving as pastors (1 Pet. 5:2-3). Though such leaders have authority (Heb. 13:17), it is not absolute. It is to be exercised with accountability to the congregation as a whole (which originally confirmed the call of such leaders). Even such anointed leaders were not a law unto themselves (1 Tim. 5:19-20).

Baptism and the Lord’s Supper

Baptists and Seventh Day Baptists perform marriages, dedicate infants (and their parents) to the Lord⁴, and conduct funeral services. However, they recognize only two church ceremonies as given to the church by the direct command of Christ: baptism and the Lord’s Supper (or “Communion”). Seventh Day Baptists have referred to these as “ordinances” because they were “ordained” (i.e., instituted, established) by the Lord (Matt. 28:19, 1 Cor. 11:23-26), with the expectation that the church would observe them. Seventh Day Baptists have also found the term “sacraments” meaningful in referring to baptism and the Lord’s Supper because these deeply meaningful observances both “call to mind” the sacrifice of our Lord, and provide opportunity for an especially sacred and close fellowship with him. With other Christians, Seventh Day Baptists have defined *sacrament* as, “an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace.”

Baptists hold to believer’s baptism by immersion. According to Acts 2:41, when Peter preached the gospel, it was, “those who accepted his message” who were baptized. It was only after Philip told the good news to the Ethiopian (Acts 8:35) that the Ethiopian was baptized. He must obviously have believed it (and have heard from Philip about the appropriateness of baptism for those who do), or he would not have requested baptism (Acts 8:36). That is the natural order: believe the gospel, then request baptism. However, profession of belief in Christ, evidence of the new birth such belief brought, and baptism, sometimes coincided. So it would not be wrong to allow a person to be baptized immediately upon profession of faith in Christ today, but Seventh Day

³“When Baptists, therefore, advocated a congregational form of church government... they believed that a congregation of committed and informed Christians, led by the Holy Spirit, could be a ‘sensitive and delicate instrument’ for seeking out the will of God. They did not consider congregational decisions infallible in declaring God’s will. They believed that full participation of the members would provide a check against the common tendencies to self-interest and the limitations of human knowledge.” Norman H. Maring and Winthrop S. Hudson. A Short Baptist Manual of Polity and Practice (Valley Forge: Judson Press, 1965), p. 13.

⁴ For a discussion of this practice, see "Dedications of Infants and Parents" in the "Church Ministries" Chapter, below.

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Baptists have generally not done so. They have usually allowed time for new believers to be instructed in the meaning of baptism, so they will be able to enter fully into the expression of its symbolism. Baptism as a mere ritual accomplishes nothing. Immersion beneath the surface of the water and the raising of the candidate back above its surface are the only actions which fulfill the Scriptural symbolism of burial and resurrection (Rom. 6:4). Baptism symbolizes being united by faith with Christ, in his death and resurrection. It also symbolizes (in a personal way) that a believer's old life (apart from Christ) is now dead and buried, and a new life is just beginning (2 Cor. 5:17). Although Seventh Day Baptists have always upheld the importance of baptism as a witness to having accepted Christ, they have never taught that baptism saves a person or is essential to salvation itself (as in "baptismal regeneration").⁵ No one is saved by "righteous things" they have done (Tit. 3:4-6), but solely by God's grace, through faith (Eph. 2:8-9). This is just as true of receiving the Lord's Supper as it is of receiving baptism.

Seventh Day Baptists hold the "memorial" or "remembrance" view of the Lord's Supper; that is, they believe the Supper commemorates Jesus' death (1 Cor. 11:24-25), and deny that it "re-creates" his sacrifice or that his "real body and blood" are somehow present in (or near) the bread and cup themselves. They believe the Lord is present, and in fellowship with his people (Matt. 18:20; 28:20), but not in a way that is localized in the physical objects (the elements) of Communion. Such an experience is far from a "bare memorial," and what it re-creates is the fellowship Jesus' first disciples shared with him in the upper room. It is also a symbolic expression of the oneness of believers, in Christ (1 Cor. 10:17).

⁵ "Let none be so ignorant, as to think baptism by water is the putting away of the filth of the flesh, or atones for sin... only being a figure of the resurrection of Jesus Christ, it is still Jesus Christ only can take away our sins, by his power and the virtue of his doings." Henry Clarke, A History of the Sabbatarians or Seventh Day Baptists, in America Containing Their Rise and Progress to the Year 1811, with Their Leaders' Names, and Their Distinguishing Tenets, etc. (Utica, NY: 1811), p. 115. In addition Clarke, on p. 121, speculates that certain superstitions may even have been introduced into the church, "from the idea that water baptism was essential to salvation."

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A Sabbathkeeping Church

Seventh Day Baptists are different from other Baptists in that they “remember” (Ex. 20:8) to keep the seventh day Sabbath holy. They are different from many other Sabbathkeeping churches in that they approach the Sabbath without the legalism that characterizes these other churches. This is true in two respects: they do not have a detailed set of rules for Sabbath conduct, and they have never viewed Sabbath observance as a means to salvation or a prerequisite for salvation.

Accountability to God is the Context for Observing the Sabbath

Seventh Day Baptists do not tell their members how to keep the Sabbath. It is expected that individuals and families will take the Scriptural principles of Sabbath observance and make their own application of them to their lives. This is in keeping with the Seventh Day Baptist commitment to freedom of thought under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and liberty of conscience. Seventh Day Baptists encourage people to study the Scripture, and then depend upon the work of the Holy Spirit in their hearts to help them apply the Scripture to the situations and challenges they face as Sabbathkeeping Christians. This is not to say that pastors may not preach about how to keep the Sabbath, or that local churches may not choose to exercise discipline when obvious Sabbathbreaking occurs, or that the denomination may not review the membership status of churches who cease observing the Sabbath. It is to say that Seventh Day Baptists seek to leave the outworking of a Sabbath commitment in the hands of the individual. It is a matter between the individual and God.

Love is the Reason for Observing the Sabbath

Seventh Day Baptists believe the Sabbath is important to God; and therefore, it ought to be important to all who love God. However, they also believe that Sabbathkeeping does not contribute anything to anyone’s salvation. No one is saved by keeping any of the Ten Commandments. The Apostle Paul says, “no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law” (Rom. 3:20). It is by God’s grace, through faith in Christ, that people are saved (Eph. 2:8-9).

Though no one is saved by observing the Sabbath, Jesus said, “If you love me, you will obey what I command” (John 14:15, and see v. 21). Chief among Jesus’ commands were the two which summarized the “Law and the Prophets” (the entire OT)¹ as love for God and love for one’s neighbor (Matt. 22:34-40). Love for one’s neighbor “sums up” the last six of the Ten Commandments (Rom. 13:8-10), just as love for God sums up the first four.² Therefore, Seventh Day Baptists insist that love for God (and for Jesus) includes keeping the first four Commandments, including the Fourth Commandment to “remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy” (Ex. 20:8).

¹ In v. 40, Jesus is using the two commands from the Old Testament Law as a means of summarizing the proper motivation for observing all of it--indeed, for observing all that the Old Testament as a whole teaches.

² Paul applies Jesus’ teaching specifically to the Ten Commandments, saying Commandments 5-10 (which deal with behavior toward others) are “summed up” by the command to “love your neighbor as yourself.” Correspondingly, it is fitting to understand Commandments 1-4 (which deal with behavior toward God) as summed up by the command to “love the Lord your God.” In neither case is the intention to replace the specific commands of the Law with generalized exhortations to love God or others. Paul’s characterization of Commandments 5-10 as “summed up” by the command to “love your neighbor” implies a kind of specificity for the latter command in the former ones, not a replacement of the former by the latter.

Disregarding this consistency between Jesus' commands and the Father's, some have taught that Jesus overthrew the Ten Commandment moral law of God. But Jesus' commands are not in opposition to the Ten. They provide a basis for summarizing the Ten, in terms of the deeper heart-motivation which the New Covenant enables believers to show in keeping them. A summary does not contradict what it summarizes, and neither does Jesus' command to love God contradict those first four Commandments by which that love for God was to be shown. To set the Son's commands against the Father's is to reject the direct teaching of Jesus, who said, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching... These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me" (John 14:23-24).

That Jesus' commands and teaching draw out the deeper intentions of God's Old Testament moral laws, rather than contradict or "abolish" them, is made abundantly clear in Matthew 5:17-19. Drawing out their deeper meanings (lit. "filling them full of meaning") is what the word *fulfill* means in this passage. (It cannot mean "abolish" because Jesus has said that is not what he came to do.) To illustrate what he means by, "the least of these commandments" (v. 19), Jesus makes direct mention of several individual commandments from the Ten, as well as other moral commands from the Old Testament. He affirms their continued relevance, and the need to understand what God meant by them (as opposed to what the people had "heard said," v. 21, about them in the teachings of Jewish tradition). The New Testament letters reflect Jesus' respect for God's law. They affirm his teaching that love for God is shown by obedience to God's law, not disobedience (1 John 5:3, 1 Cor. 7:19).

It is foolish to "rely on observing the law" (Gal. 3:10) for salvation. But it is equally foolish to think salvation gives anyone the right to break God's law. The Apostle Paul asked, "Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? By no means!" (Rom. 6:15). Breaking God's law is what defines sin (1 John 3:4; and see Matt. 7:23, where "evildoers" is literally, "lawbreakers"). Seventh Day Baptists do not keep the Sabbath in order to be justified before God. Justification is by faith in Christ alone. Seventh Day Baptists keep the Sabbath to show their love for God and his Son, through their obedience. They do so, knowing God blessed the Sabbath (Gen. 2:3) and believing Jesus when he said that the Sabbath was given for the benefit of mankind ("the Sabbath was made for man." Mark 2:27).

The Sabbath was Created

The Sabbath is God's gift of time for the benefit of mankind. Though God's creation of the heavens and the earth was complete on the sixth day of Creation, there was yet one more thing to be created: the Sabbath.

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed in all their vast array. By the seventh day God had finished the work he had been doing; so on the seventh day he **rested** from all his work. And God **blessed** the seventh day and **made it holy**, because on it he rested from all the work of creating that he had done (Gen. 2:1-3, boldface added).

The Bible does not say what the first man and woman were doing on the seventh day of Creation, but that day would have been their first full day on earth. Their first awareness of God would be as the Lord of the Sabbath. For on this first Sabbath, God was at rest to enjoy his Creation and his relationship with humanity.

The Fourth Commandment Points Back

The Fourth Commandment points back to Creation as the origin of the Sabbath:

Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy (Exod. 20:8-11).

God's command was specific, not generalized. It was not just rest on one day each week which he commanded, but rest on a specific day of the week: the seventh day. What he said was: "the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God," (Exod. 20:10). The seventh day Sabbath belongs to God, and he expects people to remember it. It is the day on which God himself rested, and it is the day he blessed. It is holy because God "made it holy" at Creation. Mankind is to "keep" it holy by resting on it, following the example God set at Creation.

Jesus is Lord of the Sabbath

One of the clearest statements of Christ's commitment to the Sabbath is found in Mark 2:27-28, where he is addressing the Pharisees. They had been condemning him and his disciples for breaking their rules regarding the Sabbath: "Then he said to them, 'The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.'" Four things can be learned from this statement from the mouth of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

1. "The Sabbath *was made*." This is a clear reference back to Genesis 2, showing that the Sabbath was a part of the perfect creation order. The Sabbath has existed from the very beginning, as the final part of God's creation.
2. "The Sabbath was made *for man*." Right after the creation of man, God made the Sabbath. (See Genesis 1 and 2.) Jesus, through whom all things were made at Creation (John 1:3), says that the Sabbath was made with all mankind in mind. Therefore it was never intended to be the Jewish Sabbath, alone. When God created the Sabbath, there were no Jews, and the Sabbath was made holy before the law that was given to the Jews. Though the Sabbath became part of that law, it did not originate with it. It had been there from, "the beginning" (Gen. 1:1).
3. "The Sabbath was made for man, *not man for the Sabbath*." God had created the Sabbath for man's benefit, but the Pharisees loaded it down with so many rules that it became a burden, instead. Their redesigned Sabbath became more important to them than the human need God's Sabbath had been created to meet. It was as if God had created man to keep the Sabbath, rather than the Sabbath to meet man's need. So Jesus offers this word of correction, which is not a rejection of God's Sabbath, but of the Pharisees' version of it.

4. ***“The Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath,”*** means that Jesus Christ was, and is, the one who is in authority over the Sabbath. It is he (not man) who has authority to speak for God, in saying what the Sabbath is for, and how it should be kept. Jesus is also Lord over all the circumstances in which his people seek to keep the Sabbath. Therefore he can arrange circumstances to provide his people the opportunities they need to keep the Sabbath holy. This is God’s will, who wants the undivided attention of his people on the Sabbath, and will use the resources of his kingdom to make this possible.

Jesus’ life, death and ministry did not change God's purpose in giving the Sabbath as a blessing for mankind. Rather than teaching the Sabbath was to be abolished, Jesus sought to restore it's God-given purpose, just as he did with another of the Ten Commandments when he asked the Pharisees, “Why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? ...you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition” (Matt. 15:3,6). Seventh Day Baptists believe this must be the view of Jesus’ disciples, today. Sunday observance arose in church tradition since New Testament times. Sabbath observance is one of the commands of God. It must not be nullified for the sake of human traditions, no matter how well intentioned those traditions are.

Though the New Testament teaches that Jesus upheld the moral laws of the Old Testament, it also teaches that he freed his followers from the other obligations of the Law (Gal. 5:1-3; 4:9-11). Accepting such obligations in the context of placing believers back under the inferior Old Covenant (Heb. 8:6-7) would cause them to deny the Gospel (Gal. 5:2-4). Some Sabbathkeeping groups say the New Testament believer is obligated to observe the Jewish feast days, as well as the Sabbath. Seventh Day Baptists have denied this, insisting on the uniqueness of the Sabbath, and pointing to the specific teaching of the New Testament against such an idea (See below).

The Ten Commandments and other moral teachings of the Old Testament (Deut. 6:5, Lev. 19:18 – Cf. Matt. 22:34-40) have their permanence in the character of God, whose goodness is eternal and unchanging (Psa. 119:89-91, 144; Luke 18:19, 1 John 1:5 & 4:7-8). They deal directly with right and wrong, good and evil, and spiritual virtues like love, faith and hope. That is not equally true of the ritual and ceremonial aspects of the law of Moses.³ At the heart of them were the Temple sacrifices and feast days designed around them, by which Israel was cleansed from sin (Lev. 23:4-37). Though the Sabbath temporarily shared ritual offerings with these days, it was distinguished from them (Lev. 23:3-4, 37-38).

Believers today do not need to participate any longer in these rituals (Heb. 10:1-10; Gal. 4:10-11). The Law of Moses was, “only a shadow of the good things that are coming--not the realities themselves” (Heb. 10:1). In Christ’s sacrifice, the Passover lamb was offered once and for all time (1 Cor. 5:7, 1 Pet. 1:18-19); and a blood better than that of the bull and goat of the Day of Atonement was shed, ending the need for such sacrifices to ever be made again (Heb. 9:11-14, 24-26; Heb. 10:18). The ceremonial provisions of the law accompanying these have also ceased to be necessary: “They are only a matter of food and drink and various ceremonial washings--external regulations applying until the time of the new order” (Heb. 9:10). Believers today owe no obligation to such regulations, which are “weak and useless” (Heb. 7:18).

³ So a law like that in Lev. 19:19 (“Do not wear clothing woven of two kinds of material”) involves no action that is wrong in and of itself, but rather with an action to which symbolic meaning has been given. But laws like those in Lev. 19:11 (“Do not steal. Do not lie. Do not deceive one another”) involve actions that are, by nature, wrong. Laws of clean and unclean food also involve no actions that are wrong (in the sense of “sinful”) in themselves. Otherwise these laws would not have been revoked by Jesus (Mark 7:19).

The ministry of Christ as High Priest and mediator of a New Covenant has changed the law (“For when there is a change of the priesthood, there must also be a change of the law,” Heb. 7:12). The results can be seen in such places as Mark 7:19, 2 Corinthians 3:7-17, Galatians 4:8-11, and Galatians 5:2-4. The Sabbath was not changed, and was not just Jewish -- any more than monogamous marriage (Gen. 2:18, 24) or belief in one God.

Jesus Kept the Sabbath

In every area of life, believers look to Christ as their supreme example. This should also be true for Sabbath observance. Christ kept the Sabbath (“On the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom,” Luke 4:16), as did Paul (Acts 17:2) and Jesus’ other disciples (Luke 23:56; Acts 16:13). And yet the majority of Christians have chosen the tradition of man in Sunday observance.

Attempts have sometimes been made to characterize Jesus’ Sabbathkeeping as Sabbathbreaking, on the basis of a statement like the following: “For this reason the Jews tried all the harder to kill him; not only was he breaking the Sabbath, but he was even calling God his own Father, making himself equal with God” (John 5:18). But this verse is merely stating the opinion of the Scribes and Pharisees, who were angry because Jesus had healed a man on the Sabbath. Such an action was in the true spirit of God’s Sabbath Commandment because the Sabbath was given for the good of mankind. But Jesus’ action was against the man-made rules of the Pharisees, so they declared it to be unlawful. Jesus had not broken God’s Sabbath. He had broken theirs.

By healing the man, Jesus had actually been doing God’s work. Because God had rested, “from all the work of creating that he had done” (Gen. 2:3) when he instituted the Sabbath, that didn’t mean he had rested from all his other work. Both the Father and the Son were active in the works of love and mercy Jesus was doing. These were highly appropriate for the Sabbath. They show that Sabbathkeeping is not to be either a day of inactivity, or a day for observing a set of legalistic, superficial taboos. By his own example, Jesus taught that (while resting from labor) the Sabbath is a day for doing good (“it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath,” Matt. 12:12). The Jewish religious leaders could not understand this, so they would frequently accuse Jesus of breaking the Sabbath. Jesus once rebuked them for these false accusations, telling them, “If you had known what these words mean, ‘I desire mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not have condemned the innocent” (Matt. 12:7).

Freedom in Christ Ought to Characterize Sabbath Observance

“It is for freedom that Christ has set us free” (Gal. 5:1). Freedom ought to characterize the life of the believer in Christ, including his observance of the Sabbath. In the Bible such freedom does not mean freedom to disobey God (for that would be slavery to sin, not freedom -- Rom. 6:15-18, 1 Pet. 2:16). It means freedom to serve God with a clear conscience (Heb. 9:14) because Christ has atoned for sin. It means freedom to obey God’s law, not as something imposed on an unwilling heart, but as the loving offering of a renewed and willing heart (Jer. 31:33; Gal. 5:13-15; Rom. 7:6; 2 Cor. 3:3). This is the kind of Sabbath observance Seventh Day Baptists seek to practice.

The Sabbath is designed as a day of freedom. During the twenty-four hours from sunset Friday evening to sunset Saturday evening, God temporarily suspends the curse of labor (Gen. 3:17-19). Labor is a curse only in that it fills the hearts of mankind with worldly cares and distracts them from fellowship with God. On the Sabbath God invites people to lay aside their labor (to “cease” from it, which is what the Old Testament word for rest means⁴). He invites them to clear their schedules and give their undivided attention to him. What he offers is release -- even from the sense of guilt "workaholics" may have for not working during those hours. Rest from labor is possible on other days of the week, but God’s long-standing invitation to mankind is for rest on the seventh day. Symbolically, it reminds them how completely he has provided for their needs in all that he created in six days. The seventh day is an opportunity to stand aside with God, and thankfully affirm that his provision is “very good” (Gen. 1:31).

Jesus is in the business of setting people free from anything that is a barrier to intimate fellowship with him, and with the Father (John 14:23). As Lord of the Sabbath, he sets his people free not only from Sabbath legalism (like that of the Pharisees), but also from the worry and concern which giving up a day of labor might cause them. As they put their faith in him as Lord, all the resources of his kingdom are available to them, freeing them to give their undivided attention to God. God has provided the Sabbath because he loves people and knows they need it. He would not ask them to do what is impossible. He has always provided enough to enable people to keep his Sabbath (Exod. 16:29), even when it falls in the middle of the critical planting or harvesting season (Exod. 34:21). Seventh Day Baptists keep God’s Sabbath holy by ceasing to work at earning a living on it, that they might spend time with God, because they love him. The Sabbath is the only day identified in Scripture as the “LORD’s day,” and he offers to share it with mankind, as a day for delighting in him:

“If you keep your feet from breaking the Sabbath and from doing as you please on my holy day, if you call the Sabbath a delight and the LORD’s holy day honorable, and if you honor it by not going your own way and not doing as you please or speaking idle words, then you will find your joy in the LORD, and I will cause you to ride on the heights of the land and to feast on the inheritance of your father Jacob.” The mouth of the LORD has spoken (Isa. 58:13-14).

⁴ "Cease, desist, rest... The basic thrust of the verb is, when transitive, 'to sever, put an end to,' and when intransitive, 'to desist, to come to an end.' This may possibly indicate that the Sabbath is the day which 'puts a stop to' the week's work," *shabat*, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, Vol. 2, ed. R. Laird Harris, assoc. ed. Gleason L. Archer, Jr. and Bruce K. Waltke (Chicago: Moody, 1980), p. 902.

Seventh Day Baptists Seek to Make the Sabbath Special

Seventh Day Baptists recognize that the Sabbath is much more than just “the right day to go to church.” They seek to draw upon its blessing by making it special, trying to emphasize the “do’s” of keeping the Sabbath rather than the “don’ts.” Though their practices of Sabbath observance vary from individual to individual and from church to church, some of the principles that have guided them are summarized below:

1. The Sabbath is to be kept holy (Exod. 20:8)--that is, devoted to God and used in accordance with his purposes for the day. Especially appropriate for the Sabbath is setting aside mundane, day-to-day activities and choosing those which emphasize building a believer’s relationship with God and his people. Twenty-four hours of religious activity is certainly not necessary, but most Seventh Day Baptists find that many of the ordinary tasks of life (like mowing the lawn or doing the laundry) can easily be kept for another day!
2. The Sabbath is to be a day of rest, of cessation from the daily grind of labor (Exod. 20:9-11). The rest and relief which the Sabbath offers has physical, emotional and spiritual dimensions. A Sabbath afternoon nap is restful, but so is quiet time in prayer, and simply having a break from other responsibilities in order to spend time with family and friends.
3. The Sabbath is to be a day for gathering together with the people of God (Lev. 23:3). It is a day for fellowship, study and worship, together with other Christians.
4. The Sabbath is to be a day of delight, as God’s people find their joy in the Lord (Isa. 58:13-14). It is a day to look forward to, when activities may be planned which are eagerly anticipated. This delight is not so much in pursuing things which please in a worldly way, but in pursuing what is delightful to God. On the first Sabbath day, God must have shared with his people his delight in what was “very good” in all of his Creation (Gen. 1:31).
5. The Sabbath is to be a day for doing good (Matt. 12:12). Jesus asked the rhetorical question, “Which is lawful on the Sabbath: to do good or to do evil?” (Mark 3:4). The obvious answer was supplied by his own actions on that day. The Sabbath is a day for doing good – for visiting the sick and the elderly, for activities which encourage others by demonstrating God’s love to them.
6. The Sabbath is to be a personal sign between the LORD and his people that he is their God (Ezek. 20:12,20). Just as the giving of a wedding ring, and the wearing of it by its recipient, symbolize a deeply personal relationship, so does the giving and keeping of the Sabbath.
7. The Sabbath is a time for acknowledging God as Creator and Redeemer. Its seventh day rest points to Creation (Exod. 20:11), and its association with the deliverance from Egypt (Deut. 5:14-15) identifies God as his people's Redeemer.

A Seventh Day Baptist Church

Seventh Day Baptists believe that following Christ's example and obeying God's will include keeping the seventh day Sabbath holy. Therefore they do not hesitate to speak about the Sabbath, as they seek to fulfill their mission for Christ in the world, recognizing the need to proclaim, "the whole will of God" (Acts 20:27).

The Congregation

Seventh Day Baptists believe that the church is the universal body of Christ, which is made visible in local congregations of baptized believers, joined by covenant and common beliefs. As an expression of the body of Christ, the local congregation is an assembly of equals: each voice may be heard, each life bears its influence. Some members may be set apart to special tasks by ordination, but this does not confer special sanctity or special class. Some may be elected or appointed to an office, but this does not give them autocratic authority. The congregation is a gathering of equals organized to fulfill the purposes God gave them when he made them members of one body.

The local church covenant expresses the unity of purpose which unites the congregation in the commitments and mission which make them the church. To be without a covenant is to be without a local church.

The local church statement of faith expresses the unity of belief which sets the congregation apart from the world (Jn. 17:17) and is the basis of the message they proclaim (2 Cor. 4:2, Rom. 15:5-6). Reflecting a commitment to the individual's freedom of conscience and liberty of thought under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, Seventh Day Baptist statements of faith are usually brief. This is also true of the denominational statement, which is prefaced by these words: "The following statement is not intended to be exhaustive, but is an expression of our common belief, which is derived from our understanding of Scripture." The denominational statement is a standard of common belief used by General Conference in the accreditation of Seventh Day Baptist pastors and the acceptance of new churches into Conference membership.

Most Seventh Day Baptist churches have their own statements of faith, which may differ from the denominational one in two ways: either by affirming additional beliefs, or by stating the same beliefs in more detail. Such variations are normal to the way Baptists tolerate individual differences, when those differences do not contradict (or undermine) the expression of common beliefs which the Conference has identified as reflecting its identity. Local church statements of faith have two purposes. They give applicants for membership the opportunity to affirm their unity with the congregation in its identified common beliefs, and they serve as concise outlines of basic Christian teaching for instructing new converts and the young.

As a denomination, Seventh Day Baptists do not use their statement of belief to impose authoritarian doctrine on all members. The statement doesn't function as a tool for creating a uniformity of beliefs on every right doctrine of Scripture. It serves as a confession or affirmation of the common faith shared by the churches. As such, it makes no attempt to give an exhaustive

treatment to every Scriptural doctrine. It's purpose is to express, in general terms, the beliefs which unite the churches and constitute the faith they proclaim together.

Covenant commitments and common beliefs create a strong glue for holding Seventh Day Baptists together in local churches and the denomination. Reflecting this truth, some early Seventh Day Baptist churches even included their statements of belief within their covenants. Covenant love and unity in the faith cannot be imposed. They can only be recognized, celebrated and proclaimed. This is the process by which individual believers find their places in a Seventh Day Baptist church.

A Balance Between Local Church Autonomy and the Association Principle

A local Seventh Day Baptist church is autonomous (self-governing). It organizes as it feels God leads it to organize. It adopts programs and procedures as it believes God directs. It responds to appeals, gives financial support, serves human need and does all it does by reason of its belief that, through prayer and dedicated labor, it is guided by the Holy Spirit. Thus, the congregation is responsible for organizing itself; it is responsible for the accomplishment of its mission; it is responsible for the development of a loving fellowship; it is responsible for outreach and service. In all these areas of activity, the local Seventh Day Baptist church is accountable, not to a higher organization or official, but to God alone. It is to God that the church reports. It is he who judges. Under the headship of Christ, and with accountability to God, the local church is responsible for itself and for its own work.

However, among Seventh Day Baptists, the local church's autonomy is conditioned by a commitment to the "association principle"--the principle that local congregations of like faith and practice should join together in different ways, to strengthen each other, carry on joint efforts and prevent themselves from living in isolation from the rest of the body of Christ. Just as individuals gather in churches to be strengthened in their mutual faith, ministry, and support for each other, so also do churches themselves gather into a larger body for mutual benefit. Just as individuals gather into churches and share their insights with the insights of all members, so local churches gather into larger groups in order to benefit from mutual discussion and correction. Just as individuals combine their efforts and seek to address social problems from a Christian perspective as local congregations, so do local churches. By uniting their efforts in the work of larger groups, an impact can be made on regional, national and worldwide problems. Therefore local congregations participate in "yearly meetings" with other congregations nearby, and in annual meetings of a larger, regional "association." They also hold an annual weeklong meeting of their national General Conference. In addition, the General Conference and some local churches participate in a limited number of ecumenical organizations.

Seventh Day Baptist churches are committed to seeking the proper balance between local church autonomy and the association principle. They are aware of the political overtones of some associations they might make with organizations in today's world. So they are wary of committing the denomination to positions which are too narrowly defined to represent a true consensus of Seventh Day Baptists as individuals and churches. For the same reason, they have also been reluctant to pass resolutions about specific issues of the day at their own gatherings. At the same time, Seventh Day Baptists have always had some involvement with other church groups, have sometimes formally adopted resolutions about issues of the day, and have always worked together in their own missions, Christian education and charitable agencies. Changing times and new

developments in government and public education make it necessary for Seventh Day Baptists to constantly evaluate the balance they wish to preserve between their interest in addressing the wider needs of society through associations, and their interest in preserving the voice and initiative of the autonomous local congregation.

The Seventh Day Baptist General Conference of the United States & Canada

The Seventh Day Baptist General Conference was founded in 1802 for the express purpose of concerted missionary endeavor.¹

General Conference is a voluntary association of churches united for mutual encouragement, aid, missionary work and education, which also serves to give the churches a common identity. It is the arm of the churches, through which they do those things which can best be done together. It provides a forum in which the concerns of all the churches can be expressed, and the accomplishment of their purposes sought. The General Conference is the servant of the churches, not a bureaucracy to be maintained for its own sake or an authority structure to be obeyed. It has advisory power only,² in its relationship with the churches. The situation was made absolutely clear in these words taken from the minutes of the General Conference sessions in 1907: "the true foundation of whatever power Conference has or may have over us lies in its ability to aid us in fulfilling our deepest mission as a people."³

Each Seventh Day Baptist church is expected to become a member of the General Conference. Without this membership, it is not considered ethical for a church to call itself a Seventh Day Baptist church. The local church applies for admission to membership in General Conference. The first step is to contact the Executive Secretary about requirements, documentation and an application. Membership is granted by vote of the delegates assembled in Conference session. (See the Appendix for details regarding General Conference membership.)

In the Conference sessions, each member church is represented by a number of delegates in proportion to its membership. Though the privilege of voting is extended only to these delegates, any Seventh Day Baptist may attend Conference sessions. In addition, delegates from fraternal organizations are welcomed, and the privilege of speaking on the floor of Conference is often granted to them, and to other recognized guests. Details of Conference organization and procedure may be found in *The Articles of Incorporation of the General Conference*, in its *Bylaws* (See the Appendix.), and in the minutes of the annual sessions, all of which are published annually in the Seventh Day Baptist Yearbook.

Because the General Conference in its annual session was unable to maintain a consistent oversight of the increasing number and complexity of the cooperative programs of the churches, a number of agencies were formed for particular purposes. Some of these agencies are governed by

¹ Don A. Sanford, *A Choosing People: The History of Seventh Day Baptists* (Nashville: Broadman, 1992), pp. 145-146. Referring to Elder Henry Clarke's proposal that the churches unite in missionary efforts, Rev. James Bailey adds: "This proposition evidently contemplates the special propagation of the Sabbath doctrine," Bailey, p.45.

² Article III of the Constitution states: "that all things transacted in such General Conference be done by way of advice, counsel or recommendation, and by no means to affect or alter the government or discipline of the churches, in their individual capacity," Clarke, p. 70.

³ J. Nelson Norwood, "The Power of Conference--It's Nature and Sources," (Delivered at Conference), The Sabbath Recorder, Vol. 63, No. 37 (Sept. 16, 1907), p. 1003.

independent boards of individual Seventh Day Baptists (often including representatives from the regional associations), and some are governed by boards elected by General Conference. The Missionary Society, which maintains offices in Westerly, Rhode Island, supervises home and overseas missions. The Board of Christian Education is responsible for the development of programs and materials for Christian education. It has its headquarters at Alfred Station, New York. The Women's Society coordinates the joint work of the women of the churches, and sponsors the Summer Christian Service Corps (SCSC) of college-age volunteers.

The Seventh Day Baptist Center, in Janesville, Wisconsin, houses the offices of several denominational agencies and provides office-related services to them. At the Center, the Tract and Communication Council publishes the *Sabbath Recorder* magazine, material for Sabbath promotion, and other denominational literature. The Council on Ministry helps educate and support pastors. The Historical Society maintains a library, an archive and research facilities there, and promotes interest in Seventh Day Baptists through the writing of books and articles about their history. The Board of Trustees of the Memorial Fund administers the invested funds of the denomination through its office at the Center.

The General Council of the Conference is made up of six members elected by General Conference (including the President, President-elect and four at large members), and six *ex-officio* members (executives of Conference boards and agencies). The Executive Secretary of the General Conference is appointed by the General Council (with the approval of General Conference) and serves as a non-voting secretary for the Council. Meeting twice a year, the General Council serves as a year-round coordinator of denominational work, and proposes policy, an annual budget and new programs, which are acted upon by General Conference.

Associations

In 1834, action was taken in General Conference session which led to the formation of regional associations of Seventh Day Baptist churches.⁴ These new organizations were founded upon principles of organization similar to those of the local churches, being autonomous, voluntary groups of churches united to accomplish stated purposes. Each association adopts its own constitution and bylaws and is responsible for amendments to them. Each adopts its own pattern of work and determines its own purposes. Membership in an association is by churches, and is voluntary. A church seeks membership by applying to the nearest association, displaying its covenant, statement of faith, and constitution and bylaws. Membership is granted by a vote of the delegates assembled in the association meeting.

The creation of these associations was a reflection of the pre-existing, informal connections between churches and was an indication of the common need for mutual encouragement felt by all. In accordance with Seventh Day Baptist belief in local church autonomy, the association has no governing power over its member churches. Its power, like that of the General Conference, is entirely advisory. However, the prayerfully sought decisions of the delegates deserve, and are given, careful consideration by the member churches. Though advisory in nature, they carry considerable weight. At times associations have helped settle differences that have arisen within or between churches.

⁴ Conference Minutes, SDB Yearbook (1834), p. 8.

In addition to giving mutual encouragement and aid to their member churches, the associations seek to work in those areas of evangelism and service where cooperative effort is most useful. They have sponsored retreats and summer camping programs for various age groups, local and regional evangelistic efforts, and studies aimed at improving the effectiveness of local church work. They have served as disseminators of information about Conference-wide programs and, at times, have sponsored active service in those programs. Associations, while not directly represented at General Conference by delegates, sometimes recommend actions for consideration at Conference. They also choose representatives to sit on the important Nominations Committee at General Conference.

The Seventh Day Baptist World Federation

In much the same manner as local churches have joined with each other voluntarily in the General Conference, USA and Canada, the General Conference has joined with other Seventh Day Baptist Conferences around the world in the Seventh Day Baptist World Federation. Proposed in 1964 and ratified in 1965, the World Federation relates to its member conferences in an advisory capacity similar to that adopted by the General Conference in its relationship with its member churches. Local churches do not affiliate with the World Federation. Wherever Seventh Day Baptist Conferences are organized, they become the unit of membership. The purposes of the World Federation are stated in its own constitution, as follows:

1. To provide increased communication among Seventh Day Baptist groups throughout the world;
2. To promote projects of mutual interest which will benefit from international cooperation, including arrangements for the handling of funds;
3. To stimulate friendship through periodic meetings of delegates or other such exchanges;
4. To coordinate mutual endeavors through the office of an executive secretary.

Relationships with Other Christian Bodies

Local Seventh Day Baptist churches are customarily involved in interdenominational efforts in their areas. Most of their pastors participate in the ministerial associations of the communities where they serve. The General Conference also participates with other Baptist denominations in the Baptist World Alliance, the North American Baptist Fellowship, and the Baptist Joint Committee on Public Affairs. This denominational participation is an extension of the association principle to include limited, joint efforts with fellow Christians who do not share the faith of Seventh Day Baptists completely, but do pursue purposes consistent with those of Seventh Day Baptists

How to Start a Church

Historically, as Seventh Day Baptist people migrated from England westward across the Atlantic in the seventeenth century, and across the American continent in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, they established a chain of churches. One chain extended from Rhode Island into New York, western New York, Ohio, Wisconsin, Nebraska, Colorado, and California. Another extended from New Jersey into Pennsylvania, West Virginia, Arkansas and Texas. It is accurate to speak of these groups of churches as “chains” because they were very closely connected. Seventh Day Baptists migrated in groups, often taking their churches with them, and always remaining in close contact, both individually and as a group, with the people left behind.

In the twentieth century cities have become the frontier, and Seventh Day Baptists have moved individually and as single families, rather than as groups. Some Seventh Day Baptist churches have been alert to their responsibility to offer help to Seventh Day Baptists who have been geographically separated from their home churches, assisting them in their spiritual lives and helping them gather new groups of Sabbathkeepers in their new locations. When their own members move, churches may wish to commission them to start a new group. The sending church should maintain contact by correspondence and personal visits. Pastors are sometimes sent on visitation missions to such members. It is important that when two or more Seventh Day Baptist families reside in the same area, they come to know each other, seek to offer each other spiritual fellowship, and consider meeting together regularly. (For assistance in starting new groups and establishing new churches, contact may be made with the Seventh Day Baptist Missionary Society.)

Organizing as a Branch Church

When one or more families have met together for a time and wish to organize into a group, the first step is to seek status as a branch church. A branch church is a church organization within the structure of another church (the sponsor church) which is already recognized by General Conference. Members of the branch church must become members of the sponsor church, and finances of the branch church are reported to the sponsor church. This relationship with the sponsor church provides the branch church with legal status (tax exemption) and standing in the General Conference. Copies of branch church minutes and financial statements must be filed with the sponsor church, in order for the branch church to function on a non-profit basis.

Pastoral service is the responsibility of the branch church. This pastoral leadership may be provided by a gifted lay member of the branch church or sponsor church, or by the pastor of the sponsor church. Branch church organization should be kept as simple as possible. At the beginning, the only organization needed might be a leader/pastor and a clerk/treasurer.

A branch church has its relationship to the General Conference through the sponsor church and is listed in the Seventh Day Baptist Yearbook as a branch of the sponsor church. Such a church looks forward to the time when it has grown strong enough to be organized as an independent Seventh Day Baptist church, recognized by General Conference.

Organizing as an Independent Church with Conference Recognition

After a branch church grows, it normally takes steps to seek recognition as an independent church. It must have achieved sufficient health and strength to minister as an autonomous and independent church. In the process of recognizing churches, General Conference uses two criteria of size to determine the potential for stability needed for such recognition. First, the branch church should have been meeting continually for one year, with an average worship attendance of at least 25, during one of the quarters of that year. Second, the branch church must have a membership of at least 25 from at least four separate households. When these and other indications of health and stability are in evidence, a preliminary meeting to consider matters of local church organization and General Conference recognition is recommended. Members of the sponsor church, as well as other Seventh Day Baptists, may be invited to advise the branch church in pursuing the goal of organization leading to recognition.

At this time, the church will probably wish to make application to the nearest association for membership. Since each association governs its own procedures, the church can usually apply for membership at the next association meeting, bringing a letter giving any specifics about the church that may be required by the association. If, as a branch church, the church has previously been known by other churches in the association, its membership request is usually handled quickly and favorably.

If a church springs up from a new movement of individuals into an area, or results from a whole group from another denomination coming to share the polity and beliefs of Seventh Day Baptists, the association may wish to delay acceptance of the application for membership until ties of fellowship and mutual understanding have been established and strengthened. The General Conference asks that a church applying for Conference membership be sponsored by a member church and meet certain minimum standards.¹ One of these is that the church have been in existence for at least a year. Neither the association nor the General Conference has authority over a local church. The larger fellowship in each case is for uniting local churches for mutual help and the accomplishment of certain ministries that can best be done together.

In preparation for General Conference recognition, the Executive Secretary should be contacted for guidelines and application forms. The following items are needed in preparation for membership in the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference:

1. A statement of factors leading to the church's organization
2. A copy of the minutes of the organizational meeting
3. A list of church officers
4. A copy of the church's covenant
5. A copy of the church's statement of faith²
6. A copy of the church's constitution and bylaws
7. Evidence that Sabbath services have been held regularly for the past year, with a statement that average worship attendance for one quarter was at least twenty-five
8. A document listing the present membership and showing that the church has the minimum twenty-five members
9. A letter of recommendation from a member church or association

¹ See *Membership Guidelines* in the Appendix.

² See the section, "Preparing a Statement of Belief," in this chapter.

Preparing a Church Covenant

Seventh Day Baptists are a covenant people. A covenant is a solemn agreement entered into by a number of people before God. It is the basic foundation of the local church. To be without a covenant is to be without a church. Therefore, the covenant of a Seventh Day Baptist church is a carefully worded document which states the responsibilities of members and their purpose for joining together as a congregation. Some covenants are written in language reminiscent of earlier days, and some are written in more modern language. Whatever the style, it is essential that care be taken to make the covenant a meaningful assertion of individual and corporate responsibility to which members may conscientiously subscribe. For further reference, see *Sample Covenants* and also *Faith & Order Committee Criteria for Evaluating Applications of New Seventh Day Baptist Churches* in the Appendix.

In order to serve its purpose in the church, the covenant must be visible, understood and used by the members. Below are some suggestions offered for accomplishing this:

1. Exposure---Increase the awareness among the Church members of the existence and content of the Covenant. Some attach it to the inside cover of a hymnal; others print it on membership cards. Candidates for Church membership should read and study the Covenant.
2. Signing – Make sure that every member has signed the Covenant. Keep a record of the signing. Applicants for membership should be required to sign the Covenant before being received into membership.
3. Reading – Public reading of the Covenant together at reception of new members, at Communion service, Church anniversary services, etc., is highly recommended.
4. Studying – Pastor’s training classes for membership candidates should include a study of the Covenant. Consider having a series of Sabbath School classes and/or sermons on the Covenant periodically.
5. Renewal – Some churches ask members to renew the Covenant periodically by reading it together and signing anew. If you are not satisfied with your present Covenant, get the members together and revise it to the agreement of all. It can be a uniting experience to talk and restudy the wording of the Covenant.
6. Reinforcing – The greater the conflict, the greater the love necessary to resolve the conflict. Admonish one another in the Love of God which constraineth us (John 17:26).³

³ Don A. Sanford, *Establishing a Church Covenant: An Historical Study* (S.D.B. Historical Society, 1995), pp. 15-16.

Note: some congregations have other ways to affirm the covenant than by an actual signing (such as by joining in to read it aloud, or by standing, etc.).

Preparing a Statement of Belief

Each local church must develop a statement of belief (some use the denominational statement of belief) in order to be recognized by General Conference. This statement should accurately describe the essential beliefs of the local church. It is fine to borrow language from other statements, but the church needs to make sure it really understands and “takes ownership” of the beliefs expressed by the borrowed language. For further reference, see discussion under the heading, “The Congregation,” in the chapter, *A Seventh Day Baptist Church*.

Preparing a Constitution

A constitution is almost always necessary to a church in meeting legal requirements for incorporation, holding property, maintaining tax-exempt status, and validating the pastor’s status as one legally authorized to perform marriages. Conference membership guidelines require a church to incorporate⁴ under the laws of its state or province. In addition, the church benefits from having established written procedures which any member may consult, and which guarantee democratic processes in the conduct of the church’s business. Nonetheless, simplicity is desirable, and a constitution (with its accompanying bylaws) should never be permitted to become cumbersome or oppressive. Since decisions about the way a church is organized ought to rest in the hands of its people, meeting the needs they have identified, it should not be thought necessary to adhere exactly to any standard forms. Models can be helpful, but more than one should be consulted,⁵ and the church should probably not just adopt even a good model “whole cloth,” without adapting it to local needs.

The church’s constitution is not just a necessary evil. It is the church’s contract with the public. As a means to legal incorporation, it also protects individual members, in case of a lawsuit. It is a founding agreement about the organization of the church which briefly describes its purposes, offices, requirements for membership, and regulations for the conduct of business (though the specifics of all of these are treated in the accompanying bylaws). A new church is well advised to consult with competent outside help in preparing a constitution and bylaws. The Faith and Order Committee of the denomination may be contacted for advice. It is the denominational group which gives preliminary evaluation to the documents of churches seeking Conference recognition.

Preparing Bylaws

A church’s bylaws contain most of the details of membership, meetings, duties, procedures, and the like. None of these detailed descriptions of the working of the church’s organization should appear in the constitution. A very good reason for this to be so, is that the bylaws can be amended quite simply, as small changes are needed from time to time in the way things are done. But changing the constitution may require re-filing of papers with the state in which the church is incorporated.

Bylaws are there for a reason, and should be consulted when unusual situations arise. They guarantee that the church acts according to the principles to which all have agreed. For further reference, see *Samples of Constitution & Bylaws* and also *Faith & Order Committee Criteria for Evaluating Applications of New Seventh Day Baptist Churches* in the Appendix.

⁴ "Organize under the laws of its state or province," *Membership Guidelines*, 1.,C. See the Appendix of this manual.

⁵ That’s why no single example is given here, and why more than one example is offered for study in the Appendix.

Disbanding a Church

When a congregation finds that its ability to survive as an independent church is seriously threatened, and dissolution is imminent, it should take ordered steps to dispose of its property in a responsible manner and formally disband. That is why it is essential to include provisions for such a state of affairs in the bylaws. Such matters should be carefully worked out before any emergency arises, and it should be clearly stated how the church is to proceed. Otherwise the church will merely drift out of existence, its property going into disinterested or unworthy hands, its decay bringing disgrace to the cause it represents when a formal disbanding would have brought honor to the history and accomplishments of the church. Sometimes it may be desirable to the remaining members of a declining church to continue for a time as a branch church, rather than as an independent church. In that case, the sponsor church would already be authorized to take action to dissolve the church, if that became necessary.

Churches may need to call on the General Conference for advice and assistance in handling the business decisions necessary for disbanding. Legally, the congregation needs to vote to disband, and the trustees need to take the actions necessary to accomplish this. If incorporated, the church needs to ensure that its actions are within the laws of the state.

A church's bylaws should be written in such a way as to prevent the situation from arising in which, though the church is no longer functioning, a handful of remaining members (or a single remaining member) refuses to take action to formally dissolve the church. Without such action, the church's assets are either no longer available for useful employment in the work of Christ's Kingdom, or are actually subject to being misused for other purposes (due to the disappearance of the accountability structure provided, formerly, through the regular business meetings of the church). Including the following provisions in the bylaws will prevent this undesirable situation from developing:

1. It should be stated that, upon dissolution of the church, the assets shall be transferred to a specific, named organization (such as the Seventh Day Baptist Memorial Fund, General Conference, etc.) which meets the requirements of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.⁶ It is best to name one or two other organizations as alternatives, in case the designated organization is unwilling or unable to receive the assets by the time the church is dissolved.
2. Both a percentage of members and a specific number of members should be used in defining a quorum for the transaction of business. Example: "A quorum shall consist of five active members or one third of the active membership, whichever is greater." This provision ensures that a certain specified minimum of members are necessary to transact business. One or two people cannot, therefore, constitute a quorum on the basis that they amount to "100%" or "50%" of the membership.
3. Some such language like the following should be included: "In the event the church has not been dissolved, but for the period of one year has not held a properly constituted business meeting (at which is present, a quorum of five active members or one third of the active membership, whichever is greater), the church shall be considered dissolved, and the

⁶ A good example is Article VII of the Articles of Incorporation of the Foothill Community Church, in the Appendix of this manual.

Manager of the Seventh Day Baptist Memorial Fund shall be empowered to distribute its assets in accordance with the provisions for dissolution contained in Article VII⁷ of these Articles of Incorporation." A variation of the above: "In the event the church has not been dissolved, but has not held public worship services at least once per quarter, for four consecutive quarters of the year, the church shall be considered dissolved...[continue as above]."

Members of a disbanding church should decide how they will now relate as Seventh Day Baptists to another church. Letters of transfer to another Seventh Day Baptist church should be issued. Those who live in distant communities may wish to relate to a church closer to their homes. The Director of Pastoral Services is responsible for helping members of a disbanded church find new church homes.

Letters should be sent to the association and the General Conference giving notice of the actions taken to disband a church so their records can be updated. The records of the church should be closed and forwarded to the Seventh Day Baptist Historical Society for safekeeping to be available to future generations as a witness to the life of the church.

There may arise an occasion when a member church of the General Conference is displaying conduct which is no longer in harmony with the distinctive faith and practice of Seventh Day Baptists. After careful research, and upon recommendation of the General Council, the corporation at its General Conference sessions may, by a two-thirds majority vote of the delegates present, remove a church from its membership rolls.

⁷ Reference should here be made to that section of the bylaws that names the non-profit organization designated to receive the assets of the church, upon dissolution. (Ideally, this sentence and other provisions for dissolution should be included in the same section of the bylaws.)

Church Membership

To join a Seventh Day Baptist church is to accept the responsibilities of its covenant. Normally, a covenant will include commitment to Christ, to the word of God, to the Sabbath, and to the body of Christ and its work in the world. When such commitments are taken to heart, God uses the members of the covenant community to mold one another into the church he wants them to be.

Church membership gives an individual believer many opportunities to join with other believers in fulfilling the purposes of the church (See Chapter One, *A Christian Church*). That includes participation in its institutional tasks, as well as sharing in the worship and fellowship of the congregation. Among such tasks are the calling of a pastor, election of officers and deacons, ordination of pastors and deacons, and the discussion and resolution of the many issues which come before the church. Members are encouraged to participate fully in the work of the church, serving on committees and voting on all motions in business meetings,¹ that the church might truly function as the Body of Christ.

Requirements

Membership in a Seventh Day Baptist Church is offered to those who are considered to have reached an age of understanding and who meet the requirements outlined below. In the spirit of Christian brotherhood, fellow believers who do not meet these requirements are encouraged to seek a church home among other Christians whose convictions and practices better match their own.

- 1. Affirm a Christian conversion.** The New Testament teaches that one should have a change of heart, giving evidence of having accepted Christ as Savior, before being admitted to the Body of Christ. This is not to suggest that everyone must have an experience like Paul's on the road to Damascus, or that there must be a "sameness" in everyone's conversion experience for it to be valid. With an appreciation for human differences, Seventh Day Baptists recognize varying kinds of conversion experiences. However, before becoming a member of a Seventh Day Baptist church, a person must have experienced a religious awakening resulting in the deliberate choice to follow Christ and seek his righteousness.
- 2. Publicly profess the intention to follow Christ.** Those desiring to unite in fellowship with Christ's disciples should be willing to make a public profession of their faith in Christ (Rom. 10:10), and their intention to follow him for the rest of their lives. It is ordinarily on the basis of this public profession, the members' acquaintance with the person, and the confirmation given by the pastor, deacons or a membership committee, that the church accepts a candidate for membership's claim to a change of heart. When a person desires to transfer membership from another Seventh Day Baptist church, a letter from that church affirming "membership in good standing" is helpful in confirming the sincerity of that person's Christian commitment. However, it is not unusual for a church to require everyone seeking membership to come before the church and speak for themselves, briefly making their request and affirming their commitment to Christ, in person. Attendance at a church membership class and/or discussions

¹ Note restrictions, however, on those who hold "Associate Membership," as discussed later in this chapter.

with the pastor or deacons may also be required in ensuring the candidate's understanding of discipleship as practiced by the church (and the church's understanding of discipleship as practiced by the candidate!).

- 3. Have been baptized by immersion.** Among Seventh Day Baptists, baptism is viewed as a necessary step of discipleship for anyone seeking to follow Christ (Matt. 28:19). On the day of Pentecost the converts followed up their repentance and faith with baptism, which was part of joining the other disciples (being, "added to their number," Acts 2:41). Seventh Day Baptists have held to the same elements of church membership, requiring believers' baptism by immersion for anyone joining the church.² However, they do not believe that it is necessary to be baptized by one of their own ministers in order to satisfy this requirement. Neither do they believe that baptism needs to be repeated, if it was done according to Scriptural standards (believer's baptism by immersion as a testimony of faith in Christ). When that is the case, therefore, they accept the baptism of those coming from other churches.
- 4. Observe the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath.** Seventh Day Baptists receive into membership only those who keep the Sabbath, as did Christ and his apostles. They have sought to treat with courtesy those who differ with them on this point, and in every way possible, they have creatively sought to fit into the life of the communities where their churches are located; but they have not apologized for holding that Sabbath observance is a significant part of Christian discipleship, and they expect their members, personally and publicly, to keep the Sabbath.
- 5. Affirm acceptance of the local church covenant.** By joining a Seventh Day Baptist church, a person enters into covenant relationship with the other members; that is, a person agrees to accept the responsibilities and purposes of that church which are identified in its covenant, and joins a community of others who have done the same.
- 6. Affirm agreement with the local church statement of belief.** Each local Seventh Day Baptist church writes its own statement of belief or takes the denominational statement as its own. This statement is important in defining the identity of the local church as Christian, Baptist and Seventh Day Baptist. It is also a public testimony to what the church practices and proclaims. Though it is usually neither very detailed nor very lengthy, the local church statement of belief is important as a reflection of the church's unity and identity. Therefore, those who seek membership in the church are required to be in agreement with its statement of belief.

Associate Membership

Some Seventh Day Baptist churches offer "associate membership" to believing and practicing Christians who wish to join with them in worship, fellowship and service, but who also wish to maintain membership in some other Christian church. Usually associate members are invited to participate in the business meetings of the church, except when votes are taken on reception of members, or on matters of belief or denominational concern. Sometimes they may not hold office, but are invited to serve on committees. Churches which offer associate membership may differ, significantly, in defining the status and membership requirements for associate members.

² Though rare exceptions have been made when, for medical reasons, a candidate could not be immersed.

In some cases, associate membership is only offered to members of other Seventh Day Baptist churches, who are normally expected to become full, active members by transfer in due course.

The concept of associate membership reflects a traditional Seventh Day Baptist desire to welcome as many people as possible into the loving fellowship of the local church. If there is anything a typical Seventh Day Baptist church seeks to avoid, it is to exclude (or be perceived as excluding) anyone. However, equally strong among Seventh Day Baptists has been the conviction that it is the existence of a covenant community of believers in a particular place which is the basis for a local church. Therefore, recognizing someone who is not in covenant relationship with the congregation as a member of the local church is almost a contradiction in terms. That is why associate membership, where it is offered, is very carefully defined and qualified.

Reception

In Seventh Day Baptist churches, members are received only upon the vote of the church at some regular or specially called meeting. Some churches maintain a committee, before whom candidates appear, and upon whose recommendation they are received. Others rely on the recommendation of the pastor or deacons. Others vote on the basis of a very informal examination of the candidate. In general, members are received into Seventh Day Baptist churches in three ways.

- 1. By Baptism.** If a candidate has not received believer's baptism by immersion, the pastor and/or the deacons usually offer instruction about the meaning of baptism, determine the readiness of the candidate to receive it, and then baptize the person. Sometimes the candidate for baptism is asked to make a brief statement to the congregation, requesting baptism and/or affirming a Christian conversion. After being baptized, the person is invited to consider church membership. Steps toward membership usually include a certain amount of instruction in the meaning of membership, and occasionally, an appearance before a membership committee or the board of deacons. Upon receiving any necessary recommendation by the pastor, deacons or a committee, candidates for membership are presented to the church, which hears their requests and votes upon them. In some cases, when a person requesting membership has not yet been baptized, a motion may be made to admit him or her to membership immediately upon baptism. It is customary for the pastor to lead in these matters, but every member of the church should expect to participate in the reception of persons into the covenant life of a Seventh Day Baptist church. Participating in the vote is more a way of adding the affirmation of the whole church to the candidate's reception, than it is a resolution of outstanding questions about the candidate's fitness. Normally the church is already assured of the candidate's fitness, by virtue of the completion of the process which led to the submission of the candidate's name.
- 2. By Letter.** A member of another Seventh Day Baptist church may be received into membership (by "transfer") upon presentation of a letter of recommendation and release from that church. In most cases the candidate presents this letter and his request to the church for consideration, and is not asked for further evidence of his Christian experience. When members are received from churches other than Seventh Day Baptist churches, a similar procedure may be followed, except that special care is taken in confirming the person's Christian experience, baptism and Sabbath

beliefs and practice. The example of a letter of transfer below is based on a form adopted by General Conference in 1923.³

Letter of Recommendation and Release

Seventh Day Baptist Church of _____
August 31, 1997

This is to certify that _____ is a member in full and regular standing of the Seventh Day Baptist Church of _____, and as such is recommended for membership in any other church of like faith and order.

Church Clerk

The individual to whom this letter is issued will be regarded as a member of this Seventh Day Baptist Church, subject to its rules of government, until due notice is received by the clerk of the reception of the former into some other church.

Note: The following blank form letter is to be sent with the above letter, that it might be detached and returned by the clerk of the church to which the letter is presented.

Letter of Notification

September 23, 1997

To the clerk of the _____ Seventh Day Baptist Church: This is to certify that on __[date]__, __[name]__ was received into full and regular standing as a member of the _____ Seventh Day Baptist Church.

Church Clerk

Please fill out the above and forward to the clerk of the church which is releasing this person.

- 3. By Testimony.** A Sabbathkeeping Christian who has been baptized by immersion, but for some reason has lost his membership (or has never held membership) in a church, may be received upon the basis of a personal statement of Christian experience. The church acts upon the request and statement in the usual way (by a vote, sometimes preceded by the recommendation of the pastor, deacons, etc.)

After the formal procedures for considering and acting upon a request for membership have been followed, it is customary for the new members to be welcomed into the church at a simple ceremony (often at an appropriate time during the worship service, right after a vote has been taken). Ordinarily this consists of a warm handshake from the pastor and/or other representatives of the

³ A Manual of SDB Church Procedure (Revised), comp. & ed. by William Lewis Burdick and Corliss Fitz Randolph (Plainfield, NJ: American Sabbath Tract Society, 1926), p. 31.

congregation that is called “the right hand of fellowship.” Some churches include a formal signing of the covenant register, as part of this ceremony. Often a prayer of blessing is offered, or a hymn relating to the fellowship of believers in Christ is sung. It is customary for candidates to be present at the time they are voted into membership, in order to answer questions if they are raised, but this is not usually a requirement.

Release

Seventh Day Baptists recognize four ways to release a person from membership:

- 1. By Letter.** When a member wishes to join another church of like faith and practice, it is customary to grant a letter of release (or “transfer”). In most churches the clerk is instructed to grant such a letter to members in good standing, upon their written request, after a vote by the church. Churches differ about whether to consider a non-Seventh Day Baptist church to be a church of “like faith and practice.” If asked to issue a letter, some will do so (particularly if the receiving church is Baptist), while others will simply drop the member’s name (perhaps with the note, “dropped at own request,” or “released to join another church”). Some churches grant a letter similar in form to the one below:

Statement of Membership

_____ is a member of the Seventh Day Baptist Church of _____,

having joined the church on _____. Upon his request he is released from membership in this church.

Pastor

Clerk

- 2. By Death.** When a member passes away, the clerk marks the name on the rolls in some manner (an asterisk* is often used), adding a note after the word “Deceased,” giving the date of death (and sometimes the place). With the advent of computer record-keeping, there may also be a place in the person’s record to include other death-related information (such as the name of the official presiding at the funeral, genealogical notes, etc.) Since computer records may be used for mailing lists, it is important to keep them current.
- 3. By Exclusion.** Since Seventh Day Baptists have never claimed to be “the one true church,” they do not generally excommunicate members who leave to join churches of other Christian denominations. However, cases may arise in which the church recognizes that a member is living in denial of (or even in contempt of) the obligations of the church covenant. In such cases it may be necessary to exclude a member, but only after a procedure is followed which is as complete and careful as that followed for admitting a member. (See “Church Discipline” below.)
- 4. By Dropping.** In a mobile society where people move often, some procedure is needed for keeping the roll books clear of the names of non-functioning members. When members move, it is best to encourage them to request a letter to another Seventh Day Baptist church within driving distance. Where this is impossible, but the member still wishes to be listed on the rolls, many

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churches ask that a certain minimal standard of participation in the life of the church be maintained. This may include some (or all) of the following: occasional attendance, the sending of an occasional offering, a pledge of prayer support, and the maintenance of some level of correspondence. Such a definition of “active membership” can usually be found in the church bylaws. If a member moves (or joins another church) and does not wish to continue at any level of active membership, but still wishes to be listed on the rolls, some Seventh Day Baptist churches agree to list the person as an “inactive member.” Such a member can usually be reinstated to full membership when circumstances merit. Designating a person as an inactive member is usually done by recommendation of the deacons (and sometimes, after a vote by the church). When a member, for whatever reason, withdraws from the church, and all invitations to return (or maintain even an “inactive” status) are unavailing, it is better to drop the person’s name than to hold him or her in a relationship of covenant responsibility which has been rejected. Names should not be dropped casually, but it is also detrimental to the concept of covenant responsibility not to do so when no true covenant relationship exists.

Privileges and Responsibilities

Among the privileges of church membership are participation in the social, business and spiritual meetings of the church; service through the church’s offices, committees and ministries; participation in the decision-making and prayer life of the church; and reception of the many benefits which come through the individual counsel, instruction and fellowship of the pastor, deacons and other members. The responsibilities of church membership are those listed in the church covenant.

In public life, covenant responsibilities usually include abandoning every form of sin and the appearance of evil, making business and social practices conform to the rule and spirit of Christ. In private life, they may include the duty to apply oneself to prayer, personal devotions, and the study of God’s word (that spiritual growth and understanding might occur in all areas of life). In church life, they are likely to include maintaining the public worship and ministries of the church, bearing the financial obligations of the church (and of the kingdom of God on earth), and keeping, “the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace” (Eph. 4:3). In personal relationships, both within and outside the church, covenant responsibilities include the duty of exercising Christian courtesy, charity and forbearance toward all – in spirit and in conduct. Covenant obligations encompass the identified ways members of a local church seek to serve Christ, their fellow believers, and their fellow human beings.

Church Discipline

Joining a church involves pledging to live for Christ, but it does not make anyone perfect. The church must therefore expect to face situations in which the sinful behavior of members becomes apparent, and may become an issue which the church needs to address. When the church decides the sinfulness of a member must be addressed, this must be done in the context of the grace of God and the love which the covenant enjoins all members to have for each other. The process for handling such situations is called the exercise of “church discipline” because its method is to discipline offending members. The goal of such discipline is to bring them to repentance and

renewed obedience to the Lord, help them seek reconciliation with those they may have wronged, and restore them to good standing as members of the church.⁴

Historically, Seventh Day Baptists exercised church discipline more frequently, as a regular part of local church covenant responsibility. At present, it happens only rarely. This is a role which may be necessary for the church, however, in extreme cases of sinful behavior. Therefore, when the reputation of the church, the cause of Christ, the unity of the congregation or the genuineness of the church's pledge to follow Christ are at risk, church discipline is still exercised.

Because church discipline is rare, a recognized procedure for exercising it does not exist in many churches. When Seventh Day Baptists find it necessary to carry out such a procedure, they seek to be guided by their commitment to Scripture, to democratic processes, and to simplicity of form. The whole matter must be handled in a way which inspires the trust and confidence of all; that is, the process must be conducted openly among the brethren, but in a way which offers protection from public exposure. Particular attention must be given to assuring that the rights of the individual are protected. The accused person is entitled to a clear statement of the charges, perhaps in writing, sufficiently in advance of the meeting scheduled to deal with them that he can prepare his response. He should be provided with an opportunity to face his accusers, and they should be expected to produce evidence (or other witnesses) to support their accusation. The accused should be allowed to prepare and present a defense, including the right to produce whatever witnesses he may wish to have speak, and the right to give testimony about any special circumstances which might pertain. All decisions should be made in a democratic manner and (above all) in an atmosphere of reason and Christian love.

Particular care must be exercised to eliminate the effect of any prejudice or revenge on the part of any person, in initiating, conducting and concluding the process of church discipline. It is possible to initiate this process under conditions which suggest to the world and all concerned that those pressing for discipline are prompted by personal motives of malice or revenge, and that the object is not to restore the erring or advance the cause of Christ, but to satisfy a personal dislike or grudge. The way this process is pursued and concluded may also suggest such unworthy motives. It is entirely foreign to the spirit of Christ to allow such motives to have any influence at all, or to appear to have any influence, in a matter of church discipline. Only harm can come from discipline under such circumstances. It would be a reproach to the church greater than the alleged offense, for the church to proceed without eliminating any grounds for suspecting such motives. If church discipline cannot be carried out with fairness, objectivity, and love, it had best not be attempted. The Scriptural counsel ought always to be foremost: "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently" (Gal. 6:1). Gentleness requires that as little as possible be done to publicly humiliate the accused. The admonition that it is, "you who are spiritual" who should lead in this process might also be taken into account when the church determines which members are to act for the church in the proceedings. Church discipline will not be effective unless most (if not all) of the members agree that the act was wrong. Before initiating steps of church discipline, the leadership of the church would be wise to discover what the rest of the church thinks about the case in question. Otherwise the case might be brought before the church, only to have half the members defend the person's actions.

⁴ Pastoral offenses are a special category of offenses calling for church discipline. See the discussion in the chapter, *Church Ministers*. Offenses by either the pastor or members of the diaconate may sometimes raise the question of the appropriateness of their continuation in office, quite apart from their restoration to the Body.

Civil law considers one innocent until proven guilty, and the followers of Christ cannot hold to a lesser standard without ceasing to be his followers. Every step in church discipline should be conducted with the utmost fairness, and with a view toward finding the truth and restoring the accused to good standing in the church, if proven guilty.

Scripture Passages Relevant to Questions of Church Discipline

Seventh Day Baptists have traditionally cited one passage of Scripture (Matthew 18:15-17) more than any other in seeking guidance about procedures for church discipline. The following clearly defined steps are outlined in the instruction Christ gives in that passage:

1. If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over.
2. But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that “every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.”
3. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

Relevant to church discipline are the ideas that discipline is the last step, not the first, when one member has sinned against another member; that the offended member ought to seek to “win over” the offender (as in restoring him to a relationship of Christian fellowship) rather than just to have the personal offense righted; that fairness in publicly charging someone with a sin he does not acknowledge requires presenting witnesses to “establish the matter”; that the church has an interest in the matter, and is given authority to deal with it; and that exclusion of an unrepentant member is a valid means of disciplining him (i.e., in pursuit of the goal identified in step 1). At the same time, Jesus’ teaching is here addressed specifically to situations in which there is a personal offense. But quite a few situations requiring church discipline do not fit in the category of one member sinning against one other member. There is also the question of whether every time a brother sins against one, it is necessary to “escalate” the matter by bringing the church into it. Most likely Jesus had a particular kind of situation in mind, in which the sin was one of special relevance to the health of the church as a whole. At any rate, applying this single passage too “woodenly” to every case of church discipline would be shortsighted. Jesus’ teaching in Matthew 5:23-24 makes it clear that he had more to say, even about the matter of personal offenses between brothers. He did not intend the responsibility for initiating reconciliation to rest entirely with the one who was offended. The offender was also responsible. Other passages of Scripture which are relevant to church discipline are 1 Corinthians 5:1-7a, 1 Corinthians 6:1-8, 2 Corinthians 2:5-11 and (in the case of pastoral sin) 1 Timothy 5:19-22 (perhaps also with 1 Corinthians 4:2-5).

Reinstating

The final disciplinary step the church might take with respect to an unrepentant sinning member is to remove that person's name from the membership roll. This would deny the person the right to vote in business meetings or hold office, and (depending upon the understanding of exclusion in the particular local church) might also imply exclusion from the worship and other activities of the church. Yet even these steps are taken for the purpose of urging the individual to acknowledge and correct the sinful behavior, that restoration to the life of the congregation might follow. Thus it might not be wise, loving or necessary to exclude the offender from the church's worship, study groups, service activities and fellowship. Permitting the person to continue in such of these activities as he is willing to, might both show the continued concern of the church for him, and provide the redemptive influence needed to encourage repentance.

It is possible that further evidence may be brought to light after discipline has been enforced that would demonstrate the innocence of the disciplined person. Therefore, exclusion for reasons of church discipline should never be considered irrevocable. The church should be as ready to acknowledge that it was wrong, as it was to pass judgment upon a wrong. If a church discovers it was in error in a case of discipline, it should do everything possible to amend the injury done. It is also possible that the excluded offender, quite apart from any ministry of the church exercising the discipline, might come to himself and wish to be reinstated. This possibility should always be kept in mind, and such a return greeted with joy.

An excluded member who has shown repentance and resumed a sincere Christian life may be reinstated to church membership upon request, by vote of the church. It is not considered Christian courtesy for a church to receive one who has been excluded from a sister church until that church has, itself, reinstated the person, or approved his coming under the discipline of the other church. The other church need not feel bound, of course, when it has been proved that the sister church was wrong to exclude the individual. If this was done without just cause, or if the member was treated wrongfully in the process, it ought to be the concern of both churches to see the matter set right, and relationships healed, in whatever ways that is possible.

Church Meetings

Among Seventh Day Baptists, the business meeting of the local church is the highest decision-making body in the church. Authority rests with the members themselves, gathered in such a meeting. This authority can be delegated to individuals and committees, but always with accountability to the congregation. As in most things, Seventh Day Baptists tend toward simplicity and informality in their business meetings. Given both the freedom of debate and the completeness of debate which is allowed at such meetings, it is sometimes remarkable how dignified the proceedings remain in both local church and General Conference business sessions. This is because Seventh Day Baptists have traditionally held a strong sense of their bonds of fellowship, along with their strong individual opinions.

Rules for Conducting Church Business

The purpose of rules accepted by a gathered people is to enable the enactment of business in as simple a manner as possible, and to ensure reasonable and democratic decisions. Rules for the transaction of business within the church are as necessary for its smooth and efficient operation as rules for society in general. They are no less necessary because the organization is a church. The commonly accepted standard for the conduct of business among Seventh Day Baptists, as among most other American organizations, is *Robert's Rules of Order (Revised)*. It provides help in planning an agenda, conducting business, and identifying those who will preside. Its rules serve to define and limit the extent to which the church may act. But it should not be followed in a manner prohibiting adequate and full discussion of all matters coming before the church. Nor should anyone insist upon a technical application of its rules where this violates the spirit and intent of Christian fellowship.

Every member has the same right as any other member in the business meeting to introduce business, offer explanations, make recommendations, and participate in discussion, except as limited in the bylaws. All members have, not only the privilege, but the duty to vote, unless a question that pertains solely to their personal interests is before the meeting. In such cases, a member should not only refrain from voting, but might best ask to be excused and withdraw from the meeting until the issue is settled. Before withdrawing under those circumstances, members should be allowed to state their own position on the issue, and to make such other comments germane to the question as Christian courtesy may suggest be received. Most pastors regard the issues of renewing their call and setting their salary as ones which require them to temporarily withdraw from the meeting.

Organizing a Meeting

The first requisite for conducting business is having a presiding officer and secretary. Ordinarily these and other officers will be carried over from an earlier meeting, and they will take charge of the meeting for the purpose of conducting the business at hand. If the group is meeting for the first time, the first order of business should be the selection of a presiding officer and secretary. This is customarily done by an election which may be as informal as to be effected by a show of hands or voice vote upon names previously offered in nomination.

Churches usually fix the number necessary to constitute a quorum (the number of persons required to be present to constitute a valid meeting¹) in their constitution or bylaws. In a church body, the quorum is usually a rather small percentage of the membership because of the difficulty in getting a larger group together for the special meetings which are sometimes needed. However, care should be taken to give sufficient notice of meetings which deal with matters of particular importance, and the attention of members ought to be drawn to the time and place of such meetings. Procedures for giving advance notice of all business meetings should be spelled out in the church bylaws. A quorum having been present at the opening of a meeting, it is assumed to continue to be present until adjournment, unless someone raises the question of a quorum. In the absence of such a question, the business transacted is legal, though the number in attendance may have declined to less than an official quorum. A meeting called to order at the appointed time may proceed without a quorum, provided that members arriving later complete the quorum and approve the business already transacted.

Officers of the Meeting

The presiding officer of a Seventh Day Baptist church may be called the “president,” “chairman” or “moderator.” The principal duty of such a person is to call meetings of the church to order and lead the members gathered in an acceptable “order of business” which allows all matters of concern to be addressed. The presiding officer’s handling of motions, discussion and votes is usually less formal than would be true in non-church meetings, but reasonable attention to *Robert's Rules of Order* is desirable, and the officer must be generally familiar with such rules.

The recording officer of a Seventh Day Baptist church may be called the “clerk” or “secretary.” The chief duty of this officer at the meeting is to keep minutes of the session, which must sometimes be read and approved by the meeting before it adjourns. The clerk also maintains an accurate roll of the members, which is sometimes needed during the business meeting. The clerk usually handles the official correspondence of the church and is accountable for the publication, as directed, of the actions taken at the meeting. The clerk is also ordinarily responsible for keeping a file of records and documents pertaining to the life and business of the church.

Order of Business

The usual order of business for a regular church meeting is as follows:

Call to order

Prayer

Reading (and approval, if not yet given) of the minutes of the last meeting

Pastor’s report (which, alternatively, sometimes follows the other reports)

Reports of officers and committees

Unfinished business

New business

Prayer/Adjournment

¹ See #2 under "Disbanding a Church" in the previous chapter ("How to Start a Church") for the suggestion: "Both a percentage of members and a specific number of members should be used in defining a quorum for the transaction of business."

Voting

The conduct of church business is by vote of the members present, each one being entitled to one vote. In some churches, proxies of those not present may be voted (when properly authenticated), but in certain states, such a procedure is prohibited by law. In most churches it is not practiced.

Voting may be by voice vote (“Aye” or “Nay”, “Yes” or “No”), by show of hands, by rising, or by secret written ballot. It is usual that a simple majority is required to pass any action of the church, but care should be taken to be sure that provisions of the constitution or bylaws be followed if a greater majority is required in some situations.

It sometimes happens that after a vote has been taken, the church wishes to make the vote unanimous. When the majority position has been clearly expressed, the minority may wish to establish a united position. Some member of the minority will then move to make the voting unanimous, and if there are no votes against such a motion, the action of the church becomes unanimous.

Motions

Seventh Day Baptists have tended to become quite informal in their handling of matters in their business meetings, which might be seen by some as improper. For instance, matters may be discussed at length before a motion is ever formulated, which is contrary to *Robert's Rules of Order*. But this procedure has the benefit of permitting a proposal to be refined without an extensive series of amendments. Parliamentary complexities, which frequently threaten to deteriorate into wrangling about procedure rather than content, are also thus avoided. Furthermore, information may be freely brought into the discussion, and clarification for individual members may be openly sought. The discussion can be guided by a capable presiding officer, whose duty it is to get adequate discussion and understanding without undue delay. Often a consensus may be reached before a motion is made, permitting the uncomplicated making and passing of the motion.

Care should be taken, in the handling of committee reports and recommendations, to see that the reports are promptly referred or received, and that recommendations are specifically brought to the attention of the meeting for passage, modification or rejection.

It is helpful for every church member (and especially, the presiding officer) to be familiar with parliamentary procedure, but it is not the purpose of this manual to go into much detail about it. Materials explaining parliamentary procedure are available in libraries and bookstores. It is essential, however, to remember the purposes of parliamentary rules. They are to facilitate business, to protect the rights of the minority, and to give expression to the will of the majority. Whatever the circumstances, in a church setting they are always to be administered graciously, efficiently, simply, and in a spirit of Christian fellowship.

Church Ministers

The Seventh Day Baptist understanding of ministry is based on the concept of the priesthood of all believers, according to which, all members are ministers of the Lord Jesus Christ. All are gifted to serve, and ministry is the responsibility of the whole Body of Christ. Differences in the way members minister does not reflect a difference in status. It reflects the great variety of ways God calls his people to serve him, and the varying levels of responsiveness (in the individual, and in the church as a whole) to his leading.

The Clergy and The Laity

Though the terms *clergy* and *laity* have a long history of use among Christians, it must be kept in mind that Scripture makes no distinction between a “first-class” and a “second-class” among the members of the church. Seventh Day Baptists emphasize that the ministry of the laity (non-pastors) has equal dignity with that of the clergy (pastors).

All believers are responsible before God to use their God-given abilities to minister in the worship, work and witness of the church. Therefore, as faithful stewards of their spiritual gifts, lay persons share this responsibility with pastors. The ministry of lay persons is as diverse as God’s call is different. In the formal ministry of the church, they may be officers, deacons, worship leaders, evangelists, counselors, Sabbath School teachers or organists (to name only a few of their roles). Informally, they may be the comforters of the sorrowing and the helpers and prayer warriors of the church. The importance of lay people is shown by the fact they provide the human foundation for the life and service of each local church. Not only do they carry out most of the church’s ministry, but they also gather in church meetings as a “congregation of equals” to deliberate and conduct the business of the church.

Though all believers are ministers, not all are pastors or deacons. Those serving in these capacities are a distinct group of ministers in the church. They are not more important than other ministers, but are set apart by virtue of the following:

1. Their ordination. Ordination recognizes two things about those who hold certain offices in the church: that their work has such potential for both good or ill to the health of the body that those who aspire to these offices must have their calling to them confirmed by the church; and that such persons must be examined to see if they meet specifically stated requirements (1 Tim. 3, Titus 1). Pastors¹ and members of the diaconate should not be viewed as a spiritual elite, but yet those who aspire to be pastors desire, “a noble task” (according to 1 Tim. 3:1) for which they must be qualified (because of being, “entrusted with God’s work,” Tit. 1:7). Members of the diaconate, as well, serve in a position sensitive enough that, before entering upon their work, “they must first be tested” (1 Tim. 3:10). Scripture warns against allowing anyone to serve in the pastorate who is unqualified (1 Tim. 3:6-7). One primary qualification is a grasp of the truth and an ability to guard the flock against false

¹ See footnote #6 on page A-3 for SDB use of “pastor” to describe the office of the spiritual leader of a congregation.

teaching of all kinds (Acts 20:28-32; Tit. 1:9-10; 1 Tim. 4:6; and 1 Tim. 3:9, of deacons).

2. Their spiritual authority. Spiritual leaders do not exercise authority as the world does (“lording it over” others, 1 Pet. 5:3). Christ is Lord; all ministers are servants (and ought to be humble ones: Matt. 23:8-12). However, leadership with humility is not leadership without authority. Basic to the Scriptural concept of leadership authority is the spirit in which it is exercised (2 Tim. 2:24-26) and the double accountability which the leader has to both God and the congregation. (See the further discussion of pastoral authority below.)

The Diaconate

Historically, Seventh Day Baptists have set apart two groups by ordination: the diaconate and the pastorate. The diaconate is a group of lay persons who have been chosen by the church to be formally set apart as “servants” of the church, along with the pastor (the very name *deacon* means “servant”²). It has its roots in the early Jerusalem church, when there was need for supervision of the distribution to widows in need, but the apostles recognized their priority had to be, “prayer and the ministry of the word” (Acts 6:4). The church chose seven men from the congregation who were, “known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom” (v. 3), to take this responsibility. Before long, these first deacons were doing more than waiting on tables. Stephen began preaching, and was the first Christian martyr. Philip began doing the work of evangelism. By the time of Paul’s New Testament letters, a list of spiritual qualifications had been developed for deacons, and the office of deacon seems to have been widely accepted in the churches (1 Tim. 3:8-13). Qualifications such as that mentioned in 1 Tim. 3:9 (“they must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith”) suggest their work was not limited to secular matters alone. (See the similar qualification for elders in Tit. 1:9.)

Seventh Day Baptists believe women are called to the diaconate, as well as men. The possibility that the term “servant” in Romans 16:1 can be understood in a technical sense as “deaconess” (and the less likely possibility that “their wives” in 1 Tim. 3:11 can be so understood) gives some direct Scriptural evidence for this practice. In addition, there seems to be no expressed reason in Scripture why women should not, today, serve as deaconesses. The fact the first deacons were men is more a reflection of the Jewish culture of Jesus’ day, than it is of any Scriptural principle.

The duties of the diaconate may be summarized by the time-honored phrase: “the deacons are to assist the pastor in every way.” They are to serve as advisors to the pastor, and as leaders with the pastor (and in the pastor’s absence). Though Scripture is not specific about all the responsibilities of the diaconate, they have traditionally ministered by visiting the members (especially the sick and shut-in), caring for the sick and needy, leading in worship (and sometimes preaching) and recommending individuals for church membership.

The deacons also assist the pastor in the administration of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, according to the specific roles variously assigned them in different churches. They are usually responsible for furnishing and serving the elements of the Lord’s Supper, as well as setting up the table. They assist the pastor in baptisms, as needed, and take responsibility (along with the pastor)

² “Servant, deacon,” (*diakonos*), Klaus Hess, “Serve, Deacon, Worship,” in Brown, NIDNTT, Vol. 3, p. 544.

for seeing that both baptism and communion are spiritual and uplifting experiences. In the absence of the pastor, they may conduct these services or take the lead in helping the church to designate an individual authorized to do so.

The wide-ranging responsibilities of the diaconate should not be understood to obviate the need for others to serve. Neither should their special role be thought to give deacons and deaconesses the right to rule over the congregation. They are servants, not rulers, and it is their calling to promote the spiritual life and ministry of the congregation, not limit or restrict it.

Deacons and deaconesses are elected by the church, and their term of service is variously defined:

1. Many churches follow the traditional custom of ordaining them for life, or for as long as they remain members of the ordaining church. The procedure for ordination usually resembles that practiced in ordaining ministers.
2. Some churches simply elect them for a definite term of years, without then ordaining them.
3. Some churches choose to ordain them for life, but rotate their periods of service according to a given cycle (five years active, five years inactive, etc.).

Regardless of which practice above is followed, the church has the responsibility to select members of the diaconate with care. Spiritual requirements for serving on the diaconate are clearly stated in the First Letter to Timothy, and they are almost identical to those listed for pastors. The church, whatever its methods, must give serious consideration to how it selects the diaconate and prepares them for service. Different practices have been followed in Seventh Day Baptist churches for nominating individuals to the diaconate. Sometimes nominations have been made upon recommendation of the serving deacons. Sometimes they have been made by direct ballot of all the members at a business meeting (with a second ballot subsequently cast for electing from the list of those nominated). When deciding upon a nomination process, it is well to keep in mind the principle of congregational polity which states, "Leaders are chosen and dismissed by the congregation" (Appendix J7-1). To ensure that the congregation may nominate those of its choice, it might be well to accept additional nominations from the floor, when the list of nominees has been submitted by recommendation of a smaller group in the church.

Deacons transferring membership from another Seventh Day Baptist church are often confirmed to serve in the same office in their new church. It is recommended, however, that the new church first give such transferring deacons one year to settle into the overall life and ministry of the congregation. After that one-year period, they will be more ready to be welcomed into the diaconate, which comes by vote of the church.

The Pastorate

From New Testament times the office of pastor has been an office of great importance to the life and service of the church. This importance derives from both spiritual and practical considerations, which become evident from the roles the pastor fulfills in the church.

Above all, the pastor is a **servant** of the church, and of Christ (Head of the church). No aspect of pastoral ministry is more important than servanthood. The final example of leadership Jesus gave before his death was that of a servant, washing his disciples' feet with a basin and towel. There is no place in the Seventh Day Baptist ministry for one unwilling to follow the example of our Lord in this (who took the "nature of a servant," Phil. 2:7).

The pastor is a **leader** in the church. In Hebrews 13:17 the Apostle Paul admonishes the church: "Obey your leaders and submit to their authority." The proper application of this teaching involves holding the two concepts of the priesthood of all believers and the pastor's authority in dynamic tension. A pastor's authority comes from God through the congregation. Authority in a Seventh Day Baptist church is always delegated by the church. There is no place for any spiritual leader who wishes to domineer or exercise an authoritarian rule over the congregation. Pastors will be able to exercise authority to the extent they demonstrate their love and servant attitude. In such an atmosphere, pastors may exercise the authority of their calling (1 Tim. 4:11-12,14; 2 Tim. 1:6-7; Tit. 2:15); the authority of their great responsibility in being accountable to God for the flock (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17; 1 Thes. 5:13); the authority of their example (1 Pet. 5:3); and the authority of the Scriptural soundness of their teaching (2 Tim. 2:25-26; 2 Tim. 4:2-3; Tit. 1:9).

The pastor is a **shepherd** in the church. Pastors are responsible for feeding and caring for the members of the church, spiritually. Feeding the church is a function of teaching, preaching, counseling, and modeling the Christian life. Pastors also have primary responsibility for protecting the church from false doctrine, and from those who would harm the life and ministry of the church in other ways.

The pastor is an **equipper** in the church (his efforts are, "to prepare God's people for works of service," Eph. 4:12). Much of the pastor's work focuses on God's people (the members of the covenant community), who have spiritual gifts that need to be developed and mobilized.

Many Seventh Day Baptist pastors are bi-vocational because they must have additional income in order to support themselves and their families. When the pastor is working outside the church, the diaconate must assume more responsibility for the spiritual work and welfare of the church. It is also necessary for the church and pastor to work together to make the best use of the pastor's limited time for church work.

The Call to the Pastoral Ministry

Among Seventh Day Baptists the "call to the ministry" is recognized to have a dual meaning.

1. It is *the call of God*, the inner call, which leads men and women to dedicate themselves to professional ministry. This call is made evident through such different means as:

- a) The advice of friends. The advice of trusted and wise friends who are devout disciples of Christ is to be taken into account. But it is not conclusive.
 - b) Personal fitness to the work. Natural gifts sometimes give evidence of God's call to ministry or add their weight to other evidences. Among these are intelligence, a natural love of people, dedication to service, administrative ability, and an enjoyment of teaching. A person may also seem especially fit for pastoral ministry because of spiritual qualities, like love for God and his word or a notable commitment to prayer. But fitness to the work is not an infallible test, for some able people have been dismal failures in the ministry, and God has called others whose disabilities became their strengths.
 - c) Personal inclination. When church members' tastes draw them to the ministry, they should be considered an indication, not a proof, that they are called of God to that work. It is the work of evangelizing, nurturing and service. Interest in, and enthusiasm for, these activities might indicate the call of God, but fascination with the superficial aspects of the ministry (like being called "pastor" or enjoying public attention) is obviously not an indication of God's call. Care must also be taken not to regard the ministry as simply a means of seeking personal spiritual development. It is really a ministry for developing others.
 - d) The need for workers. Some see this need and realize they can be of more service to God and to humanity in the pastorate than in any other capacity. The Holy Spirit has often used a compelling sense of the need for workers, to draw a disciple into the pastoral ministry.
 - e) The voice of the Holy Spirit. The disciple **must** believe in his or her heart that God is calling. Sometimes the voice is heard through the church, sometimes through natural inclination, sometimes through the advice of friends, but it is when the Spirit impresses the conviction of a call upon the heart of the candidate that the call becomes a reality.
2. It is *the call of God's people* to the individual to prepare for service as a pastor. This is the outward call. It is the voice of the church, which has sometimes been characterized as the call to, "improve one's gifts for the ministry." God often speaks through the church, as he did when Paul and Barnabas were sent out as evangelists. Though the voice of the church is not conclusive, one should hesitate a long time before refusing its call. (For more about the call of God's people, see the section on "The Licentiate," below.)

When the outward call and the inner call coincide, the call to the ministry is complete.

Pastoral Education and Training

Seventh Day Baptists have always prized an educated and trained pastorate. Many of their pastors in seventeenth century England were trained at Oxford and Cambridge, and several were scholars of distinction. In America the need for Seventh Day Baptists to educate their own pastors was a primary motivation for the founding of Alfred College (in New York State), which subsequently became Alfred University in order to offer theological degrees. For nearly a century the School of Theology at Alfred was the focus for Seventh Day Baptist theological education, though some of their students chose to attend other schools. In 1963, the General Conference replaced its own school with what is today known as the Seminary Education Program of the Council on Ministry.³ This program assists with, and guides, the education of theological students in accredited seminaries throughout the country. The Council on Ministry considers the Master of Divinity degree to be the standard of education to be sought by Seventh Day Baptist pastors.

³ Sanford, pp. 357, 388.

However, the Council recognizes that not everyone can attend seminary. Therefore, the Training in Ministry by Extension (T.I.M.E.) program offers training to those without formal theological education who are already pastoring a Seventh Day Baptist church. The education and training of Seventh Day Baptist pastors is viewed by the Council as a lifelong process.

The Licentiate

As early as 1809, Seventh Day Baptist churches began to license members to preach. Almost exclusively, the license was understood to be a stepping stone to the ordained ministry and was worded so as to make this purpose clear: “To improve his gifts for the ministry,” was the familiar phrase. Licensing became a useful practice among Baptists in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Baptists still generally adhere to the practice of licensing, “for improvement of gifts,” or, “for testing of gifts.” Seventh Day Baptists have used the “license to preach” to provide authorization for preaching by lay people of devotion and ability who don’t intend to enter the ordained ministry. The license to preach has thus come to have two different meanings.

1. It may mean that a Seventh Day Baptist church has put its solemn stamp of approval on the inward call to the ministry felt by one of its members. The granting of the license will then express the intention of the church to give the member opportunities within the fellowship of the church for the improvement of ministry gifts through study and practice, with a view toward ordination.
2. It may mean that a Seventh Day Baptist church has felt that one of its members has demonstrated such faith and such ability in public leadership of the church that both the member and the church will benefit from an acknowledgment of this fact. The license is then granted so that all may be done in good order, so that those who preach to the congregation may be chosen by the congregation.

The changes that occur naturally with the passage of time indicate a need for the periodic review of each license. The licentiate may prefer not to have the license renewed, or the church may be dissatisfied with either the progress or the ability of the licentiate. These are compelling reasons for a church to issue a license for a specific period of time (such as one year), and for the church to review all licenses at regular intervals, renewing those that are benefiting the church, and rescinding those that are not. It has been a recommended procedure that each Seventh Day Baptist church review its list of licentiates annually.⁴

The license to preach is granted by vote of the church of which the candidate is a member. It is not to be granted lightly because it is a sign of the church’s confidence in the faith, devotion and ability of the candidate. The guidance of the Holy Spirit must be prayerfully sought before the church grants such a license.

The wording of the license reflects the particular purpose for which it has been granted. An example is given below.

⁴ A Manual of Procedures For Seventh Day Baptist Churches, ed. Wayne R. Rood (Plainfield, NJ: SDB General Conference, 1972), p. 53.

Certificate of License

This is to certify that at a meeting of the _____ Seventh Day Baptist Church, on the ____ day of _____, [Person's Name] _____, having given evidence that he⁵ possesses gifts for the work of the Gospel ministry, was licensed to preach the Gospel as he may have opportunity and to exercise his gifts in the work of the Gospel ministry for the period from this date to _____, when his status will be reviewed by the church.

When acting as a pastor of a Seventh Day Baptist church, and authorized by that church so to do, he shall be considered eligible to administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and to officiate at funerals and weddings, when compatible with the laws of the State.

*Moderator
Pastor
Church Clerk*

The authority of such a license extends to services for the licensing congregation and for such other congregations as may vote to recognize the license.

Ordination to the Pastoral Ministry

The Meaning of Ordination

Christians have practiced ordination since New Testament times. In different eras, and in different churches, it has assumed different characteristics. Seventh Day Baptists practice ordination as a formal dedication of a person to a particular ministry. It is ordination to a task, with the blessings of the church. It is done in confirmation of the inward call of God which the ordinand professes, and it affirms trust in him or her as one who will faithfully serve Christ. Since ordination is for life, and may in time involve the life and work of several congregations and the reputation of the Church of Jesus Christ, haste should be avoided in calling anyone to ordination. However, it is appropriate for the local church to do so when they believe a member has demonstrated the call of God to the diaconate or the pastoral ministry.⁶

The church issuing a call to ordination of a candidate for pastoral ministry has the responsibility to consider the candidate's sincerity, faith, doctrinal understanding, morality, ability and training for gospel ministries.⁷ This is a process involving considerable preparation and a number of steps, but the act itself consists of a simple, but solemn and prayerful, laying on of hands. An ancient symbolic gesture indicating the bestowal of trust, the laying on of hands was practiced by the New Testament church in setting apart Christian servants. A very personal act, in which representatives of God's people touch the candidate (usually on the head), ordination among Seventh Day Baptists is usually performed by all of the ministers present, including those from other denominations. It is done without any conception of "apostolic succession" or the belief that it bestows special qualities or transfers spiritual endowments to the ordinand. The act of ordination is functional, not sacramental.

⁵ Or "she"

⁶ This chapter will focus on ordination to the pastoral ministry, with the ordination of the diaconate being similar.

⁷ See also, "Ordination and Sexual Conduct," below.

The authority for ordination lies in the local congregation. It is the congregation which calls one of its members to service and leadership. It is the congregation which ordains. However, each local church has a responsibility, not only to the candidate and to itself, but also to the entire Seventh Day Baptist denomination (and to the Christian world in general) to act responsibly and in the true spirit of the New Testament precedent. Two advisory bodies assist a local Seventh Day Baptist church in the ordination process: the Ordination Preparation Committee, and the Ordination Council.

The Call to Examination

The local congregation formally begins the process of ordination by voting to call the candidate to examination, and if he or she is found qualified, to ordination. The motion may be stated as follows:

Whereas Brother/Sister _____, a member of this church, has given evidence that he (or she) is called of God to the Gospel ministry; and whereas we believe the time has come when he should be formally set apart to that work; therefore, be it

***Resolved:** First, That we call Brother/Sister _____ to examination, with a view to the ministry, and to ordination, provided that upon examination it appears to us that the time has come for such an action; Second, That we form an Ordination Preparation Committee to examine his (or her) credentials; Third, That we call an Ordination Council to consider and pass upon the fitness of Brother/Sister _____, said council to meet with us at _____ o'clock (A.M./P.M.), on the _____ of _____ [Year] and; Fourth, That we invite sister churches in this association and the Seventh Day Baptist Council on Ministry to send delegates to said council.*

The Ordination Process⁸

Ordination Guidelines

Introduction

Ordination is the responsibility of the local church. The following General Conference guidelines are not requirements for ordination or for future possible accreditation. However, information gathered in the ordination process may be helpful in the accreditation process, as well. These suggested guidelines are designed to assist local churches to better fulfill their ordination responsibilities and to assist candidates in their preparation for the Ordination Council.

Review of the Ordination Process

1. It is recommended the Council on Ministry be consulted regarding available ordination guidelines before the local church calls the candidate to examination.
2. Ordination candidate prepares his/her credentials.
3. Ordination Preparation Committee of the local church examines the credentials of the candidate to ensure the preparedness of the candidate for the Ordination Council.
4. Ordination Council is called with association and denominational representation to examine the candidate and make a recommendation to the local church.

⁸ "Ordination Guidelines" and "Ordination and Sexual Conduct," Conference Minutes, SDB Yearbook (1992), pp. A22-A24.

5. Following receipt of a recommendation from the Ordination Council, the local church makes the final vote on the ordination of the candidate.
6. Ordination service is planned and carried out by the local church to take place no earlier than 27 days following an affirmative vote by the local church.
The Ordination Preparation Committee of the local church will assist in the preparation of the candidate for the Ordination Council. Here are the suggested guidelines the church may wish to use for this new committee.

The Ordination Preparation Committee

In order to encourage the preparedness of the ordination candidate, we urge local churches to establish an Ordination Preparation Committee.

Purpose of the Ordination Preparation Committee

To carefully review the credentials of the candidate to see if they are in order for an Ordination Council and recommend that the church proceed with the examination and call to ordination.

Membership of the Ordination Preparation Committee

The Ordination Preparation Committee will be chosen by the local church. It can be established as a new group or an existing group in the local church (diaconate, Advisory Board, etc.) may be chosen for this purpose.

The Role of the Ordination Preparation Committee

The Ordination Preparation Committee should meet to carefully review the following suggested credentials of the candidate.

1. A written statement of the candidate's Christian experience.
2. A written statement of the candidate's call to the Christian ministry. A statement of the spouse's support in this call would also be desirable and encouraging.
3. A verification of the candidate's educational background.
4. A resume of the candidate's work experience and/or previous ministry experience.
5. A written doctrinal statement on each segment of the Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Belief.
6. Three letters of reference regarding his/her moral character. One of these letters should be from a person outside the church but from the community where the person is ministering.

When the Ordination Preparation Committee is convinced that the candidate's credentials are in order and that the candidate is prepared for the Ordination Council, the church should be notified. At this time the church is ready to call for an Ordination Council.

Please send a copy of the above credentials (letters and documents) to the Council on Ministry to be placed in the pastor's file.⁹

Ordination and Sexual Conduct

Ordination Standards

When a person has demonstrated a call to ministry it is appropriate for the local church to call that person to ordination. The church issuing a call to ordination has the responsibility to consider the candidate's sincerity, faith, doctrinal understanding, morality, ability, and training for gospel ministries.

⁹Note: Of course, a copy of the above credentials should also eventually be made available to the Ordination Council.

Ordination and Sexual Conduct

Sexual conduct is a significant part of the morality of a pastor being considered for ordination. Sex between a man and a woman in the bonds of holy matrimony is a beautiful, pure and powerful part of the marriage union. However, sexual activity outside of heterosexual marriage--such as fornication, adultery, and homosexual activity--is contrary to the will of God (1 Corinthians 6:9, 10).

We recommend to local churches that they not ordain individuals to the gospel ministry who practice sexual activity outside of heterosexual marriage or are unrepentant of sexually immoral behavior as defined by scripture.

Accreditation and Sexual Conduct

We recommend that General Conference not extend or continue accreditation to individuals in the Gospel ministry who practice sexual activity outside the bonds of heterosexual marriage or are unrepentant of sexually immoral behavior as defined by Scripture.

The Ordination Council

Upon receiving the recommendation of the Ordination Preparation Committee, the church makes its decision whether or not to continue the ordination process. In matters of such great importance to other congregations of the General Conference, as well as to the church considering ordination, there is a need to seek the help of fellow Seventh Day Baptists in shouldering this responsibility. So doing also adds to the solemnity of the proceedings. It is therefore expected that the church will request delegates from sister churches within the association and from the General Conference, who will be empowered to participate fully in the examination and ordination. The body gathered to assist in carrying out these actions is called the Ordination Council. It functions for the purpose of this one ordination only. Ordination without a council formed according to these guidelines is discouraged and cannot be expected to lead to accreditation by the General Conference.

The following procedure is recommended for continuing the ordination process.

- 1. Appointment of delegates.** The churches invited to participate in the examining council appoint delegates to the council. These often include the pastor and members of the diaconate, but should not be limited to these ordained members. A list of those appointed should be forwarded by the clerk of each church to the clerk of the church issuing the invitation, so that the will of each church is made clear. The ordaining congregation usually appoints a large delegation to the council (sometimes, "all members present").
- 2. Calling the council to order.** When the council assembles, the meeting is called to order by the moderator or clerk of the local church, or by some other individual appointed by the church. This person continues to preside until a clerk and moderator have been elected by the council. (Sometimes the local church has nominations for these offices ready to present at this time.)
- 3. Agenda of the council.** The following is a logical order of business for the proceedings.
 - a) Reading of the call.** Following the call to order, the action of the church in calling the council should be read.
 - b) List of delegates.** The list of delegates appointed and present should be compiled and read. New names may be added by the council itself.
 - c) Election of moderator and clerk.** These officers should be elected by the council of accredited delegates. However, the council often accedes to the will of the local church in this matter.

- d) **Prayer.** A season of prayer for God’s guidance is customary. It is a time of deep solemnity and need. The prayer may be short or extended, formal or informal.
- e) **Examination of the candidate.** The candidate for ordination is called upon to state his or her Christian experience and beliefs, and to describe his or her call to the ministry. It is customary for the candidate to present a prepared statement of the foregoing (which may be the same as was submitted to the Ordination Preparation Committee), but nothing prohibits an *extempore* presentation. At the close of the candidate’s statement, members of the council are free to question the candidate about any part of this statement, or about matters not included in it. In order to ensure that the examination remains orderly, it is conducted by the moderator of the council or by an “examiner” appointed by the council. The examination should be functional rather than formal. Its purpose is to reveal the fitness of the candidate and to satisfy all members of the council that they possess sufficient information about the candidate to make a recommendation with regard to ordination.
- f) **Vote of the council.** At the close of the examination, the council prepares to vote upon the candidate’s acceptability for ordination. The candidate and the candidate’s family members may be asked to leave the room while the council conducts its business in the presence of the other assembled people. However, this is not required when the council retires to another place for its deliberations. It is customary for this part of the agenda to be conducted apart from the candidate. Adequate time should be taken by the moderator to allow members of the council to comment on the matter before them. The council has two responsibilities:¹⁰
- 1) To determine the candidate’s **fitness for ordination** and to vote: (a) to recommend that the church ordain; or (b) to recommend that ordination be postponed; or (c) to recommend that the candidate not be ordained. The motion may be similar to the following (shown including several variations in the wording):

*RESOLVED, That the examination of Brother (Sister) _____ has
(has not) been satisfactory, and we recommend
that he (she) be (not be) ordained
that further consideration of ordination be postponed, until he (she) has
sought further preparation
gained greater experience.*

- 2) To determine the **agreement of the candidate’s beliefs with the Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Belief.** The motion might take the following form:

*RESOLVED, That the council has found Brother (Sister) _____’s
beliefs to be in accord with the beliefs expressed in the Seventh Day Baptist Statement
of Belief.*

Final Vote by the Local Church

1. **The vote of the local church.** The local church makes the final decision by a vote of the church upon receipt of the Ordination Council’s recommendation.
2. **Setting the time for ordination.** It is recommended that a period of 27 days minimum be allowed to elapse between the session of the examining council and the ordination service. The

¹⁰ See also item number 2 under, “The Ordination Service” below.

date should be only tentatively set, pending the outcome of the Ordination Council. It should not become customary to automatically expect an affirmative recommendation from the council, and such is the implication if the date of the ordination service is publicly announced prior to the examination, or is planned to immediately follow it. Sometimes it is decided that distance and the participation of delegates requires that ordination be conducted on the same day as the examination. However, as desirable as it may be, the examining body and the ordaining body do not need to be composed of the same people. The two functions are separate in purpose.

The Ordination Service

The local church conducts the ordination service and decides who shall preside. Sometimes this is the moderator of the church, the moderator of the Ordination Council, the pastor of the church (if other than the candidate), or a visiting minister. The order of the service varies according to the will of the church and the circumstances. The following is presented as a guide since it includes all the usual elements.

1. Worship. This service may be similar to a Sabbath morning worship service, or varied according to the wishes of the ordinand and the church. Often those especially close to the ordinand are invited to take part. It is customary for there to be special music, the particular selections often being requested by the ordinand.
2. Affirmation. A member of the Ordination Council should be designated by that council to make a statement affirming that the candidate has met every requirement and is ready for ordination.
3. Ordination Sermon. The preacher is often requested by the ordinand.
4. Charge to the Candidate.
5. Charge to the Church.
6. Consecrating Prayer. It is at this point that the act of laying on of hands is ordinarily performed. Usually the ordinand kneels.
7. Welcome to the Ministry. This is usually given by an ordained minister.
8. Benediction. The benediction is usually pronounced by the ordinand as his first act as a newly ordained minister.

Records and Certificate of Ordination

The clerk of the Ordination Council and the clerk of the church should keep detailed records of the entire proceedings, seeing that they are entered into the permanent records of the church. A copy should be sent to the Council on Ministry so that it will be on file when accreditation by General Conference is sought. A Certificate of Ordination should be provided to the ordinand. A blank certificate is available from the Director of Pastoral Services of the Council on Ministry. It states:

Certificate of Ordination

This is to certify that after a satisfactory examination by a duly called council as to his (her) Christian experience, call to the ministry and religious faith, _____ was consecrated to the Christian ministry by the Seventh Day Baptist Church of _____ on the _____ day of _____, [Year].

Church Moderator

Church Clerk

Accreditation¹¹

Accreditation means:

1. That a local church has seen evidence in a person of a calling to and gifts for pastoral ministry involving the sincerity, faith, character, morality, ability, doctrinal understanding, understanding of Seventh Day Baptist polity, and training, to call this person to ordination,
2. That an Ordination Council, including delegates from sister churches as well as official representatives of the General Conference, has agreed with that determination, and found the candidate's beliefs in accord with the beliefs expressed in the Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Belief, and discovered the person fit for the ordained ministry, and
3. That General Conference has reviewed the actions of the local church and ordination council and recognizes that the person meets the requirements of education and service.

Purpose of Accreditation

1. To provide a list of ordained individuals who have reached acceptable standards in education and service; this list is maintained for the information of Seventh Day Baptist churches.
2. To provide a standard of education and service toward which ministers and ministerial students may strive.
3. To indicate the worthiness of a minister to be recommended for service among Seventh Day Baptists. The judgment of a minister's worthiness is based on his or her general reputation and good report. The continued worthiness of an accredited minister is assumed, apart from the verification of charges against the minister which are brought to the attention of the General Conference.
4. To provide an official listing of Seventh Day Baptist ministers for interdenominational, intraprofessional, business, and government groups and organizations, verifying the minister's accredited standing with the General Conference.

Requirements for Accreditation

1. Five years as a member in good standing of a church holding membership in the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference shall be required.
2. The candidate must present evidence of education and service that meets one of the following sets of requirements:

¹¹ "Accreditation," Conference Minutes, SDB Yearbook (1995), p. A32-A33, revised by Conference action 2004.

EDUCATION	SERVICE IN MEMBER CHURCH ¹
Completion of 3 year Master of Divinity at a COM approved school	1 year of acceptable and continuous pastoral service
TIME: Senior Pastor Program ²	4 years of service experience as a called senior pastor
B.A. or B.S. in pastoral ministry at COM approved school	6 years of acceptable and continuous pastoral service
Incomplete seminary training (M. Div. level, approved school)	10 years with 2 year reduction per completed academic year
TIME: Associate, Assistant, and Youth Minister Programs	8 years of service experience
One-year Certificate: seminary	8 years of service as a called senior pastor
One-year Certificate: Bible college	9 years of service as a called senior pastor
None of the levels listed above	10 years of acceptable and continuous pastoral service

¹ Service must be in a member church of the General Conference or a church working toward membership in the General Conference as the senior pastor after completion of education.

² Graduates of the previous TIME program will be required to complete six (6) years of service.

3. The candidate must have a thorough acquaintance with Seventh Day Baptist history and polity, as well as, Sabbath Theology, by way of Summer Institute courses offered through the School of Ministry.
4. The candidate must present evidence of ordination or recognition of ordination by a church which is a member in good standing of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference. The ordination council (called by a local church) must examine the doctrine of the candidate in order to decide if the candidate's beliefs are in accord with the beliefs expressed in the Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Belief. This is also the best opportunity to review the character and moral lifestyle of the candidate. Since General Conference does not employ or supervise local church pastors, ordination councils and local churches must seek to maintain the high standards of ministry.
5. The candidate will affirm that his/her beliefs are in accord with the beliefs expressed in the Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Belief on the application for accreditation.

Procedures for Accreditation

1. The Council on Ministry has oversight of the accreditation process of ordained Seventh Day Baptist leaders. As ordination is a prerequisite for accreditation, the Council on Ministry should be invited by the local church to be represented in the ordination process, especially on the Ordination Council.
2. At a business meeting, the church must take action to recommend the pastor for accreditation. Before taking such a step the local church should review the sincerity, faith, character, doctrinal understanding, understanding of Seventh Day Baptist polity, morality, ability, and training of the pastor. The church should also determine that the candidate's beliefs are still in accord with those beliefs expressed in the Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Belief. The submission of the application attests to the fact that the local church has found the candidate for accreditation fit for ministry as an accredited

Seventh Day Baptist pastor. Applications are to be submitted to the Council on Ministry no later than January 1, of the year in which the General Conference is to consider an application for Accreditation. (last sentence added by vote of Conf 2006)

3. A recommendation for accreditation will be based on a review of the candidate's application, including service and education requirements, the actions of the Ordination Council, ordination by the local church, and the continuing good reputation of the candidate.
4. The Council on Ministry, based on a review of the candidate's credentials, may grant a recommendation for accreditation to the General Council. General Council, in turn, makes its recommendation for accreditation to General Conference and its Ministerial Interest Committee. The General Conference in session votes on the recommendation for accreditation.

Suspension of Accreditation

1. Situations which might require review of accreditation shall be handled through the Council on Ministry with the understanding that only General Conference has the authority to remove accreditation.
2. An accredited minister who is no longer a member of a recognized Seventh Day Baptist church, or a church working toward membership in the Conference, shall be reviewed and may be suspended as an accredited Seventh Day Baptist minister by action of the Council on Ministry.
3. An accredited minister who leaves pastoral service but remains as a member in good standing of a recognized Seventh Day Baptist church, or a church working toward membership in the Conference, will remain accredited unless the minister requests a suspension.
4. The Council on Ministry will act on requests for voluntary suspensions and voluntary restorations of accreditation.

Pastoral Offenses

Because the pastor is a unique and public representative of the church, and because the office of pastor within the church calls for the highest spiritual and moral qualifications (1 Tim. 3, Tit. 1), pastoral offenses are potentially very serious. The pastor therefore bears special responsibilities.¹² It will be necessary for the pastor to be more careful in regard to his or her language, conduct, pursuits, engagement in controversies, and participation in public protest, than other members of the congregation. If the pastor fails to show sensitivity and discretion in these areas of responsibility, it may be necessary for members of the congregation to offer counsel by supplying information about public perceptions and the potential consequences of certain behaviors. If the pastor has shown questionable behavior in performance of his duties within the congregation, it may also be necessary for the diaconate, a pastoral relations committee or individual members to raise the subject with the pastor.

¹² In recognition of this fact, pastors voluntarily drafted and affirmed a "Statement on Pastoral Conduct" at the 1993 Seventh Day Baptist Minister's Conference.

If strife develops within the church over the pastor's behavior, because of issues relating to either personal or spiritual matters, all that is possible should be done in a quiet and loving way to set things right and restore trust between the people and their pastor. A pastor might become unacceptable to all or part of the congregation because of doctrinal views or biblical interpretation, or because of disapproval of some aspect of the pastor's personal habits or style of ministry. In matters of this sort, it is always better for the church to err by premature loving action to remedy the situation, than by postponing action and running the risk of supplanting love with anxiety or suspicion.

When there is pastoral misconduct involving sin, the church will have to deal with more than one issue. First, there will be the issue of a sinning believer needing to come to repentance and restoration to good standing in the Body. In this respect, the procedures for pastoral misconduct are the same as for any other member of the church.¹³ But there will also be a second issue for the church to face, and more than church discipline is needed to deal with it. Sinful behavior by the pastor almost always involves greater public disgrace to the church than that of other members. It may sometimes even involve a direct breach of trust with the congregation, if there has been abuse of the pastoral office. There may be the need to protect the spiritually weak or others with whom a pastor might continue to be involved, if the pastor is continuing to behave erratically or immorally, or is continuing to teach some falsehood. In order to protect the reputation of the church and the interests of those (inside and outside the church) who might be damaged by the pastor's continuation in office, the church may need to act promptly to temporarily suspend the pastor from his or her duties. Such a step should not involve stopping the pastor's salary, just treating the pastor like a person who is for the time being, disabled from performing customary tasks. Such a course of action, though it might need to be done promptly, must **never** be done lightly or without a formal and fair hearing concerning the alleged misconduct (1 Tim. 5:19).

If it should ever become necessary to enter upon a formal hearing of charges against the pastor, special precautions should be taken to assure that everything is done in a confidential and orderly manner,¹⁴ since the minister's entire vocational calling and service are at stake, as well as the public image of the church. If the church and pastor need assistance in resolving conflict (whether minor or major), the Director of Pastoral Services may be called upon for counsel and assistance.

¹³ See the sections concerning church discipline in the chapter, *Church Membership*.

¹⁴ See the full discussion of these issues under the heading, "Church Discipline" in the chapter, *Church Membership*.

ECCLESIASTICAL ENDORSEMENT FOR CHAPLAINS

(The following wording was voted by the Conference in session August 2013)

Ecclesiastical Endorsement for Chaplains to be granted by COM for Seventh Day Baptists who believe they are called to Chaplaincy under the following conditions:

The individual must

- Be a member of an SDB church for at least 2 years and remain an active SDB.
- Have the recommendation of a local SDB Church for Endorsement.
- Be in agreement with the current SDB Statement of Belief.
- Understand that Endorsement is reviewed at least annually.
- Understand that Endorsement can be withdrawn at any time. Reasons for withdrawing Endorsement include (but are not limited to) moral failure, failure to remain connected with SDBs, failure to comply with these requirements.
- Agree to take the three summer institutes within the first 10 years of the endorsement, and understand that if not completed in this time that the endorsement will be withdrawn.
- Understand that a person cannot receive Ecclesiastical Endorsement and be funded by the Seminary Education Program at the same time.

Church Ministries

The ministries of a Seventh Day Baptist church are designed to fulfill the purposes which Scripture identifies for the local church: worship, fellowship, service, the practice and proclamation of common convictions, and growth in grace and in the knowledge of Christ. The ministry activities common in Seventh Day Baptist churches are discussed under the various headings of this chapter.

Worship

Just as other churches have variety in the styles of their corporate worship, so do individual Seventh Day Baptist churches. Likewise, there are similarities in worship style, but these are not the result of the imposition of a denominational standard of worship. They result from the free choice of each congregation.

Worship is an inward response to God that is **spiritually experienced**. The particular styles and forms by which worship is expressed are less important than this inward experience. In John 4:23, Jesus told the woman at the well: “the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks.” Worship “in spirit” occurs when believers respond to God with their spirits and with the help of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Worship “in truth” is worship which is consistent with what God has revealed about himself in Scripture (and through the Son, who was “full of grace and truth,” John 1:14) and worship which is sincere and earnest. Worship in spirit and truth is the kind of inner response to God which Seventh Day Baptists value and seek to experience. They recognize, however, that their outward response to God will be culturally influenced and reflect personal tastes.

Worship is an outward response to God that is **culturally influenced**. In Cameroon, Africa, a cantor sings each phrase of a worship song, followed by a congregational response. In the rural areas of the Philippines, however, a distinctive feature of congregational singing is accompaniment by a guitar. Different cultures produce different styles of worship, even in the different regions of North America, but each style of worship expresses a response to the presence of the living God.

Worship is an outward response to God that reflects **personal tastes**. Some believers are more comfortable with worship experiences in which there are quiet times for reflection, the worship leader is not intrusive, and the spontaneous outbursts of other worshipers are not “a constant distraction.” Other believers are more comfortable with worship experiences in which exuberant and spontaneous praise is emphasized, an informal atmosphere is encouraged, and the service is kept from being “dead” by the lively participation of the congregation. Still other believers find a blend of the two styles to be most meaningful, with times of both quiet restraint and overt emotional expression. But whether joy in Christ is expressed with outward exuberance or with a quiet warmth in the privacy of the inner spirit, it is still joy in Christ. Whether reverence for God is shown by restraint or by the prostration of the body before him, it is still reverence for God. Whether praise is offered by one generation with the familiar words of traditional hymns or by another generation with the words of praise songs familiar to them, it is still praise. The differing tastes of believers with different personalities and different backgrounds will influence the style of worship they prefer, but does not invalidate the worship styles preferred by others. Each local church needs to address the

preferences and tastes of everyone in the congregation, to the extent that is possible. These are not questions of right and wrong, but of personal taste, the tolerance of differences, and the unity of the local church in diversity.

Sabbath School

The teaching ministry of a Seventh Day Baptist church is essential to the Christian maturity of its members. In the broadest sense, teaching in the church includes everything the members do and say that is observed by others. In a covenant community, the members live out their Christian lives in a relationship with both God and each other. Others in this community may well be the people God uses to make a member into the person God wants him or her to be. Each member is called to a Christian way of life which both benefits, and receives benefit, from others. By such means the present members, and the next generation of members who are growing up in the church, learn what it means to know Christ and live for him.

In addition to the natural interaction of members in a covenant community, there is need for times of specific instruction (of both adults and children) to assist them in Christian development. Sabbath School is the ministry of the church which provides such systematic instruction, teaching the content and principles of the Bible, with the goal of applying the Bible to life. Closely associated with the Sabbath School program, most churches have a youth fellowship and participate in summer camps for youth. Together such ministries comprise the Christian education program of the local church, along with the ministry of the “pastors and teachers” (literally, “pastor-teachers,” Eph. 4:11) who work with them.

The organization of a Sabbath School ministry among Seventh Day Baptists varies from church to church. In all cases, however, it is best if there is a group in the church which is given specific responsibility for selecting and supervising curriculum and teachers. For assistance in Sabbath School development, the Executive Director of the Seventh Day Baptist Board of Christian Education may be contacted.

Baptism

Baptism was given to the church by Jesus, “the author and perfecter of our faith” (Heb. 12:2). Being baptized “brings home” to believers the meaning of their salvation by faith in Christ and expresses essential elements of their commitment to him. The Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Belief refers to baptism as a step taken, “in obedience to Christ’s command,” which is, “a witness to the acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord... a symbol of death to sin, a pledge to a new life in Him.” It is this witness, symbol and pledge that Seventh Day Baptists care about; therefore, they tend to keep the human ceremonies simple so these elements might remain foremost.

Seventh Day Baptists practice “believer’s baptism” rather than infant baptism.¹ They believe baptism gives testimony that a person has made a conscious choice to accept Jesus as Savior and follow him as Lord. They also deny that the water has any efficacy in itself, conferring benefit on those incapable of expressing (or even understanding) the commitments it symbolizes. For these

¹ See the earlier discussion of baptism in the chapter, *A Baptist Church*, under the headings of “The Membership of the Local Church: Regenerate and Baptized” and “Baptism and the Lord’s Supper.”

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reasons Seventh Day Baptists baptize only those who have reached the age of understanding and have expressed their own faith in Christ (not that of their parents).²

Seventh Day Baptists hold that actual immersion of the entire body under the surface of the water is the only mode of baptism which fulfills the symbolism of death, burial and resurrection taught in Romans 6:3-4. Other Scriptural support for practicing baptism “by immersion” is found in the fact that after Jesus was baptized he, “went up out of the water” (Matt. 3:16) and that Philip did not baptize the Ethiopian by sprinkling him with some of the water he must have been carrying with him, but waited until they came to a source of water adequate for immersion (Acts 8:36). From a Baptist perspective, what rules out baptism by sprinkling or pouring is not that they use less water (as if the water had some efficacy in itself), but the failure of these modes to fulfill the Scriptural symbolism.³ Rare exceptions have been made, when candidates could not be immersed.

Candidates for baptism may be advised to wear a bathing suit under any other clothing they may wish to wear when baptized, to ensure proper modesty. Some churches provide baptismal robes. Members of the diaconate often assist them as they enter and leave the water, because the pastor usually enters ahead of the candidate(s). Baptism is sometimes incorporated into the regular worship service of the church, with the service being somewhat abbreviated so that it does not become over-long, or the ceremony of baptism rushed, when there are many candidates. Sometimes a separate baptism service is planned, especially when a large number of people are to be baptized. Most older Seventh Day Baptist churches have a “baptismal pool” that can be filled and disclosed for the ceremony. Many churches (even some with baptismal pools) now conduct outdoor baptisms, in a river or lake (or even a swimming pool) during seasons of the year when weather is favorable.

Usually a candidate is asked to express his or her faith in Christ just prior to being baptized. The pastor (or other person performing the baptism) will ask something like the following: “John, have you trusted Christ as your personal Savior, and do you agree to follow him as the Lord of your life?” Occasionally other phrases are included, like a pledge to “deny Satan and all his works,” etc. Upon an affirmative answer, the presiding minister then replies with words similar to these: “Upon your profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, I now baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit.” The person officiating will already be standing to the side of the candidate, with one hand resting on the candidate’s shoulders and the other holding his arm (usually at the wrist). He will have instructed the candidate ahead of time about the necessity of allowing the knees to bend when baptized and of the importance of taking a breath as soon as the statement beginning, “Upon your profession...” is concluded. After taking a breath, the candidate is then immersed once under the water, backwards, being held by the minister. To prevent water from entering the nose of the candidate, he is either instructed to pinch his nose, or he has been provided with a folded towel that rests on the open, upraised palms of this hands and is pushed over his face by the minister upon lowering him under the water. Sometimes family members are invited to join the candidate and presiding minister in the water (especially with outdoor baptisms where there is plenty of space). As a variation from the above procedure, the candidate might be asked to give a fuller testimony of faith before baptism, rather than simply reply in the affirmative to a question. (However, such a testimony is more likely to be given prior to entering the water, so that the

² For a description of the process by which candidates request baptism and are received into the church “by baptism,” see the section on “Reception” in the chapter, *Church Membership*.

³ Further support for immersion as the mode of Christian baptism is found in the fact that immersion was the only mode used by its precursor in Judaism--baptism of converts to Judaism as a ritual purification (i.e., from the primary defilement of idolatry).

simplicity of the ceremony is preserved and the focus is directly on the symbolism of the actions of baptism.)

Ordinarily it is expected that baptism be performed by an ordained minister, though not because ordination confers a special spiritual grace, but because it confirms a person's understanding of the observances of the church and calling to lead in the right administration of them. On the other hand, it is appropriate for a church to appoint a deacon or lay person to preside at baptism if no pastor is available. Ordinarily churches would rather do so, than to invite an ordained minister of another denomination to preside, when that person may not share the convictions of Seventh Day Baptists about the meaning and purpose of baptism. In all cases, every effort should be made to keep the occasion as meaningful and sacred as possible, in order that Christ might be honored and the one baptized might long remember the day as one of the most beautiful and significant in his or her Christian life.

The Lord's Supper (Communion)

The Lord's Supper re-enacts the last gathering of Jesus with his disciples before his crucifixion. The occasion was the Jewish feast of the Passover, and from it come the elements of unleavened bread and wine. After telling the disciples of his impending death, and as a way of sharing with them the fact that forgiveness of sins was to come through him, Jesus took the bread and the cup and distributed them to his disciples saying, "This is my body, which is for you; do this in remembrance of me," and, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, whenever you drink it, in remembrance of me" (from 1 Cor. 11:24-25). Then they went out, he to his death and they to their duties as his followers and witnesses. Ever since, Christians have shared in this memorial, in obedience to Christ's instruction, "Do this in remembrance of me." Seventh Day Baptists share in it, also, participating in a "communion" with Christ and with each other with great solemnity, reflection and deep inner emotion, and often in almost complete silence.

A variety of theological interpretations have been given this common Christian practice. Roman Catholics have believed that the bread actually *becomes* Jesus' flesh, and the wine his blood (in what they call the "Mass"), giving a literalistic interpretation to his words, "this is my body," etc. Lutherans have believed that the actual flesh and blood of Jesus are in some way *in* the bread and wine, but cannot be seen. Calvinists have believed that the elements are *memorials* of Jesus' life and death. Seventh Day Baptist convictions about the Lord's Supper have resembled the latter more than any of the others, but they also tend to lay emphasis on the symbolic actions of the breaking of the bread and pouring of the cup, in calling Jesus' sacrifice to remembrance. They have denied any "transformation" of the elements by the speaking of ritual words by an ordained person. They find the meaning in the remembrance of the sacrifice and in the re-creation of the fellowship (of believers with Christ and one another) of the upper room.

As in all things, Seventh Day Baptists tend to prefer simplicity in their celebration of the Lord's Supper. Therefore they have developed no universal forms to follow in the observance. As a minimum, it is expected that someone shall repeat at the appropriate time, Jesus' "words of institution," as they appear in one of the Scriptural accounts (i.e., "This is my body," etc.). Some ministers prefer to use Jesus' words as Paul reports them (1 Cor. 11:23-26), which seem to place their own words and actions in perspective (for Paul begins, "For I received from the Lord what I also passed on to you..."). It is not necessary for an ordained minister to speak these words. In the

absence of a pastor, a member of the diaconate of the congregation may administer communion. In the absence of either, a lay person may be named to preside by the congregation gathered.

Practice concerning the elements has varied, historically. The ancient custom of all Christians was to use unleavened bread and a common cup (a single cup from which all would drink) containing fermented wine. These customs were followed by Seventh Day Baptists well into the twentieth century. After the Temperance Movement in the United States, most American Seventh Day Baptists (who were almost universally active in it) changed from wine to grape juice (this expedient still fulfilling the original symbolic use of the, “fruit of the vine,” Matt. 26:29). With more modern concerns about sanitation, they have also changed to the use of individual cups. From time to time, leavened bread (sometimes passed as a single loaf, from which each person breaks off a piece) has been used. However, most churches ordinarily use unleavened bread. But Seventh Day Baptists have not generally insisted on the exact elements from the Jewish feast, considering that the breaking, pouring and distributing of the elements bears the symbolism (and keeping in mind that it is the Lord’s Supper, not the Jewish Passover, which they are observing).⁴

Usually the Communion service itself is preceded by an invitation, which varies according to the practices of the particular local church. In the past, many Seventh Day Baptist churches practiced “closed Communion” (for members in good standing only), but today most practice “open Communion” (for anyone present who has trusted Christ as Savior). Some churches may narrow the scope of open Communion by inviting only baptized believers to participate (meaning those baptized as believers by immersion). Even churches practicing open Communion may restrict participation to members only, on special occasions such as a covenant renewal service. This is a special service in which covenant members recommit themselves to God and each other. It is best to hold such a service at a time other than the time of the regular worship service, so none are offended because they are not yet members.

Seventh Day Baptists generally maintain simplicity in the ceremony of distributing and partaking. The minister in charge hands the trays to members of the diaconate, who serve those present, who remain in their places. The trays are passed down each aisle, allowing each person to partake (or not) depending on whether they fall in the category of those who, in the introductory invitation, are invited to participate. Usually parents are allowed to determine whether their children participate, with the understanding that they must be believers (and in some churches, be baptized, or be baptized members). Upon returning to the front, one of the diaconate members serves the pastor, who in turn serves the rest. Usually the congregation eats or drinks together, doing so when the pastor does, after the pastor has spoken a sentence such as, “Jesus said, ‘This is my body, which is for you.’” Often hymns are played or sung during the distribution, and it is traditional to close with a hymn (sometimes making reference to Matt. 26:30).

Some pastors or deacons will take the elements from the congregation’s observance to celebrate Communion with those physically unable to leave their homes, while others feel that the essential feature is the presence and participation of the congregation together. Most churches celebrate the Lord’s Supper quarterly (usually at the close of a shortened Sabbath morning worship

⁴ From time to time, however, some Seventh Day Baptist churches have shared Communion as part of a “Passover Seder,” as a means of recalling the Jewish background of the meal shared in the upper room. This has not been done, though, with any sense that the Lord’s Supper must be celebrated in such a context, or that it must be held only at the time of the Passover Feast. Even when churches have chosen to celebrate the Supper at Passover, it has not been out of a sense of legalistic obligation to keep the ceremonies of the Old Covenant.

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service), but other plans have been followed. Some churches have found a particular appropriateness in celebrating the Supper only once a year, at the time of Passover, since that was when it was instituted.

Weddings

A wedding is both a holy and a joyous event. It is both an ecclesiastical and a civil ceremony. Seventh Day Baptists view marriage as a sacred institution and recognize that its bond between husband and wife is holy. They do not, however, speak of it as a sacrament, nor have they insisted that any prescribed ritual or set form of customs be followed. In order for the ceremony to be as meaningful as possible to the couple, their wishes are usually solicited by the minister and are woven into the service. The pastor's experience and judgment in these matters are usually well received by the couple, and it is important to plan what is acceptable to both the couple and the pastor. When a formal service in the church is desired (especially when a large wedding party is involved), wedding customs and protocol need to be understood and agreed upon. The pastor usually consults with the bride (sometimes with the assistance of a member of her family or a "wedding coordinator") in making the arrangements. The results should be a creative blending of spiritual and social considerations. When the service is more informal, as in a home or outdoor setting, traditional elements of the service may be simplified, but it is essential that the event not become so brief or casual as to lack significance.

Because of the nature of the vows exchanged in marriage, especially in a time of shifting moral standards in the world, most Seventh Day Baptist ministers counsel with the couple well before the ceremony (usually in more than one session, three being an average minimum). To perform the ceremony with no counseling is nearly unconscionable. Sometimes the pastor makes partial use of counseling tools, such as simple pre-marital or personality inventories or audio or videotapes. Sometimes the pastor just relies on his experience and the depth of his reading about pre-marital counseling, following a standard outline of subjects he has prepared to discuss with couples. Among subjects often discussed in pre-marital counseling are: finances and the stewardship of money, personality types, sexual and family planning matters,⁵ views of parenting, Scriptural roles in the home and the meaning of love and marriage, personal and couple devotional life, relations with family and friends, and dealing with anger and conflicts.

The pastor will always encourage a couple to look to God to help them become one, in Christ. Some will not marry a believer and an unbeliever, or (under certain circumstances) a couple in which one person is divorced. Most do not fail to take advantage of the opportunity (early in the counseling) to present the Gospel to an unbeliever, whether or not it is later possible to conduct the ceremony. Even some believers need to have the Gospel shared with them "for assurance," giving them a firm basis for establishing a Christian home and family. Most ministers do not make the promise (or create the expectation) that they will automatically perform the ceremony just because the couple meets with them. They usually indicate they will give an answer only after one or two meetings with the couple.

⁵ Often the pastor just asks the couple if they feel comfortable with their current understanding of, and decisions in, this area, recommending that a (first time) prospective wife see a medical doctor for a pre-marital physical exam (at which time the doctor can offer family planning information). Though it is wise for the pastor to be knowledgeable in this area, the pastor must not place himself or herself in the position of offering medical advice.

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It is best for the minister to make known to a congregation what his convictions about marriage are, at the time they are considering him as a pastoral candidate for their church. It is also best when the diaconate supports the pastor in his or her convictions, perhaps even by developing a marriage policy for the church with the pastor's help. Such a policy need not be overly restrictive, but it might deal with questions such as how long a period of time is expected between a request to be married and the date of the ceremony (three months is a good minimum—to allow for counseling). Questions about use of the church building might also be addressed. A pastor's decision to marry or not marry a couple can be one of the most stressful of his or her ministry. Such a decision involves the pastor's own convictions about accountability to God and faithfulness to Scripture. Though no one can make such a decision for the pastor, it is a loving congregation which does not leave the pastor totally "out on a limb" by himself when the answer must be no. Here is where a genuine acceptance of spiritual responsibility by lay leaders is tested and has potential for building a true partnership in ministry in the church.

Pastors are expected to accept a certain amount of responsibility for the legality of the marriages they perform; therefore, they must be familiar with the marriage laws of the state in which they minister. Usually the essentials can be gained from a visit to the county seat of government (or Web site), where couples usually apply for a marriage license. It is the responsibility of the state to make sure the couple meets the requirements for marriage when the license is issued. But pastors need to be assured of their status as a person entitled to perform marriages in the state; they need to know what language constitutes a pronouncement of marriage; and they need to know how to handle the marriage license. It will be necessary to promptly and accurately record the marriage and secure the signatures and addresses of the legal witnesses on the license. It will also be necessary to return the license to the issuing office within the specified number of days. (A keepsake copy is usually also filled out for the couple to take with them.) It is a very unwise pastor who does not see that the marriage license is in his possession before performing the ceremony. The clerk of the church may also wish the pastor to submit information about the marriage for inclusion in the church records.

Seventh Day Baptists have no denominational rulings concerning such matters as marriage between a believer and an unbeliever, marriage to a member of another denomination, inter-racial marriage, or marriage where previous divorce is involved. However, pastors are expected to possess their own understanding of such matters and to honor their personal convictions, as well as the convictions of the congregations they serve. As to performing so-called "same-sex marriage," the 1992 recommendation by General Conference that churches not ordain ministers who practice sexual activity outside the bonds of heterosexual marriage identifies such as, "contrary to the will of God."⁶

Dedications of Infants and Parents

In most Seventh Day Baptist churches a brief dedication ceremony is held during the regular worship service for newborn children and their parents. The purpose is to offer thanks to God for the new life he has granted and express the desire that the child might grow up to love and serve the Lord, ask for the Lord's protection of the child as he or she grows (often with the request that God might eventually grant the child saving faith), and provide opportunity for both the parents and the congregation to pledge themselves to providing Christian nurture to the child in future years. Sometimes a charge of responsibilities is made to the parents (and sometimes also the congregation) after they have pledged themselves to accepting this responsibility in the child's life.

⁶ See "Ordination and Sexual Conduct," under the heading, *The Ordination Process*, in the *Church Ministers* chapter of this manual.

The pastor usually presides and often takes the infant in his arms (or lays his hand on an older child) when offering a dedicatory prayer. Jesus' blessing of little children is sometimes recalled, and his words quoted (Matt. 19:13-15). Mention is also sometimes made of Hannah's dedication of Samuel (1 Sam. 1:21-28) and Mary & Joseph's presentation of Jesus at the Temple (Luke 2:22-23). But the Seventh Day Baptist practice is not done with the intention of fulfilling the Old Testament law for redemption of the first-born male (as Jesus' dedication was--Luke 2:27; Ex. 13:12-13), or of repeating any voluntary practice of the Old Testament (the "dedication" in 1 Sam. 1 meant leaving the child to be raised at the Temple). No identification of the Seventh Day Baptist practice with these actions is intended, beyond the simple parallel of parents bringing children before the LORD at his house. Though, in addition, today's parents can identify with Hannah's understanding that her child is God's gift (1 Sam. 1:27) and can desire that their child might (in a different sense) be "given over to the LORD" for his or her whole life (1 Sam. 1:28). The further point must be clearly understood by all that, as practiced by Seventh Day Baptists, the dedication of babies is not in any way akin to infant baptism. The ceremony confers no special grace, and is not a means of entry into the church. Pastors are wise to explain this to the parents beforehand.

Pastors might preserve these distinctions by a form of words that clarifies them, as in the following example⁷: "As Hannah brought Samuel to the Temple to give him up to the LORD's service there, and as Joseph & Mary presented Jesus, in fulfillment of the Old Testament law for the redemption of the first-born son, so these parents [or: parents' names] have brought [child's name] to the house of God today. They come to acknowledge God's gracious gift of life, to dedicate their child to the love and service of the LORD (asking the LORD to protect him, and to one day grant him the gift of saving faith), and they come to pledge themselves to bring him up in the training and instruction of the LORD. Though this ceremony confers no special grace upon this child, it expresses the desire of his parents that [child's name] might grow up to serve the LORD. Let us then join with these parents in thanking God for him, and in pledging ourselves to encourage and support them in their pledge to nurture [child's name] in Christian principles, that God might be glorified in his life." An example of words to include in the prayer of dedication follows: "As Jesus received the little children, so also do we (in Jesus' name), as together with their parents, we dedicate [child's name] to the love and service of the LORD. Our Father, we now dedicate [child's name] to your love and service in Christ. May your blessing rest upon him, and may he one day come to saving faith in Jesus, our Lord." A simpler prayer: "Our Father, we now dedicate [child's name] to you. May your blessing rest upon him, and by your Grace, may he grow up to have saving faith in Jesus."

Funerals

Scripture does not provide direct guidelines for the conduct of funerals. It does, however, provide the basis for the doctrines of life and death, salvation, eternal life, and divine comfort. Taken together with the Seventh Day Baptist preference for ceremonial simplicity and emphasizing what is positive and uplifting (as in Phil. 4:8-9), this teaching guides pastors in the conduct of what is a solemn and public event.⁸

⁷ There is no required form of words, but these examples bring the theology down to the level of an actual ceremony.

⁸ Funeral and wedding manuals can be obtained from Christian bookstores. (See the Appendix for recommendations.) Sample services are available to intern pastors from supervising pastors, and to others from the Director of Pastoral Services.

In this present age, all human beings, including Christians, must die. But Christ, “has brought life and immortality to light through the gospel” (2 Tim. 1:10). He has said, “I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die” (John 11:25-26). It is upon the basis of this faith that believers face the genuine sorrow which death brings, with an inner assurance and joyous hope which look beyond it. From the perspective of this faith, and in the love Christ has for all people, the Christian community ministers by bringing comfort to the bereaved. In this role they also have a care to do all things with an order and dignity which shows respect for the deceased.

Because pastors usually have the leadership role in the church’s ministry to the bereaved, they must prepare themselves through careful thought, study and prayer, to minister in the various situations which may arise. Faithfulness to the truth of the Gospel, as well as sensitivity to the feelings of people, must be combined in the pastor’s ministry. Good intentions are not enough. Those pastors who simply assert that all people are saved (regardless of their relationship to Jesus Christ) often turn out to be the least respected by the believers in the community. On the other hand, those who recklessly call attention to the uncertain status of the deceased person’s faith (always with no true knowledge of what may have passed between that person and God, in the privacy of the heart) also fail to act in a manner worthy of respect. It is very seldom the role of the pastor at a funeral to exhort the family (or anyone else) to faith by using the deceased as a negative example. (Only at the specific request of all the family should such a thing be done, and even then, it is more effective to urge faith in Christ than to condemn its lack.) If the faith of the deceased is in doubt, nothing needs to be said about it by the pastor in the service. The first responsibility of the church is to the living. The pastor can focus on their needs by sharing the hope of the gospel through the reading of Scripture, with a comment such as, “These are the promises Scripture offers to those who trust Christ...” Then the hope is shared, but nothing has been said about whether the deceased was such a person or not.

In other ways, a pastor may demonstrate a clumsiness in words or actions which more careful thought might have cautioned him to avoid. Unfortunately many communities have their tales of the bizarre behavior shown by a pastor at a funeral. One pastor from another denomination was known for actually pounding on the casket at funerals, in emphasis of his words! Seventh Day Baptist pastors must show greater sensitivity and wisdom in their behavior.

When the church is called upon to minister in situations where those in sorrow are not members of the church, and where the comforts of a Christian faith cannot just be assumed, there is opportunity for ministry beyond the grief of the moment. A sincere Christian testimony can be given which might help the family come to a new understanding of the living God or his Gospel message through Christ. In every case of a grieving family, the pastor and people of the church should be sensitive to every opportunity for service, realizing that specific needs will vary, even as there are different personalities involved, different feelings among the family members, and different circumstances surrounding death.

Social Activities

The social life of the church is one important way to bring less active current members closer to the center of the life of the church. Seventh Day Baptist churches are like extended families which need opportunity to get to know each other better. Communication and relationships are

important “glues” holding a Seventh Day Baptist church together. The greater the level of participation in the social life of the church, the closer the relationships between the covenant members. The closer the relationship with those committed to Christ and to the local church, the more opportunity there is for spiritual development in those seeking personal growth.

The social life of the church can have impact on the numerical growth of the church. Seventh Day Baptists will attract some new people from Christian backgrounds who have come to the Sabbath. They will attract some other Sabbathkeepers who are not happy with their present church. Still others will come for a variety of other reasons. No matter what the motive people have for visiting a Seventh Day Baptist church, they are more likely to stay if they become involved in the life of the church and the lives of its individual members. A church with a healthy social life will be better able to assimilate new people.

Evangelism

Some Seventh Day Baptist churches have a statement at the top of their weekly bulletin which gives the name of the pastor, followed by his title (“Pastor”), then identifies the members, followed by their title: “all members, Ministers.” This is a simple way to express a Seventh Day Baptist conviction – that the pastor doesn’t minister for the congregation, but rather leads them in ministry. This applies to the evangelistic efforts of the church as well as to other kinds of ministry. Pastors have their own personal evangelistic ministries, but they also seek to, “prepare God’s people for works of service” (Eph. 4:12) in evangelistic ministry. This preparation can take a number of different forms: keeping the task of evangelism and world missions before the congregation through sermons and teaching; guiding the church in planning for “whole church evangelism” (the process by which outsiders are brought into contact with the life of the congregation, where they hear the Gospel as a natural--and planned--part of its various ministries); holding classes in one-on-one evangelism; leading groups in evangelistic efforts at fair booths and by canvassing the community; planning follow-up efforts with the church.

Some members have a spiritual gift for evangelism (Eph. 4:11). Others do not, but share the responsibilities of all believers, to be Gospel witnesses (Acts 1:8). Some pastors do not have a spiritual gift for evangelism, but they may still, “do the work of an evangelist” (2 Tim. 4:5) as they have opportunity. A wise pastor and congregation will identify those who do have this gift, sometimes even commissioning them as ministers of evangelism.

A part of evangelistic ministry is for the church to take a close look at itself, as a church which outsiders are invited to visit and eventually join. Does it function in a way that enables an outsider to understand how to participate in its worship services and to easily locate classrooms, bathrooms and the nursery? Does it minister to the whole person (including that person’s material and emotional needs), or just seek a decision? Does it welcome an outsider with love, patience and tolerance, or expect someone (who has had little experience with the Christian life) to immediately conform to the lifestyle of the congregation? Does it allow God to deal with the sinful habits of a contact, over time, or demand perfection as a condition of welcome or membership? Sometimes effective (and Christ honoring) evangelism requires removing barriers, as much as putting up the welcome sign.

Seventh Day Baptists are not greatly different from other Biblically evangelistic churches in their methods and philosophy of evangelism, except perhaps in their emphasis on summer youth

ministries. The Summer Christian Service Corps (S.C.S.C.) trains college age youth to work in summer camps and outreach efforts in Seventh Day Baptist churches around the country. Most Seventh Day Baptist churches participate in summer youth camps and are dedicated to seeing them advance the cause of Christ among their own (and unchurched) youth. Over the years, Seventh Day Baptists have also formed evangelistic singing groups who hold concerts in the churches, including “The Lightbearers for Christ” and “Stained Glass.” Seventh Day Baptists also use puppet ministries and men’s and women’s outreach groups. Training programs like Natural Evangelism Training (N.E.T.) are also available.

Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Belief

Introduction

2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 2 Timothy 2:15; Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:3-6, 15; Romans 10:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Seventh Day Baptists consider liberty of thought under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to be essential to Christian belief and practice. Therefore we encourage the unhindered study and open discussion of Scripture. We uphold the individual's freedom of conscience in seeking to determine and obey the will of God.

The following statement is not intended to be exhaustive, but is an expression of our common belief, which is derived from our understanding of Scripture.

I. God

1 Timothy 1:17; Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Kings 8:27; 1 John 1:5; Genesis 1:1-2; Acts 17:24-25, 28; Psalm 90:1-2; Matthew 28:19; John 3:16; Isaiah 57:15; 2 Peter 3:9.

We believe in one God, infinite and perfect, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe who exists eternally in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and desires to share His love in a personal relationship with everyone.

The Father

We believe in God the Father, who is sovereign over all, and is loving and just as He forgives the repentant and condemns the unrepentant.

1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:6; Ezekiel 33:11; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8; John 5:24; John 3:16-18.

The Son

We believe in God the Son, who became incarnate in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. He gave Himself on the cross as the complete and final sacrifice for sin. As our Risen Lord, He is the mediator between God the Father and mankind.

John 1:34; Hebrews 1:3; John 1:14-18; Romans 1:3-4; 1 John 3:16; 1 Peter 2:24; Hebrews 10:10-14; 1 Corinthians 15:20-21; 1 Timothy 2:5; John 14:6; 1 John 2:1-2.

The Holy Spirit

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who gives spiritual birth to believers lives within them, and empowers them for witnessing and service. We believe the Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures, convicts of sin and instructs in righteousness.

John 14:16; 3:5-8; 14:17; Romans 5:5; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7; 2 Peter 1:20-21; John 16:7-11.

II. The Bible

2 Peter 1:20-21; Romans 3:2; 2 Peter 3:1-2, 15-16; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Matthew 5:17-19; Psalm 119:105; John 20:30-31; Hebrews 1:1-2.

We believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and is our final authority in matters of faith and practice. We believe that Jesus Christ, in His life and teachings as recorded in the Bible, is the supreme interpreter of God's will for mankind.

III. Mankind

Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 8:3-9; Micah 6:8; Matthew 5:44-48; 1 John 1:3; John 1:12

We believe that mankind was created in the image of God and is therefore the noblest work of creation. We believe that human beings have moral responsibility and are created to enjoy both divine and human fellowship as children of God.

IV. Sin and Salvation

1 John 3:4-5; Romans 3:23-25; Isaiah 59:2; 1 John 1:8-10; Romans 5:6-8; Romans 6:23; Hebrews 10:10-14; 1 Peter 1:3; John 3:16-18, 36; Ephesians 2:8-9; John 14:6; Matthew 25:41-46; Romans 5:10

We believe that sin is disobedience to God and failure to live according to His will. Because of sin all people have separated themselves from God. We believe that because we are sinners, we are in need of a Savior.

We believe that salvation from sin and death is the gift of God by redeeming love accomplished by Christ's death and resurrection, and is received only by repentance and faith in Him. We believe that all who repent of their sin and receive Christ as Savior will not be punished at the final judgment but enjoy eternal life.

V. Eternal Life

1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 20-23; John 14:1-3; Matthew 24:30; Titus 2:13; John 17:3; 1 John 5:11-13; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44; John 10:27-28; John 6:40

We believe that Jesus rose from the dead and lives eternally with the Father, and that He will come again with power and great glory. We believe that eternal life begins in knowing God through a commitment to Jesus Christ. We believe that because He died and lives again, resurrection with spiritual and imperishable bodies is the gift of God to believers.

VI. The Church

Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 12:13, 14, 27; Romans 12:4-5; Colossians 1:18; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 2:19-22; Romans 15:5-7; Ephesians 4:11-16; 2 Peter 3:18; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Matthew 18:20; Hebrews 10:24-25

We believe that the church of God is all believers gathered by the Holy Spirit and joined into one body, of which Christ is the Head. We believe that the local church is a community of believers organized in covenant relationship for worship, fellowship and service, practicing and proclaiming common convictions, while growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We believe in the priesthood of all believers and practice the autonomy of the local congregation, as we seek to work in association with others for more effective witness.

VII. Baptism

Romans 6:3-4; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41; Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:11; Galatians 3:26-27

We believe that baptism of believers in obedience to Christ's command is a witness to the acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. We believe in baptism by immersion as a symbol of death to sin, a pledge to a new life in Him.

VIII. The Lord's Supper

Mark 14:22-25; Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, 11:23-30

We believe that the Lord's Supper commemorates the suffering and death of our Redeemer until He comes, and is a symbol of union in Christ and a pledge of renewed allegiance to our risen Lord.

IX. Sabbath

Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 16:23-30; Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 5:17-19; Mark 2:27-28; Luke 4:16; Acts 13:14, 42-44; 16:11-13; 17:2-3; 18:4-11; Ezekiel 20:19-20; Hebrews 4:9-10; John 14:15; Isaiah 58:13-14; Luke 23:56

We believe that the Sabbath of the Bible, the seventh day of the week, is sacred time, a gift of God to all people, instituted at creation, affirmed in the Ten Commandments and reaffirmed in the teaching and example of Jesus and the apostles.

We believe that the gift of Sabbath rest is an experience of God's eternal presence with His people.

We believe that in obedience to God and in loving response to His grace in Christ, the Sabbath should be faithfully observed as a day of rest, worship, and celebration.

X. Evangelism

Matthew 24:14; Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Corinthians 4:1-2, 5-6; 1 Peter 3:15; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Ephesians 6:14-20

We believe that Jesus Christ commissions us to proclaim the Gospel, to make disciples, to baptize and to teach observance of all that He has commanded. We are called to be witnesses for Christ throughout the world and in all human relationships.

The time when a church is seeking a new pastor is often a time filled with uncertainty about where and how to move. It is also a time when congregations can come to a new vision of mission and purpose for the church. It is the goal of the Council on Ministry to assist your church in its search for pastoral leadership. It may be possible for the Director of Pastoral Services or other Conference executives to visit your church. Please feel free to contact the Director of Pastoral Services asking for assistance, informing as to progress, and sending copies of materials developed.

I. Pastoral Search Committee

- A. Select a Pastoral Search Committee to lead the congregation in selecting a pastor to guide your church in its ministry for Christ. The church's constitution or bylaws may indicate exactly how the committee is to be selected. If your church has a Pastor-Parish Relations Committee it may serve in this capacity. In very small churches the congregation may act as a committee of the whole. In any case it is important that the committee represent the various ages, groups and interests in the church.
- B. The Committee will be responsible to lead the congregation through the process of pastoral search. Pray often for the Lord's guidance at every step of the process, and don't be tempted to take shortcuts. The goal is not to find a pastor quickly. The goal is to find God's pastor for your church through prayer and hard work.
- C. The Committee will function best when it understands that it must evaluate the church and understand its needs and expectations before looking for the pastor to meet those needs and expectations.
- D. The Committee will work in behalf of the congregation but will report to it frequently. The final decision on who to call and the terms of the call will be made by the congregation.
- E. The confidential nature of the Committee's work cannot be overemphasized. The Committee will be considering pastors without their knowledge or the knowledge of the churches they are serving. Much of the information that is gathered and the records kept should be destroyed after the work of the committee is completed.
- F. Correspondence with the Council on Ministry and with potential pastors should be handled by the chairman or secretary of the committee.

II. Interim Pastor

- A. Consider hiring an interim pastor (full or part time) who will relieve the need for you to be hurried in your pastoral search. An interim pastor would also help your church continue its ministry between pastorates.

- B. Often an interim pastor can bridge difficulties which exist and help to prepare the way for the new pastor. It is especially valuable to have an interim (or "transition") pastor after a very long pastorate, or when the church has experienced bad conflict.
- C. The job of the interim or "transition" pastor should be clearly defined. For example: preach, lead worship, teach, counsel, visit, lead church in self-evaluation. You may wish that the interim pastor have no involvement with organization or administration, or initiate new programs or evangelism.
- D. Normally the interim pastor should not be eligible for consideration as your prospective pastor. The congregation and the interim should have a clear understanding at this point.
- E. The experience of our churches is that it usually takes several months to get a new pastor. You may want to call the interim pastor for a specific period of time, such as: a minimum of six months and a maximum of one year with the interim leaving sooner if a pastor is found before that time is up.
- F. Contact the Director of Pastoral Services for suggestions of persons who might serve as interim pastors.

III. Church Evaluation

- A. This is an excellent time for the congregation to do some self-evaluation of needs and expectations in order to determine what kind of pastoral leadership is needed.
- B. Questionnaires such as the "Pastoral Priorities Survey" can be circulated among the congregation. Summarizing the responses can help you to know what is needed and arrive at realistic expectations. The results shared with a prospective pastor can help that person determine whether they believe God is calling him/her to serve your church.
- C. It may also be helpful to your congregation or your Pastoral Search Committee to go through the booklet, *Foundations for Pastoral Search*.

IV. Job Description

- A. Every church should have a job description for the work of its pastor. No standard job description can fit every situation. You can develop a tentative job description based on that of your last pastor or on your understanding of the pastor's work. However, you may choose to develop the job description based on the results of the Pastoral Priorities Survey. This tentative job description will be shared with potential pastors.
- B. When your new pastor arrives, you will want to work with that person to develop an initial job description emphasizing the strengths and gifts of the pastor and indicating areas of responsibility that will best be covered by others in the church.
- C. With the passage of time there will need to be occasional revisions of the job description.
- D. The job description can be a helpful tool in evaluating the pastor's work.

V. Church Profile and Packet

- A. Develop a church profile and packet of information to be sent to those whom you will call as pastor. Include the following information.
 1. A short church history with the recent developments of the church
 2. Present congregational make-up (attendance, membership, other pertinent statistics)
 3. Sabbath School description (youth statistics)
 4. Church officers
 5. Covenant
 6. Constitution and bylaws
 7. Budget
 8. Church property description
 9. Office equipment
 10. Secretarial assistance
 11. Living accommodations and furnishings
 12. Current programs
 13. Sample bulletins and newsletters
 14. Needs and goals for the future
 15. Information about the community
 16. Total financial package for the pastor including salary, retirement, medical, housing, etc.

VI. Pastor's Listings

- A. A list of all Seventh Day Baptist seminary students and pastors is found in the Directory section of the YEARBOOK. It lists pastors as licensed, ordained and accredited with their current addresses, positions and term of service . Look both at the pastor's list and the listing of churches.
- B. The Council on Ministry will send out a listing of pastors currently available for consideration. Biographical information on these and any other pastors you request, plus additional comment as to which persons may be the most likely possibilities for your church, are available from the Director of Pastoral Services.

VII. Pastoral Inquiry Letters

- A. Sometimes churches make inquiry of a number of pastors as to whether they would like to be considered. This allows for a church to focus on only those pastors who would be interested in considering a call.
- B. The Council on Ministry discourages this practice of sending out inquiry letters to pastors because it is a disruption to the pastor, the pastor's family and often to the pastor's church. Pastors and their families have enough stress without having to seriously deal with letters of inquiry that will, more than likely, not bear fruit in a call to the church.
- C. However, those churches using pastoral inquiry letters should follow these guidelines:

1. In letters and telephone calls be sure that there is no misunderstanding as to this being an "inquiry" and not a "call."
2. Pastors are not impressed with form letters so make sure each letter is individually written.
3. All correspondence, now and at every point during the pastoral process, should be marked "personal" and sent to the pastor's home address.
4. All materials developed to date by the Pastoral Search Committee should be included with the letters.
5. Those pastors who indicate that they do not wish to be considered and any others who do not reply can be eliminated from consideration.

VIII. Pastoral Candidate Selection

- A. If the Pastoral Search Committee is in unanimous agreement on a particular pastor as the candidate, you will make that recommendation to the church.
- B. The Committee may recommend several persons to the church and ask that a candidate be selected.
- C. It is essential that the congregation select one candidate and only one candidate at a time. The church should not develop a list of pastors to call (in case of rejection) based on the number of votes which each candidate received from the church. It would then be possible for a church to call a pastor which is not the choice of a majority of the people. After a candidate declines a call, the church should vote again for the next candidate to call.
- D. Candidates should be considered one at a time. Pastors do not want to be in competition with other pastors. Also, considering more than one person at a time can divide the church membership unnecessarily.

IX. Candidate Visit

- A. Invite the pastoral candidate to come to your church and community for a visit. Care must be taken to insure that it is clear to all concerned that this is a get-acquainted visit and not a "call."
- B. All expenses of the visit are to be borne by the inviting church.
- C. The time of the visit should be mutually agreed upon by the church and pastor. A long weekend including Friday and Monday is suggested.
- D. If the pastor is married, be sure to include the spouse and perhaps family in the visit. Plan to arrange housing at a motel or some other situation where there can be time alone.
- E. It is helpful if there can be some free use of a vehicle during the visit for getting acquainted with the community, visiting schools, etc.

- F. You will want to have the pastor preach and perhaps lead parts of the worship service. Have the service planned locally so that the pastor will get a flavor of the kind of service your church is used to.
- G. Plan a general meeting of the congregation at which there can be free discussion with question and answers both by the pastor and the congregation.
- H. Schedule a meeting of the pastor with the Pastoral Search Committee and/or other appropriate group in the church for discussion of finances, terms of the call, etc.

X. Terms of the Financial Agreement/Contract

- A. The Pastoral Search Committee will need to work with the Trustees and the congregation in developing a proposed contract. The contract may include the commitment of the congregation, job description of the pastor, financial considerations and other terms of the agreement between the pastor and church.
- B. In order to meet the requirements of the Internal Revenue Service it is essential that the church adopt a statement on parsonage allowance, before the pastor begins and prior to January 1 each succeeding year. The Director of Pastoral Services will furnish upon request a form to be filled out with the suggested wording of the resolution.
- C. Be sure to provide for your pastor to be included in the denomination's retirement program. Details on the program and how to make payments are available from the COSAR Business Manager at the Seventh Day Baptist Center.
- D. In setting compensation levels the church should take into consideration the pastor's level of training and years of experience. No cut-back should be made from the support level of the previous pastor unless the new pastor has less training and experience and the compensation level is truly adequate. Guidelines for pastoral salary minimums and goals are available from COSAR through the office of the Director of Pastoral Services.
- E. If it is not possible for the church to give full financial support to the pastor, it is important to specify whether additional employment will be expected or allowed.
- F. Present the proposed contract to the pastoral candidate expressing the possibility of negotiation.

XI. Calling the Pastor

- A. After the visit of the pastoral candidate, the church should decide promptly, but in the context of prayer, whether to call that person to serve as pastor. If the vote is favorable, you will proceed with the call. If the vote is negative, your Committee will need to contact that candidate and notify him/her of the church's decision. Then go back to work and decide on another person (or persons) to recommend to the church.
- B. Candidates should be considered one at a time. It is essential at every point during the search process to give prompt notification to all pastors who have been in communication with your church. Keep them informed of your progress. Let them know whether they are still being considered, whether they have been eliminated from consideration, or when someone has been secured as pastor. It is not right to ask a pastor to express an interest, and then to never hear from the church again.
- C. Inform the pastoral candidate by telephone of your decision as to whether to extend a call or not, and follow this with a letter. If the church is extending a call ask for a reply within two weeks, or for acknowledgment of receipt of your letter if the pastor desires a little more time to reach a decision.
- D. With the call letter enclose any materials not previously given to the pastor. Be sure you have made it clear about the moving expenses that will be covered by the church.
- E. Do not advertise publicly (i.e., in newsletters or bulletins which go to people beyond the local congregation) information about who is being considered or called and what they reply. This information should be kept confidential within your own congregation.
- F. The pastoral candidate may reply to your call with a request for more information or to negotiate some part of the contract. Proposed changes may be of great enough magnitude to call for a special business meeting of the congregation.
- G. If the pastor declines your call, it's back to work for the Pastoral Search Committee.

XII. Welcoming the New Pastor

- A. When the pastor has accepted your call, rejoice. Then send the good news to the Director of Pastoral Services, The Sabbath Recorder, and your local newspaper, (Be sure the timing has been cleared with your new pastor.)
- B. If you have a parsonage, make sure it is in complete readiness: repairs made, redecoration completed, utilities connected and house cleaned. This is the best way to get the pastor-parish relations off to a good start. Also, a well-stocked pantry is a wonderful welcome.
- C. If you do not have a parsonage, arrange housing accommodations for the pastor and family until they have found a place. Arrange accommodations in case the furniture should arrive after they do.

- D. Help your pastor and family become acquainted with your community. Provide them with maps and literature, information about schools, stores, hospitals, medical care, etc. A conducted tour with introductions can be helpful.
- E. Introduce your pastor to the congregation at the first worship service. Arrange an early meeting for your pastor with church leaders.
- F. Plan an installation service.

XIII. Pastor-Parish Relations Committee

- A. Provide for the strengthening of on-going pastor-people relationships by making sure that your church has a Pastor-Parish Relations Committee. The diaconate or advisory board can also function in this capacity.

Procedures to Assist Churches that Are Considering Calling Pastors Who Have Not Previously Been Seventh Day Baptists.¹

Purpose

These procedures are intended to orient any pastor coming to Seventh Day Baptists so that he or she can become an effective Seventh Day Baptist pastor. These procedures are also intended to assist churches in the process of calling a pastor from outside the denomination.

Background

Many fine pastors serving Seventh Day Baptists have come from outside the denomination. They have come by various routes: by forming and leading a group into the Conference, by joining a member church and eventually being called to the pastorate, and by becoming known to a member church through long-distance affiliation over a lengthy period of time.

Others have come suddenly, without prior experience with Seventh Day Baptists or deep understanding of Seventh Day Baptist belief and polity. This has been the case when a Seventh Day Baptist church in need of pastoral leadership has been unable to find a pastor from within the denomination and has called a person from its local community as pastor. When problems have resulted from outside leadership, they have most often developed when pastors have come in this way. A pastor whose beliefs conflict with those of Seventh Day Baptists cannot serve a Seventh Day Baptist church well.

Rather than resorting to outside leadership, it may be possible, with the help of the Council on Ministry, to locate a Seventh Day Baptist lay person or retired pastor willing to serve as an interim pastor. While pastors with conflicting beliefs may be called to serve temporarily as interim pastors, or to provide pulpit supply, it is not wise to call them for a longer term. A church must take great care to call a pastor who respects and supports their commitment to Seventh Day Baptist belief and practice and the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference.

When a pastor is making significant progress toward adopting Seventh Day Baptist belief, and the church and pastor agree that the pastor's current beliefs do not contradict Seventh Day Baptist belief, a call for more than temporary interim service may be acceptable. In this case, it will be helpful to follow these procedures.

Procedures

The procedures below apply to the calling of regular pastors from outside the Conference (as opposed to interim pastors or pastors temporarily providing pulpit supply to a church). Churches should not assume that a successful transition will occur as a matter of course. These procedures may be adapted to situations in which both the pastor and the church are in the process of becoming Seventh Day Baptist (see also "Organizing as a Branch Church" in Section E of this Manual).

Before calling a pastor from outside the denomination, the church is encouraged to ...

1. Seek the help of the Director of Pastoral Services
 - a. to ensure that the church is aware of all pastoral candidates from within the denomination and
 - b. to explore the possibility of securing a Seventh Day Baptist lay person or retired pastor as an interim pastor during the pastoral search process.

2. Notify the Director of Pastoral Services when a pastor from outside the denomination is being considered. Supply contact information to the Director of Pastoral Services. The Director of Pastoral Services may be able to assist in investigating the candidate's credentials.
3. Seek the advice and counsel of sister Seventh Day Baptist churches. Share information about a potential new pastor with these sister churches and their pastors, asking for information they might have about a candidate. Request opportunities for leaders of sister churches to become acquainted with the candidate and to help the church and candidate become aware of potential problems.
4. If possible, have the candidate attend Association meetings and introduce the candidate there.

When calling a pastor from outside the denomination, the church is encouraged to ...

1. Require the candidate to join the church, following all the steps that are normally required for membership.
2. Call the candidate for a two-year period and notify the Director of Pastoral Services of this action.
3. If the candidate is not ordained, license the candidate to preach.
4. To the extent possible offer financial assistance to the new pastor to attend Conference and Association meetings, and Summer Institute sessions. The church will excuse the pastor for the purpose of attending these meetings.
5. In consultation with the Director of Pastoral Services, the church should select a nearby Seventh Day Baptist pastor to serve as mentor.
6. Evaluate the pastor during this two year period, renewing the license to preach annually. A positive evaluation requires that the pastor actively sought to become familiar with Seventh Day Baptists and their belief and practice. Two leaders from sister Seventh Day Baptist churches and the Director of Pastoral Services should assist the church in evaluating the candidate.
7. If the pastor is to continue beyond the two years, he or she will assure the church that withdrawal from all other denominational affiliations has occurred.

After two years of positive evaluations the church is encouraged to ...

1. Make sure that the Director of Pastoral Services and sister churches in the Association know that the individual is continuing as pastor of the church. Plan an installation service, to which sister churches are invited.
2. To the extent possible, offer financial assistance to the new pastor to attend Conference and Association meetings, and excuse the pastor's absence for the purpose of attending those meetings.
3. Call the pastor to ordination or confirmation of a former ordination after not less than one additional year of serving as a Seventh Day Baptist pastor. (Confirming a previous ordination from another denomination requires the same process as that for ordaining a pastor for the first time as delineated in the Council on Ministry Manual of Procedures).
4. When the pastor has met the requirement for accreditation (see "Requirements for Accreditation" in Section H of this Manual of Procedure), make application to the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference for the granting of that status.

The Transfer Pastor is expected to ...

1. Sever relationships with the former denomination by notifying appropriate agencies.
2. Join the Seventh Day Baptist church in which a ministry position is sought.
3. Submit transcripts of all post high school education to the Council on Ministry.

4. Complete the full sequence of Summer Institute courses offered by the Council on Ministry. Fees will be waived, but travel expenses will be the responsibility of the church the Transfer Pastor serves.
5. Cooperate with efforts made to inform him or her of Seventh Day Baptist belief and practice, and welcome opportunities to get to know other Seventh Day Baptists.
6. Be willing to work with a mentor pastor to explore Seventh Day Baptist belief, practice and tradition.
7. Welcome the encouragement and advice of the Director of Pastoral Services.
8. Pursue a path that will eventually lead to ordination (or recognition by Seventh Day Baptists of previous ordination) and accreditation as a Seventh Day Baptist pastor.

¹ Conference Minutes, SDB yearbook (2003), pp A-4 through A-6 and A-22 and A-23

Example 1: The Seventh Day Baptist Church at North Loup, Nebraska

Since God, by His grace, has brought us into fellowship with Himself through Jesus Christ our Savior from sin, and into fellowship with each other through faith in Him, we acknowledge His Lordship over us. Therefore, we enter into covenant with our God and with each other as the Seventh Day Baptist Church of North Loup, Nebraska, solemnly agreeing to live according to the following covenant by the help of God.

WE COVENANT AND AGREE

That we will live by faith in Jesus Christ in fellowship with each other in His Church.

That we will take the Bible, God's Word, to be our final authority in matters of faith and life and will strive to pattern our lives on its precepts, endeavoring, through His Spirit, to keep the commandments of God.

That we will each look out for the others' interests and serve each other in Christian love as any has need.

That we will observe God's holy Sabbath out of love for God, in worship, in study and in service, attending the services of the church as we are able.

That we will give a voluntary and cheerful offering, as we are able, for the advancement of Christ's kingdom and the necessary expenses of the church.

(As revised October 6, 1991)

Example 2: Foothill Community Church--Montrose, California (A Seventh Day Baptist Congregation)

Being in substantial agreement with each other upon Biblical doctrines (as stated in our Articles of Faith) we enter into this covenant with our God and with each other as the Foothill Community Church, solemnly agreeing to walk by the help of God according to the following covenant:

- WE COVENANT AND AGREE TO RECOGNIZE THE BIBLE AS THE ONLY WRITTEN SCRIPTURE AND THE FINAL GUIDE OF OUR FAITH AND PRACTICE, STRIVING TO FASHION OUR LIVES ACCORDING TO GOD'S STANDARDS AND COMMANDS.
- WE COVENANT AND AGREE TO GIVE HIGH PRIORITY TO GOD'S CALL UPON OUR LIVES BY FAITHFUL PARTICIPATION IN WORSHIP, STUDY, FELLOWSHIP AND SERVICE.

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- WE COVENANT AND AGREE TO ACTIVELY WORK TO FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION BY INVITING OTHERS TO ACCEPT JESUS CHRIST AS LORD AND SAVIOR.
- WE COVENANT AND AGREE TO ENCOURAGE AND HELP EACH OTHER GROW IN OUR UNDERSTANDING AND LIVING OF THE CHRISTIAN FAITH. WE WILL SEEK TO FULFILL OUR CALLING TO BE SERVANTS IN OUR FAMILIES, IN OUR OCCUPATIONS AND IN OUR COMMUNITIES.
- WE COVENANT AND AGREE TO ACTIVELY SUPPORT THE WORK OF THE FOOTHILL COMMUNITY CHURCH WITH OUR PRAYERS, OUT TIME, OUR ENERGY, AND OUR FINANCIAL RESOURCES, AS GOD GIVES US THE ABILITY.
- WE COVENANT AND AGREE TO SUPPORT OUR CHURCH LEADERS BY UPHOLDING THEM IN PRAYER AND TREATING THEM WITH LOVE AND RESPECT. WE WILL WORK TOWARD A UNITY OF SPIRIT AND UNDERSTANDING IN OUR CHURCH FAMILY.

Signature

Date

Example 3: Pawcatuck Seventh Day Baptist Church--Westerly, Rhode Island

Recognizing that due to our sinful nature we have fallen short of the glory of God, and that it is only through our faith in God's grace, the sacrifice of His Son, that we are saved and brought into fellowship together, WE AGREE:

-- to keep the Commandments of God, and walk in the faith of Jesus Christ.

-- to accept the Holy Scriptures as our rule of faith and practice.

-- to watch over each other for good, to the intent that we may be built up together in Christ, grow in grace and a further knowledge of the truth, and be instrumental in bringing men to a saving knowledge of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

-- to faithfully attend the appointments, and bear the burdens and expenses of the church, according as God may give us severally the ability.

(As revised April 12, 1986)

Example 1: Seventh Day Baptist Church of Shiloh, New Jersey

Articles of Faith

I Concerning God

We believe in one God, the creator and sustainer of all things, manifest in three persons: the Father, who is perfect in justice and love; the Son, who is eternal God who was manifest in the flesh; the Holy Spirit, who is the regenerator and guide of men.

God Creator: Psa. 90:2; Heb. 1:2; Trinity: Matt. 28:19; Father, Justice, Love: Rom. 3:26; John 3:16; Rom. 5:8; Son: Luke 1:35; Phil. 2:6,7; Holy Spirit regenerator: John 3:5; Guide: John 14:26; Acts 1:8.

II Concerning the Scriptures

We believe that the Bible is the Word of God, divinely inspired, and that it is the only perfect rule of faith and practice.

Inspired: II Pet. 1:21; I Cor. 2:12,13; Perfect Rule: Matt. 4:4; II Tim. 3:16; Rom. 10:17.

III Concerning Sin and Salvation

We believe that man is by nature and by disobedience a guilty sinner in need of salvation but unable to save himself; that in order to be saved he must be born again, repenting and accepting by faith Christ's sacrificial atonement for sin.

Sin: Rom. 3:23; Isa. 53:6; Guilt: John 8:24; Rom. 6:23; Atonement: John 1:29; I Cor. 15:3; I Pet. 2:24; Repentance, Belief, New Birth: Luke 13:3; Acts 2:38; Gal. 3:22; Eph. 2:8; John 3:3.

IV Concerning Baptism

We believe in the baptism of believers only, by immersion, symbolizing burial with Christ and resurrection to newness of life, and the washing away of sins; and that it is a necessary qualification for church membership.

Believers: Acts 8:36,37; Meaning and Mode: Col. 2:12; Rom. 6:3,4; Acts 22:16; Church Membership: Acts 2:41.

V Concerning the Lord's Supper

We believe that the Lord's Supper commemorates the suffering and sacrificial death of Christ, was instituted by Him for the church, and is intended only for his followers.

Instituted: Matt. 26:26-29; Partaking: I Cor. 10:16; 11: 23-30.

VI Concerning the Sabbath

We believe that the seventh day of the week is the Sabbath of Creation, of the ever-binding Ten Commandments, of Christ and of the Apostolic Church, and that it should be observed as the Christian's day of rest and worship.

Creation: Gen. 2:1-3; Law: Exod. 20:8-11; Rom. 3:31; Christ: Mark 2:27,28; Apostles: Acts 18:3,4,11; Blessing: Isa. 58:13; For all time: Matt. 24:20; Isa. 66:23.

VII Concerning the Resurrection

We believe in the miraculous resurrection of Christ, and that both the just and the unjust shall be raised when He comes again in judgment, cutting off eternally from the presence of the Lord, those who are unrepentant in this life, and receiving into the fullness of eternal life those who are his true followers.

Christ's Resurrection: Matt. 28:1-7; I Cor. 15:17-20; Raising of all: Acts 24:15; II Cor. 5:10; Judgment: Matt. 25:31-34,41,46; John 5:28,29; Time: II Tim. 4:1; Fullness: I John 5:12; Phil. 3:21; I John 3:2.

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Example 2: Seventh Day Baptist Church of Daytona Beach, Florida

ARTICLES OF FAITH

I. GOD

We believe in one God, self-existent, infinite in wisdom, power, justice and goodness - the Creator and Governor of all things. (Duet. 33:27; Ps. 90:2; Isa. 44:6; I Tim. 1:17)

II. CHRIST

We believe that Christ possessed both a divine and a human nature, and was, therefore, in a true sense both the Son of God and the Son of Man. (Matt. 1:1; Ps. 2:7; Lk. 1:35; Rom. 1:3,4; Gal. 4:4; II Cor. 5:19; John 1:1)

III. THE HOLY SPIRIT

We believe in the Holy Spirit, who inspired the prophets and the apostles, whose continual office is to lead humanity into a knowledge of the mind of God, who is the great regenerator of mankind through the truth. (John 14:26; II Pet. 1:21; Acts 2:4,5; John 3:5; Rom. 8:2; Gal. 5:22)

IV. THE HOLY SCRIPTURE

We believe that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments were inspired by the Holy Spirit and that, rightly interpreted, they provide a perfect rule of faith and practice. (Heb. 1:1; II Pet. 1:21; II Tim. 3:16,17)

V. MAN AND HIS ATTAINMENT OF ETERNAL LIFE

We believe that mankind possesses both a physical and a spiritual nature, that in order to be saved one must be born of the Spirit, that this salvation is the gift of God, and that when men and women thus become regenerated children of God, they become heirs of eternal life. (II Cor. 4:16; Rom. 7:22; Eph. 3:16; 2:5; Rom. 3:24,25; Rom. 4:16; Eph. 2:8; Col. 3:10; I Pet. 3:4; Gen. 1:26; John 3:3,5,7; Acts 26:17,18; Rom. 8:14-18; Gal. 3:29 & 4:7)

VI. REPENTANCE, FAITH AND BAPTISM

We believe it to be the duty and privilege of all mankind to repent, believe in Christ the Saviour and be baptized. (Matt. 28:19; Lk. 24:47; Acts 2:38,41; Acts 8:12; 10:47; 16:15; 16:33; 18:6; Mk. 16:16; Rom. 6:4; Col. 2:12)

VII. THE LORD'S SUPPER

We believe the Lord's Supper to be an appropriate ordinance of the Christian religion, which should be perpetuated in the Church. (Matt. 26:26-28; I Cor. 11:23-26)

VIII. THE SABBATH

We believe the seventh day of the week to be the sacred Sabbath of Jehovah, and that it should be kept holy - in recognition of Gods will, in conformity with both the example and the teachings of Christ, as a fitting memorial of creation, and as a type of the saints' rest in Heavenly Home. (Gen. 2:2; Ex. 20:8-11 ; Ex. 31:13; Is. 58:13,14; Ezek. 20:12; 44:24; Mk. 2:27; Mk. 3:1-5; Matt. 5:17-19; Lk. 14:6; Heb. 1:11)

(Adopted March 13, 1932)

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Appendix 5: Sample Constitutions and Bylaws

Example 1: Rural Church in Small Town (Nebraska)¹

ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION SEVENTH DAY BAPTIST CHURCH OF NORTH LOUP, NEBRASKA

We, the undersigned, acting as incorporators under the Nebraska Nonprofit Corporation Act, Sections 21-1901 to 21-1991 Revised Statutes of Nebraska, adopt the following Articles of Incorporation for this corporation:

ARTICLE I. NAME

The name of this corporation is Seventh Day Baptist Church of North Loup, Nebraska.

ARTICLE II. TERM

The corporation shall have perpetual existence.

ARTICLE III. PURPOSES

The purposes for which this corporation is organized are:

1. To provide a household of faith, fellowship, and service with the Bible as our guide.
2. To aid in the redemptive work of Christ's kingdom in this community and in the world at large through the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference.
3. To provide opportunities for members to cooperate in service to the community.
4. To promote the acceptance and observance of the Biblical Sabbath.

ARTICLE IV. POWERS

This corporation shall possess and enjoy all the rights, privileges, immunities and benefits conferred on it by its original and amended Articles of Incorporation, together with those which are conferred upon it pursuant to the provisions of the Nebraska Non-Profit Corporation Act and the laws of this State which are applicable to the nature of its business as more specifically set forth in Section 21-19, 106, R.R.S.

The corporation shall accept contributions and aid for the foregoing purposes from the congregational membership and any others who show an interest in the purposes as stated in Article III.

¹ Replacing the original constitution, the articles below are in a form more suitable for incorporation under state law. The accompanying bylaws are simple and uncomplicated, reflecting the needs of a small to midsize church. The bylaws repeat the statement of the purposes of the church (with slight variation) contained in the articles of incorporation since the latter document is not widely circulated. (Indeed, the above version of it was difficult to find, and may not represent the final form submitted to the state!) As may be seen below, the articles contain legal stipulations which need not be consulted for the day to day operations of the church (which are described in the more readily available bylaws).

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The corporation may receive gifts, grants, bequests, devises legacies and any other gratuity of a beneficial character for a specified purpose or purposes which shall be administered in accordance with the terms and conditions imposed by the donors, and which shall be devoted to the accomplishment of the designated purpose or purposes.

Unless otherwise provided by the donor, property and funds so received may be mingled for the purpose specified by the donor. Provided, however, in the event it becomes impossible to effectively use any such funds for the purposes specified by the donor and if the donor has not provided an alternate disposition, the board of trustees shall have the power to transfer such fund to the general purposes of the congregation.

The corporation shall have the following powers:

1. To execute contracts therefore or relating thereto or to receive assignments of such contracts.
2. To acquire, utilize, and dispose of, in any manner, real and personal property, or any interest therein, including but not limited to licenses, leases, copyrights, patents and franchises.
3. To acquire, utilize, and dispose of, in any manner, capital stock, bonds, securities, or evidences of indebtedness of this corporation or any other corporations, domestic or foreign; to borrow money, with or without pledge or mortgage upon all or any of its property as security; and to undertake or assume the obligations of any person, firm or corporation.

ARTICLE V. INTERNAL AFFAIRS

1. Members. The members of the corporation shall be persons who desire to participate in the purposes and objectives of the corporation. The classes of members, manner of election or appointment, term of membership, and qualifications and rights of members shall be set forth in the bylaws.
2. Management. The affairs of the corporation shall be managed by its Board of Directors which shall be known as a Board of Trustees and said board shall have all rights and duties vested in a Board of Directors by law. The officers of the corporation shall be a President, Secretary, Treasurer and such other executives and spiritual officers as may be set forth in the bylaws.
3. Bylaws. The initial bylaws shall be adopted by the Board of Trustees. The power to alter, amend, or repeal the bylaws or adopt new bylaws shall be vested in the Board of Trustees unless otherwise provided in the bylaws.
4. Non-Profit. This corporation shall have no capital stock. No dividends shall be paid and no income shall be distributed or used to the benefit of the trustees, officers or employees of the corporation other than reasonable compensation for services rendered. Trustees may not be reimbursed for any personal services rendered to the corporation. All income of the corporation and all contributions to it shall be used exclusively for accomplishing the purposes of the corporation.
5. Exemption. This corporation is organized and shall be operated exclusively for religious, charitable and educational purposes. It shall not engage in any activity that would disqualify it as a corporation described in Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code to which contributions may be made which are deductible under the United States Internal Revenue Code. No part of the net earnings of said corporation shall inure to the benefit of any private shareholder or individual and no substantial part of the activities of said corporation shall be carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting, to influence legislation. Said corporation

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shall not participate in, or intervene in, any political campaign on behalf of any candidate for public office.

6. Dissolution. In the event of dissolution of the corporation, all remaining assets shall be distributed exclusively for the purposes set forth in Article III of these Articles, to [named institution].

ARTICLE VI. REGISTERED OFFICE AND AGENT

1. The address of the initial registered office of the corporation shall be [address given here].
2. The initial registered agent is [person named].

ARTICLE VII. OFFICERS AND INCORPORATORS

1. The Board of Trustees shall consist of the following persons: [list of names].
2. The names and addresses of the incorporators are: [names given].

ARTICLE VIII. AMENDMENTS

The Articles of Incorporation may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present or represented by proxy at a meeting of the members.

[Dated in 1975 and signed by incorporators]

BYLAWS (Last Revised July 13, 1997)

ARTICLE I. PURPOSE

Section 1. The purpose of this church shall be:

- A. First and foremost, to lead people to Jesus Christ.
- B. To nurture them in Christian living by providing a household of faith, fellowship and service, with the Bible as our guide.
- C. To provide opportunities for members to cooperate in service to the community.
- D. To promote the acceptance and observance of the Biblical Sabbath.

ARTICLE II. AFFILIATION

Section 1. As a Seventh Day Baptist church, this church shall maintain its membership in the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, USA and Canada, sharing the privileges thereof, and the reciprocal responsibilities of its ministries.

Section 2. Similarly this church shall also maintain its membership in the Mid-Continent Association and share in the support of its work and ministries.

ARTICLE III. MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Active Membership

- A. Qualifications - One may be received into the church after giving evidence of having experienced a religious awakening wherein he has chosen to follow Christ and His

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- righteousness, and has been baptized by immersion in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, observes the Sabbath of the Lord, which is the seventh day of the week, and accepts the duties and obligations of church membership.
- B. Applications for church membership shall be considered by the Board of Deacons. Upon recommendation by said Board, the application shall be granted by vote of the church. Members may be received in three ways:
1. By letter. This refers to transfer from a church of like faith and order, which practices baptism by immersion after profession of faith.
 2. By baptism. This means reception of one who has not been a member of a church of like faith and order, but who has professed faith in Christ, receives baptism by immersion and is otherwise qualified.
 3. By testimony. This refers to those who meet the qualifications for membership but do not have a letter of transfer from a church of another Baptist denomination.
- C. Duties - The duties of members are such as outlined in the church covenant and include faithful attendance, support, and efforts to bring others into the fellowship of the church, the body of Christ.
- D. Dismissal - Dismissal shall be made by majority vote of the church, upon the specific written request of the member or by recommendation from the Board of Deacons. Upon his written request, a member may be given a letter to a sister church of like faith and order by a majority vote of the church, and so certified with a letter signed by the church secretary.

Section 2. Inactive Membership - Members may be declared inactive by vote of the Board of Deacons, upon their request or provided: their addresses are unknown; or for a period of two years, they have not contributed to the financial support of the church, or helped with its activities, or attended its services, or otherwise expressed commitment to the church and its work, in response to inquiries from the church. Such inactive members may be reinstated on the active membership list by a vote of the Board of Deacons upon their renewed commitment to the church as defined by the above criteria.

ARTICLE IV. PROFESSIONAL MINISTRY

Section 1. Pastor

- A. Selection of a pastor - The selection of a pastor shall begin with the appointment of a special Pastoral Search Committee, which shall present names to the church for its consideration. At any such business meeting, nominations from the floor are in order. The church shall proceed to vote on the names given. All voting shall be done by written ballot. A two-thirds vote of those members present and voting is required to effect a call. The pastor shall be called for an initial term of three years.
- B. Renewal of call - At the annual business meeting next preceding the end of the pastor's term of office, a written ballot shall be taken. A two-thirds vote of approval of those members present and voting shall be necessary for the renewal of a call for one year.

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- C. Termination of call - The call of the pastor during his term may be terminated by the pastor or a majority vote of members present and voting. Either the pastor or church shall give notice ninety days prior to the time of termination.
- D. Duties of pastor - The pastor shall supervise the spiritual interests of the church in his role as preacher, teacher, leader, counselor, minister, and shepherd of his congregation. As spiritual leader, he shall be available to the community, and he shall seek opportunities to share in the spiritual life of the community and its churches. He shall be a member ex-officio of all committees under Article VII. The pastor shall report on his activities and on the spiritual life of the church at each quarterly and annual business meeting and at such times as he or the church may desire.

Section 2. License to preach - The church may issue a “license to preach” on recommendation of the Board of Deacons to any person whose commitment and faith give promise of future acceptance of professional responsibilities in the church or to others who are temporarily serving the church in some pastoral capacity. Such a license is granted for a duration of one year, after which the situation and the suitability of the licentiate will be reviewed. Renewal of license shall be by the same procedure as that of its first issuance.

ARTICLE V. MEETINGS

Section 1. Meetings for worship - meetings for worship shall be held on the Sabbath and at such times as they may be appointed by the church or its spiritual leaders.

Section 2. Meetings for business - The annual business meeting shall be held on the first Sunday in the month of January, and quarterly business meetings shall be held on the first Sunday of the months of April, July and October.

Section 3. Meeting changes - The time of any one of the business meetings may be temporarily changed or the meeting may be postponed by the church or the Advisory Board. At all ordinary meetings, ten members in good standing shall constitute a quorum.

Section 4. Special meetings - A special business meeting may be called by the president or at the request of any five members, providing notice has been given on the two Sabbaths before the meeting date and the purpose of the meeting has been stated.

ARTICLE VI. OFFICERS

Section 1. Spiritual officers - The spiritual officers of the church shall be such as the church may choose in accordance with the general usage of the Seventh Day Baptist churches (pastor, deacons, deaconesses, elders).

- A. Selecting Diaconate members - A candidate shall be called to ordination for the Diaconate upon recommendation of the Diaconate with the approval of the church. Suggestions may be made to the Diaconate by any church member. Each new member shall be ordained unless he has previously been ordained in another Seventh Day Baptist church. He shall be a member of the Board of Deacons as long as he is a member of this church.
- B. Duties of the Diaconate - The Board shall in every way assist the pastor in his work; cooperate with him in providing the pulpit supply and prayer meeting leaders in his absence; consider all applications for church membership, requests for letters of dismissal, and transfers to inactive membership; visit the members; care for the needy, sick and distressed members of the church; use such fellowship funds as needed; designate special offerings; help with and serve the Lord's Supper; and aid in baptisms. The Board shall make recommendations for the issuance of a license to preach.

Section 2. Executive officers

- A. Electing executive officers - Any church member is eligible to hold an office of the church and perform the duties as outlined for such offices. At each annual meeting or such other meeting as shall have been designated for the purpose, a president, secretary, treasurer, and assistant treasurer (each to serve for one year) and one trustee (who shall serve for four years) shall be chosen by a majority vote of the voting members present. Such vote shall be by ballot. All these officers shall, however, continue to serve until their successors have been chosen.
- B. Duties of executive officers
 - 1. President - The president shall serve as moderator and preside at all business and Advisory Board meetings. He is a member of the Board of Trustees. He may also call special meetings as the need arises.
 - 2. Secretary - The secretary shall keep a complete record of the transactions of all business at the meetings of the church and the Advisory Board. He shall keep a record of the names and addresses of members, with dates and manner of their admission and dismissal, as well as a record of baptisms. He shall notify all officers, committee members, and delegates of their election or appointment. He shall issue letters of dismissal and recommendation voted by the church, preserve on file all communications and written reports and give legal notice of all meetings where such is required by these Bylaws. He shall also assist in preparing denominational reports. Immediately after the election of his successor, the secretary shall deliver to the new secretary all books and records for which he has been responsible. He shall be a member of the Board of Trustees.
 - 3. Treasurer - The treasurer shall have custody of the funds of the church and all deposits made in the name of the church, and all the checks drawn by him shall be made in the name of the church. He shall keep separate accounts of all funds raised or contributed for particular purposes, and no funds shall be disbursed by him except for the purpose for which they were raised or contributed. He shall have custody of the securities, investments, title papers and other valuable documents of the church.

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He shall make such other reports as may be desired by the church. He shall deliver immediately to his successor all books and records pertaining to his office. He shall be a member of the Board of Trustees and Advisory Board. He shall preside at the Advisory Board or church business meeting in the absence of the president. At the quarterly and annual business meetings, he shall present to the church an itemized report of receipts and disbursements showing the actual financial condition of the church.

4. Assistant Treasurer - The assistant treasurer shall perform the duties of the treasurer in his absence or as directed by the treasurer.
5. Board of Trustees - The Board of Trustees, under the direction of the church, shall have the care and management of the temporal affairs of the church. They shall hold, buy, sell and administer all the real and personal property of the church, and all permanent trust funds belonging to the church as they are directed by the church. They may, under the direction of the church, employ and remunerate a janitor to take care of the house of worship.

Section 3. Other church officers - The other church officers are: organist, assistant organist, historian, Recorder reporter and *Prairie Post* (newsletter) editor.

A. Electing other church officers - These officers are chosen in the same manner as the executive officers.

B. Duties of other church officers

1. Organist. The organist shall provide accompaniment at worship services and other church meetings as needed.
2. Assistant Organist. The assistant organist shall perform the duties of the organist in his absence or as directed by the organist.
3. Historian. The historian shall keep a record of current events of the church.
4. Recorder Reporter. The Recorder Reporter shall report activities of the church to *The Sabbath Recorder* (denominational magazine) at regular intervals.
5. *Prairie Post* Editor. The editor of *The Prairie Post* shall solicit articles and reports and edit them quarterly. He shall oversee the printing and mailing of this church newsletter.

ARTICLE VII. COMMITTEES

Section 1. Advisory Board

- A. Membership - The Advisory Board shall consist of a choir representative and one member from each of the following boards and committees: Deacons, Trustees, Christian Education, Fellowship and Service, Outreach, and the Youth Fellowship. Each group

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shall select its own representative yearly. The president, secretary, treasurer and pastor shall serve as *ex-officio* members.

B. Duties

1. Coordinate all boards and committees.
2. Prepare a budget for the annual business meeting.
3. Collect agenda items for the business meetings.
4. Call special business meetings when needed.
5. Allow individual input from any committee, subcommittee, or church member wishing to be present at the meeting as a non-voting member.
6. Conduct necessary church business between quarterly meetings.
7. Report to the church at quarterly business meetings.

Section 2. Board of Deacons

A. Membership - Membership shall be as defined in these Bylaws, Article VI, Section 1, Letter A.

B. Duties - Their duties shall be as listed in these Bylaws, Article VI, Section 1, Letter B. In addition, they shall:

1. Select a head deacon, and assign one member to serve on the Advisory Board and one member to serve on the Pastoral Relations Committee.
2. Report to the church at quarterly business meetings.

Section 3. Board of Trustees

A. Membership - The Board of Trustees shall consist of the president, secretary, treasurer, and four at-large members serving a four year rotating term of office.

B. Duties - Their duties shall be as listed in these Bylaws, Article VI, Section 2, Letter B. In addition, they shall:

1. Select a member to serve on the Camp Committee.
2. Report to the church at quarterly business meetings.
3. Elect their own chairman.

C. Subcommittees

1. Memorials & Historical Items Committee

- a. Membership - This committee shall consist of three at-large members and be responsible to the Trustees. They shall serve a three year rotating term of office.
- b. Duties - They shall: 1.) Make recommendations for the selection of memorial items 2.) Be responsible for the care of memorial pieces and restoration and preservation of historical items 3.) Elect their own chairman.

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2. Camp Committee

- a. Membership - This committee shall consist of seven at-large members and one trustee. They shall serve a three year rotating term of office.
- b. Duties - They shall: 1.) Operate and maintain the camp facility 2.) Provide operational staff 3.) Report to the Trustees and/or the church 4) Elect their own chairman

Section 4. Christian Education Committee

A. Membership - The Christian Education Committee shall consist of four at-large members, the Youth Fellowship Sponsor, the Youth Christian Fellowship Sponsor, and the Sabbath School Superintendent. The at-large members shall serve a four year rotating term of office.

B. Duties - They shall:

1. Maintain an ongoing Christian education program for the church.
2. Promote Bible study and encourage the devotional life of the congregation.
3. Foster individual growth through discipleship.
4. Coordinate camping programs, including: setting policy, setting dates, securing directors, and overseeing and evaluating the programs.
5. Promote the use and development of the church library.
6. Report to the church at quarterly business meetings.
7. Elect their own chairman.
8. Provide direction for the operation of the Sabbath School in cooperation with the Sabbath School officers.
 - a. Meet quarterly with the Christian Education Committee and Sabbath School officers and/or teachers
 - b. Assist the Sabbath School Superintendent, officers and teachers in choosing curriculum and class structure
 - c. Provide counsel to the Sabbath School Superintendent.
 - d. Promote Sabbath School with such incentives as the officers and members see fit.

C. Subcommittees

1. Youth Fellowship
 - a. Membership shall include all youth of the church of Junior and Senior High School through college age.
 - b. The sponsor is appointed in consultation with the Christian Education Committee, and shall serve on that committee.
2. Youth Christian Fellowship
 - a. Membership shall include children of the church in grades three through six.
 - b. The sponsor is chosen by the Christian Education Committee, and shall serve on that committee.

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Section 5. Fellowship & Service Committee

- A. Membership - The Fellowship & Service Committee shall consist of four at-large members serving a four year rotating term of office.
- B. Duties - They shall:
 - 1. Set up monthly social committees and promote social activities.
 - 2. Provide a slate of nominations at the annual business meeting for expiring terms of officers and the following committees: Board of Trustees, Christian Education, Fellowship & Service, Outreach, Camp, Memorial & Historical Items, Communications, Pastoral Relations, Pop Corn Days Stand, and Lord's Acre.
 - 3. See each nominee personally.
 - 4. Prepare individual ballots for each office and committee.
 - 5. Select a member to serve on the Communications Committee.
 - 6. Report to the church at quarterly business meetings.
 - 7. Elect their own chairman.
- C. Subcommittees
 - 1. Communications Committee
 - a. Membership - This committee shall consist of two at-large members and one member of the Fellowship & Service Committee.
 - b. Duties - They shall: 1.) Provide a communications link in special circumstances or as the need arises by way of telephone to the congregation and/or the community 2.) Supervise and assist in the publication of *The Prairie Post* (newsletter).

Section 6. Outreach Committee

- A. Membership - The Outreach Committee shall consist of six at-large members who shall serve a three year rotating term of office.
- B. Duties - They shall:
 - 1. Initiate programs for evangelism and church growth.
 - 2. Promote missionary endeavors.
 - 3. Engage in community outreach activities such as worship services for the elderly in Ord, men's Lenten breakfasts, Pop Corn Days parade float, etc.
 - 4. Report to the church at quarterly business meetings.
 - 5. Elect their own chairman.

ARTICLE VIII. INDEPENDENT COMMITTEES AND ORGANIZATIONS

- Section 1. Sabbath School - This organization shall function through the work of its officers, teachers, and members in cooperation with the Christian Education Committee.

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Section 2. Pastoral Relations Committee

- A. Membership - This committee shall consist of the pastor, a deacon, one member chosen by the pastor, and one member chosen by the church.
- B. Duties - They shall establish and maintain healthy relations between the pastor and the congregation.

Section 3. Pop Corn Days Stand Committee

- A. Membership - This committee shall consist of six at-large members serving a three year rotating term of office. Co-chairmen shall serve in their third year.
- B. Duties - They shall report to the church when applicable.

Section 4. Lord's Acre Committee

- A. Membership - This committee shall consist of six at-large members serving a three year rotating term of office. Co-chairmen shall serve in their third year.
- B. Duties - They shall report to the church when applicable.

Section 5. Dr. Grace Missionary Society - All women of the church may participate in the activities and affairs of the Society. This organization shall function through the work of its officers and members.

Section 6. Young Adult Fellowship

Section 7. Men's Fellowship

ARTICLE IX. AMENDMENTS

Section 1. These Bylaws or the Articles of Incorporation may be amended at any quarterly or annual business meeting by vote of two-thirds of the members present and voting, provided: that the proposed amendment shall have been presented in writing at a previous quarterly meeting; and that two notices of such proposed amendment shall have been given in connection with the regular notice of the meeting when action will be taken.

Appendix 5: Sample Constitutions and Bylaws

Example 2: Large Church in Small City (Wisconsin)¹

Constitution and By-laws of the Seventh Day Baptist Church
Milton, WI
(Adopted January 2005)

CONSTITUTION

Article I. **NAME**

The corporate name of this church shall be the Seventh Day Baptist Church of Milton, Wisconsin.

Article II. **OUR FAITH**

We believe in God, Our Father: in Jesus Christ, His Son: and in the Holy Spirit.

We believe in the Bible: it is our authority in matters of faith and conduct.

We believe in the Church: with Christ as its head, it is the whole company of people dedicated to the worship and service of God and the promotion of His kingdom. We subscribe to the Christian doctrines and practices as set forth in the statement of Beliefs of Seventh Day Baptists.

We believe in the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper: through confession of faith in Christ and Baptism by immersion we enter the Church. Through the Lord's Supper we symbolize our Christian fellowship and pledge renewed allegiance to our risen Lord.

We believe in the Sabbath of the Bible: following our Lord's example, we observe the Seventh Day Sabbath to the glory of God and the physical and spiritual enrichment of man.

We believe in Christ's great commission, as given in Matthew 28:19-20. As His disciples we commit ourselves to share Christ's good news with mankind.

Article III. **OUR COVENANT**

Having received salvation by the grace of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, we covenant:

- to keep the commandments of God, sustained in the faith of Jesus Christ.
- to meet for worship on the Sabbath and to support the program of the Church.
- to give in service to God a fair proportion of our time, abilities, and material possessions in the belief that these are given to us as a trust from God.
- to watch over each other for good and to pray for each other to the intent that we may grow in wisdom and spiritual understanding.

¹ Reflecting the needs of a larger congregation, the organization of this church is more complex than the previous example in this section, and much more attention is given to the management of finances.

Article IV. **MEMBERSHIP**

This church recognizes two degrees of affiliation: Membership and Associate Membership. Membership in this Church is attained by a majority vote of the Church on the request of a candidate whose confession of faith and acceptance of the Articles of Faith and Covenant are followed by baptism in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Any person having already experienced these requirements may apply for membership by letter or testimony and be voted upon as above.

Associate membership may be attained by majority vote of the church by any person who subscribes to the Articles of Faith and Covenant of the Seventh Day Baptist Church, but who desires to maintain their primary membership in another church. Such members are welcome to be a part of the church's varied ministries but are not eligible for elected positions and have no voting privileges.

A member, upon his request, may have his name removed from the roll of the church by a majority vote of the church or by a majority vote of the Leadership Council if the request is received between regular Church business meetings. He may in the same manner be granted a letter of transfer to a church of like faith or a statement of membership to join a church of another denomination.

An associate member may, in like manner, be granted a statement of associate membership.

Names of members whose whereabouts are unknown will be dropped from membership roll of this church by action of the Church on recommendation of the Leadership Council. Such persons may be reinstated to membership by vote of the Church. Removal from membership may take place by a majority vote of the church. If a person has not attended or made contact with the church in 2 years, a letter may be issued to determine their intent. If contact cannot be made or the person does not respond, the person's name may be brought before the church for dismissal.

Article V. **POLITY**

The government of the Church is vested in its members, who shall have the right to vote upon all questions offered for consideration and action at any business meeting. All members are eligible to serve in any office of the Church.

Article VI. **ADMINISTRATION**

Officers: The officers of the church shall consist of a president, vice-president and treasurer, all of whom shall be members of the Church. To serve specific needs the Church may elect additional officers who shall not be considered administrative officers. The president and treasurer shall be elected at the annual business meeting.

Business Meetings: The annual meeting of the Church for the transaction of its business shall be held on the third Sunday in January. Additionally a meeting will be held in July of each year to review goals for the current year and to transact other business as referred. Annually in the fall of each year, a meeting will be held to discuss a strategic plan for the next fiscal year. Business meetings may also be held at the call of the Operations Team or at the request of a majority vote of the Leadership Council. Notices of time of holding all business meetings shall be published by the Administrator and announced at the Sabbath morning services at least one week before the session.

Quorum: Twenty-five members shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Parliamentary authority: The most recent edition of Robert's Rules of Order shall be considered the parliamentary authority in all matters of procedure not otherwise ordered by this constitution or its by-laws.

Article VII. LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Leadership Council: There shall be a Leadership Council of 16 positions. These shall include the president, treasurer, team leaders and additional Church members elected on a rotation basis. The Senior Pastor and the Associate Pastor shall be voting members. At the beginning of each year the Leadership Council shall elect from their group the vice-president. Vacancies in the Council shall be filled by Leadership Council appointment. The appointees shall hold office until the next annual business meeting.

Article IX. DIACONATE

Diaconate: The Diaconate consists of those members who have been recognized as possessing the scriptural qualifications set forth in Acts 6:3 and I Timothy 3:8-13 and have been called to serve as deacons and deaconesses in promoting the spiritual well-being of the Church.

When the need for additional members to the Diaconate is recognized, the Ministry Team shall bring the need to the Leadership Council. Suggested names will be gathered from the congregation with the final selections being recommended by the Diaconate to the church for a written ballot vote.

An appropriate service of ordination to set apart those thus elected shall be arranged by the Ministry Team.

Ordained deacons and deaconesses of sister churches, when admitted into membership of this Church, may become members of the Diaconate upon vote of the Church.

A member of the Diaconate may request to be relieved of the responsibilities of the Diaconate.

Article X. LORD'S SUPPER

The Lord's Supper shall be administered on the first Sabbath in January, April, July, and October unless otherwise ordered by the Diaconate.

Article XI. PASTORATE

All pastors shall be called in faith to serve the church as spiritual leaders. Annually, the President of the Church and the Senior Pastor shall establish performance goals and standards. These goals are established and consistent with the direction and focus of the church and shall be communicated to the Leadership Council. The Pastor's performance shall be evaluated against those goals by the Leadership Council. If performance standards are not met, action plans to correct these deficiencies are established with specific time expectation. Ultimately if performance standards are not met, it will be the responsibility of the president and the Leadership Council to recommend to the church termination of employment.

When the need to call a new pastor arises, a committee to recommend candidates shall be appointed by the Church president. This committee shall seek information regarding candidates and report to the church in a regular or specially called business session. By a process determined at the meeting, one or more candidates shall be selected. The Church shall then vote to call one of the candidates. The official call shall specify the terms of employment, including the responsibilities of both parties.

Article XI. **AMENDMENT**

This constitution may be amended at any regular business meeting by a two-thirds majority of the members present, provided that said amendment has been read in open session at a preceding regular business meeting and a copy of the same has been circulated to the membership at least thirty days in advance of the meeting at which it is to be considered.

BY-LAWS

Section 1. **MISSION STATEMENT**

The Mission of the Milton Seventh Day Baptist Church is to be a Christ-centered, Bible-believing, family-oriented ministry that observes the Sabbath and seeks:

- To HONOR GOD with our worship (MAGNIFY)
- To REACH PEOPLE with the good news of God's love and salvation through Jesus Christ (MISSIONS)
- To STRENGTHEN SPIRITUAL LIVES (MATURITY)
- To CARE FOR PEOPLE and their needs (MINISTRY)
- To BUILD THE CHURCH into a strong family (MEMBERSHIP)

Section 2. **OFFICERS**

PRESIDENT

Shall preside at the regular business meetings of the Church and the Leadership Council
Shall see that the decisions of the Church are carried out.

VICE-PRESIDENT

Shall assume the duties of the president in his absence.

SECRETARY OF THE LEADERSHIP COUNCIL

Shall act as secretary to the business meetings of the Church and Leadership Council and keep the permanent record of the same.

TREASURER

Shall pay bills as authorized by the Church and the Leadership Council

Shall provide monthly, quarterly and annual reports to the Church or the Leadership Council

Shall alert the leader of the Finance Team if Church giving fails to meet the budget.

Shall deposit all monies received by the Church and keep an accurate account thereof.

Shall include in the reports an account of all interest payments or monies received in any way from any of the funds, bonds, securities, etc., which make up the endowment fund and the receipt of any bequest, memorial gifts or other specifically designated funds received to the Church.

Shall provide statements to individuals on the status of their giving.

Shall provide an annual report to the Church.

ASSISTANT TREASURER

Shall assume the duties of the treasurer in his absence. This position is appointed by the Leadership Council.

Section 3. **CHURCH**

General Responsibilities

Elect the leadership of the organization and participate in the life of the church according to ones spiritual giftedness.

Specific duties

- Call or remove a Pastor
- Act on major budget modifications
- Approve large unbudgeted capital expenditures
- Vote membership
- Approve sale or purchase of real estate
- Approve annual budget
- Vote on denominational issues
- Approve Constitution/Bylaw amendments
- Provide input to and approve the annual strategic plan.
- Read minutes as posted on bulletin boards, newsletters, and website...be informed
- Attend annual meeting.
- Attend mid- year meeting.
- Attend annual strategic planning meeting.
- Elect the Leadership Council

Section 4. **LEADERSHIP COUNCIL**

General Responsibilities

Ensure overall management of the organization and effective execution of the strategic plan and vision.

Specific Duties

- Financial/budget monitoring and oversight
- Facilities management
- Hiring of staff, calling Pastors by action of the church, and staff performance evaluation in coordination with the Human Resources Team.
- Appoint committees
- Recommend to the church licenses to preach.
- Receive and act on New and Continuing Program and Funding Requests from teams
- Annual Covenant Renewal
- Responsible to recruit volunteers to fill at-large vacancies on all committees.
- Appoint Nominating Committee to consist of a mix of Leadership Council Members and non-Leadership Council Members, with a minimum of four members plus the Pastors.

- Has the authority to replace a team chair for non-performance and fill unexpired term in case of resignation.
- Annual evaluation of strategic goal attainment
- Present new annual strategic plan and last year's goal appraisal to the church
- Perform periodic evaluation of the church program
- Faith and Order sub-committee to maintain Biblical Integrity
- Elects Vice President of church from the members of the Leadership Council.
- Appoint Secretary and Assistant Treasurer.
- Oversees and approves work of all teams. All teams' work flows back through and reports to the Leadership Council.
- Meet a minimum of every 60-days.
- Appoint Chair for delegates to SDB General Conference.

The 16 member Leadership Council will be made up of the following church elected positions plus the Senior Pastor and Associate Pastor.

Team Leaders	Term
Magnify	2 years
Mission	2 years
Maturity	2 years
Ministry	2 years
Membership	2 years
Finance	2 years
Human Resource	2 years
Property	2 years
At Large	1 year
At Large	2 years
At Large	2 years
At Large	2 years
Senior Pastor	NA
Associate Pastor	NA
Treasurer	1 year
President of Leadership	2 years

The Senior and Associate Pastors will serve on teams to provide continuity of program and the goal of the Church's vision statement.

The Vice President of the Leadership Council will be elected by the Leadership Council.

Section 5. **NOMINATIONS** (appointed annually by the Leadership Council)

General Responsibilities

Review and develop a complete ballot annually

Specific duties

- Review job descriptions and job expectations for each position on the ballot. (Ensure they are complete and current).
- Develop an inventory of members, specifically outlining qualification and interest (skills involved) in conjunction with the Equipping Ministry.
- Interview candidates for each spot on the ballot.
- Solicit volunteers to fill in vacant positions on the ballot.
- Submit a complete ballot to the Leadership Council sixty days prior to each annual meeting.
- Count ballots at the annual meeting.

Section 6. **OPERATIONS TEAM** (subcommittee of the Leadership Council)

*Church President, Vice-president and Senior Pastor

General Responsibilities

Conduct the day-to-day business of the church.

Specific duties

- Meet monthly or as needed to conduct routine maintenance that needs immediate attention, within the adopted budget and strategic plan of the church.
- Actions taken by the Operation Team will be ratified by the Leadership Council at its next meeting.
- Special meetings of the Leadership Council, and/or the Church, may be called as necessary.
- Submit reports to the Leadership Council and to the church.

Section 7. **MAGNIFY TEAM**

*5 Members – Team Leader, 3 at large appointed by the Leadership Council and a pastor

General Responsibilities

Arrange and provide for the celebration of God's presence in worship.

Specific Team Duties

- Coordinate with the Pastors the music and worship programs of the church
- Evaluate with the Pastors the effectiveness of the music and worship programs
- Promote authentic and heartfelt worship within the church body.
- Appoint choir directors, organists, pianists, and other musicians
- Communication link between congregation and music and worship leaders
- Assist pastors in planning, implementation and evaluation of worship programs
- Plan and coordinate special music/worship events and rehearsals with choir directors, organists, pianists, and other musicians
- Prepare seasonal choirs/ensembles
- Work with the Pastors in utilizing the gifts and talents of the congregation within the worship service
- Develop recommendations for leadership regarding need for additional music, instruments, tuning, and maintenance
- Arrange for regular tuning and maintenance of the instruments within budget

- Provide for taping of services and distribution of tapes weekly
- Appoint AV Coordinator and evaluate A/V Technicians/use of screen, etc
- Schedule offering receivers and ushers
- Coordinate with Deacons on baptisms, communion, prayer times, etc.
- Coordinate with Maturity Team children's programs to ensure that worship is appropriate and engaging for children as well as for adults.
- Develop an annual vision statement and strategic plan
- Continuously evaluate progress toward attainment of strategic goals
- Submit reports to the Leadership Council and to the church.
- Lead the church in the promotion of Sabbath worship and joyful observance.

Section 8. **MISSIONS TEAM**

*5 Members – Team Leader, 3 at large appointed by the Leadership Council and a pastor

General Responsibilities

To promote, organize, encourage, and train toward outreach, evangelism, and missions in our community, and the world.

Specific Team Duties

- Lead the church in evangelistic programs and endeavors and promote Christian missions
- Provide for regular outreach opportunities (i.e. invitations, bring a friend)
- Provide for training for evangelism and outreach
- Arrange for greeters for services
- Develop and implement comprehensive plans for greeting guests and initial phases of integration:
 - ✓ Provide for guest welcome at service
 - ✓ Home visits for first time guests
 - ✓ Promote nametag usage
 - ✓ Encourage church family “friendliness”
 - ✓ Other initial assimilation strategies
 - ✓ Provide initial discipleship to new attendees
- Encourage involvement in Christian service and missions, including short-term missions for both adults and youth.
- Promote regular missions giving and select and collect SS Missions offering.
- Provide regular information about the denominational missions activities as well as any locally supported missions or other social action projects
- Select additional missions opportunities for the church to support and provide information to the church. Arrange for missionaries we support to speak with the church in an appropriate forum
- Organize an annual missions awareness event.
- Provide consultation for other groups on benevolence/missions giving
- Develop an annual vision statement and strategic plan
- Continuously evaluate progress toward attainment of strategic goals
- Submit reports to the Leadership Council and to the church.
- Lead the church in endeavors to promote the knowledge of the Sabbath as a day set aside by God for worship and rest.

Section 9. **MATURITY TEAM**

*5 Members – Team Leader, 3 at large appointed by the Leadership Council and a pastor

General Responsibilities

Responsible for the education and discipleship programs of the church

Specific Team Duties

This Team's duties are divided into adult and Children's Programming, however some duties will require oversight of a central committee to ensure non-duplication.

- Appoint such leadership (officers) as may be needed
- Encourage the establishment of small group Bible studies
- Teacher training and development
- Promotion of denominational Scripture memory program
- Appoint and oversee Library Coordinator
- Develop an annual vision statement and strategic plan
- Continuously evaluate progress toward attainment of strategic goals
- Submit reports to the Leadership Council and to the church.
- Get SCSC Team and team project director
- Teach the joy and blessings of Sabbath observance and tithing.

Adult Maturity Programs

- Supervise the Adult Sabbath School program
- Select and secure Sabbath School teachers and appropriate SS materials

Children's Maturity Programs

- Supervise the Children's Sabbath School program
- Select and secure Children's Sabbath School teachers and appropriate SS materials
- Provide oversight of various children's and youth programs.
- Recruitment of Director for Children's Christmas Program
- Camp Program Committee
 - ✓ Schedule 3 week-long camps and VBS
 - ✓ Obtain directors and pastors/staff (non-paid) for camps and VBS
 - ✓ Review Director's Program
 - ✓ Assist HR Team in hiring and overseeing Camp Cook
 - ✓ Schedule buses
 - ✓ Provide recreation ideas to Directors
 - ✓ Organize, revise, and distribute Director's packets
 - ✓ Brochures, advertise camp/programs
 - ✓ Develop new/continuing programs for submission to the Leadership Council for approval
 - ✓ Set camp fees
 - ✓ Wash sheet and mattress covers between camps
 - ✓ Provide meals for camp clean up

Section 10. **MINISTRY TEAM**

*5 Members – Team Leader, 3 at large appointed by the Leadership Council and a pastor

General Responsibilities

Demonstrate God's love through service. Provide for the oversight of the caring ministries of the church.

Specific Team Duties

- Provide and inform the church of opportunities to nurture the physical, emotional and spiritual life of the church family and the larger community.
- Health Ministries Committee –
 - ✓ Promote physical, mental, and spiritual well-being of members through health education programs
 - ✓ Oversee Parish Nurse program, including budget expenditures
 - ✓ Provide nursing services to Camp Wakonda during scheduled SDB camps
- Diaconate – including communion preparation, shut in communion, baptism, Care Groups and visitation. Track attendees and ensure deacons have names of new attendees to add to Care groups when appropriate
- Christian Social Action – Keep the church informed of social concerns and provide for representation of the church in the community and around social concerns issues
 - ✓ Liaison with Milton Community Action, Hospice, Habitat for Humanity & other community groups
- Be conscious of needs of members/Care Groups and advise Pastor of special concerns requiring his attention
- Provide practical ways to promote and assist the church's efforts to show God's love to the world through practical caring and serving ministries.
- Minister to those unable to participate fully in church activities, communicate with shut-ins
- Arrange for transportation program to church activities for those unable to drive
- Provide opportunities for healing of mind/body/soul
- Develop an annual vision statement and strategic plan
- Continuously evaluate progress toward attainment of strategic goals
- Promote the Sabbath as a day set aside by God for renewal and rejuvenation physically, mentally, emotionally, and spiritually.
- Submit reports to the Leadership Council and to the church.
- Appoint and oversee Prayer Chain Coordinator
- Oversee the Nursery.

Section 11. **MEMBERSHIP TEAM**

*5 Members – Team Leader, 3 at large appointed by the Leadership Council and a pastor

General Responsibilities

To include and incorporate God's family into our local church body, and provide opportunities for building up life-impacting relationships within the church.

Specific Team Duties

- Provide oversight for the social activities of the church to ensure that they are inclusive and geared to the ultimate goal of providing opportunities for everyone.
- Identify groups not having socialization needs met in the church and develop means to meet these needs

- Organize regular church social events that include all church members
- Insure that new attendees are invited and included in social events
- Provide oversight for the various church fellowships
- Appoint and oversee Meal of Sharing Coordinator (Offering focus by Ministry Team)
- Develop an annual vision statement and strategic plan
- Continuously evaluate progress toward attainment of strategic goals
- Submit reports to the Leadership Council and to the church.
- Responsible for the oversight of historical records of the church.
- Be a supportive link to the membership classes taught by the Pastors.

Section 12. **FINANCE TEAM**

*5 Members – Team Leader, Treasurer, Assistant Treasurer and 3 at large appointed by the Leadership Council

General Responsibilities

Provide oversight of all financial activities of the church.

Specific Team Duties

- Supervise the financial activities of the church
- Responsible for encouraging, acknowledging and recording all memorials given to the church.
- Responsible for the monitoring of and evaluation of the Investment Portfolio
- Plan and conduct a stewardship campaign to raise funds during the year as necessary
- Arrange for teaching the discipline and blessings of tithing and systematic giving to the local church and denomination.
- Make additional appeals for funds as needed
- Coordinate with the Missions Team on Missions giving promotion
- Review and recommend changes, when appropriate, in the accounting and other record keeping systems/procedures.
- Responsible for the design of the accounting and financial reporting system
- Responsible for the accuracy and security of all accounting and financial reporting systems
- Responsible to inform the church on financial issues
- Will develop and propose a budget annually to the Leadership Council and the church
- Develop an annual vision statement and strategic plan
- Continuously evaluate progress toward attainment of strategic goals
- Submit reports to the Leadership Council and to the church
- Will ensure that a financial audit is conducted periodically.

Section 13. **HUMAN RESOURCES TEAM**

*5 Members – Team Leader, President, 2 at large appointed by the Leadership Council and a pastor

General Responsibilities

Ensure overall responsibilities for Human Resource policy and program

Specific Team Duties

- Write and monitor Human Resource policy and procedure manual.
- Responsible for compensation administration.
- Develop and maintain current job descriptions for paid, elected and appointed positions.
- Responsible to design and maintain an effective performance evaluation system.
- Administer all employee benefits.
- Ensure compliance with all relevant employment rules and laws.
- Advise on all human resource matters to include hiring, dismissals, and performance evaluations.
- Responsible to organize and implement annual orientation of elected leadership.
- Equipping Ministry

Section 14. **PROPERTY TEAM**

*5 Members – Team Leader and 4 at large appointed by the Leadership Council

General Responsibilities

Management, supervision, and oversight of the physical properties of the church, including the church and grounds, the parsonage and grounds, Camp Wakonda, and the church vehicles.

Specific Team Duties

- Maintain the physical plant of all Church real and personal property
- Responsible to manage all new construction projects authorized by the Leadership Council and the church.
- Supervise the work of the custodian.
- Supervise the work done by in-house volunteers
- Oversee vehicle leases and maintenance
- Assist in the performance evaluation of Custodian
- Camp Committee – responsible for Camp Wakonda maintenance
 - ✓ Insure the proper and timely maintenance of all camp buildings, grounds, and equipment.
 - ✓ Plan and implement capital improvement projects
 - ✓ Planning of camp cleanup and winterizing
- Responsible for decorating the church inside and out according to seasonal themes.(Coordinate with the Pastors and the Magnify Team)
- Appoint and oversee Flower Coordinator working with the Circles.
- Develop an annual vision statement and strategic plan
- Continuously evaluate progress toward attainment of strategic goals
- Submit reports to the Leadership Council and to the church.

Section 15. **AMENDMENT**

These By-laws may be amended by a two-thirds majority of the members present at a regular Church business meeting.

Example 3: Newer Church in Large Metropolitan Area (California)¹

**ARTICLES OF INCORPORATION
OF
FOOTHILL COMMUNITY CHURCH - A SEVENTH DAY BAPTIST
CONGREGATION, INC.**

a California corporation

The undersigned initial directors, for the purpose of forming a corporation, under the general corporation law of the State of California, hereby certify:

I

The name of this corporation is FOOTHILL COMMUNITY CHURCH - A SEVENTH DAY BAPTIST CONGREGATION, INC.

II

This Corporation is a religious corporation and is not organized for the private gain of any person. It is organized under the nonprofit religious corporation law primarily or exclusively for religious purposes. The specific purpose of this Corporation is to preach the gospel, to teach the Bible, to edify spiritually the members, and to promote the teachings of Jesus Christ to make this world a better one.

III

Pursuant to the filing of these Articles, FOOTHILL COMMUNITY CHURCH - A SEVENTH DAY BAPTIST CONGREGATION, INC., an existing unincorporated association, is hereby being incorporated.

IV

The name and address in the State of California of this Corporation's initial agent for service of process is:

[In the original document, the name and address of this person is given here.]

V

This Corporation is organized and operated exclusively for religious purposes within the meaning of Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. No substantial part of the activities of this Corporation shall consist of carrying on propaganda, or otherwise attempting to influence legislation, and the Corporation shall not participate or intervene in any political campaign [including the publishing or distribution of statements] on behalf of any candidate for public office.

VI

The classes of members and the respective rights, privileges, preferences, restrictions and conditions of such are:

¹ As of the date of publication of this Manual, these documents had not been filed with the State of California. They are in a final enough form, however, for them to be offered for study here. The Articles treat issues of non-profit status in greater detail than the first example in this section, reflecting the needs for incorporation in the 1990s. Provisions for how assets are to be distributed in case of dissolution are also more detailed in the Articles here.

- (a) **Full membership:** A Full member of the church has been a provisional member of the church for at least one (1) year and recommended by the Pastor or Diaconate for Full membership, and subsequently voted upon and accepted by a majority vote of the church Full members; or a person who has transferred from other Seventh Day Baptist Churches, being in good standing therewith, and has been recommended for Full membership of this church by the Pastor or Diaconate, and subsequently voted upon and accepted by a majority vote of the church Full members.
- (b) **Provisional membership:** A Provisional member of the church is defined as a person who has been a member of this church for less than one (1) year, or more than one year but has not been recommended for Full membership by either the Pastor or Diaconate, and voted upon by a majority vote of the church Full members. A provisional member does not share the right to vote and the right to hold an elected office as does a Full member.

VII

The property of this Corporation is irrevocably dedicated to religious purposes, and no part of the net income or assets of this Corporation shall ever inure to the benefit of any director, officer or member thereof, or to the benefit of any private person. Upon the dissolution or winding up of the Corporation, its assets remaining after payment, or provision for payment, of all debts and liabilities of this Corporation, shall be distributed to the Seventh Day Baptist Memorial Fund of Janesville, Wisconsin or its successors. If this organization is unable or unwilling to accept such assets, the assets shall be distributed to the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference of USA and Canada, Inc. of Janesville, Wisconsin or its successors. In the event that neither of these organizations is able or willing to receive such assets, the assets shall be distributed to a non-profit fund, foundation or corporation which is organized and operated exclusively for Christian religious purposes and which has established its tax exempt status under Section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code.

VIII

The initial directors of this Corporation are:

[Directors' names, addresses and signatures are recorded on the original document, but they are not shown here.]

The undersigned, being all the persons named above as the initial directors, declare that they are the persons who executed the foregoing Articles of Incorporation, and that this instrument is the act and deed of the undersigned.

Executed this _____ day of _____, 1996, at
 _____, California.

 Signature of Director

Signature of Director

Signature of Director

VERIFICATION

We, the undersigned, being Chairman of the Board and Secretary of FOOTHILL COMMUNITY CHURCH - A SEVENTH DAY BAPTIST CONGREGATION, INC., do hereby state, under penalty of perjury, that:

(a) Incorporation of the association by means of the Articles to which this Verified Statement is attached, has been conducted and approved by the association in accordance with its rules, regulations and/or procedures;

(b) Upon the change of status, the property of the association has or will become property of the Corporation; and

(c) The members of the association who had any voting rights have or will become members of the Corporation.

Dated:

By: _____
Chairman of the Board

Dated:

By: _____
Secretary

BYLAWS

OF

FOOTHILL COMMUNITY CHURCH - A SEVENTH DAY BAPTIST CONGREGATION, INC.

ARTICLE I NAME

The name of this corporation is Foothill Community Church - A Seventh Day Baptist Congregation, Inc. (hereafter referred to as the Church).

ARTICLE II PRINCIPAL OFFICES

The principal office for the transaction of the business of the Church is located at 2103 Montrose Ave, Suite B, Montrose, California. The trustees may change the principal office from one location to another. Any changes of location shall be recorded by the secretary in the meeting minutes of the trustees. The trustees may at any time establish branch churches or subordinate offices at any place or places. Copies of the Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws and a list of the membership names and addresses shall be kept at the principal office and shall be available for inspection or copying by any member.

ARTICLE III OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSES

The purposes of this Church shall be to:

- (a) Weekly celebrate the Sabbath;
- (b) Provide worship, fellowship, training, nurture and service to those in the congregation;
- (c) Share the knowledge of the saving grace of Jesus Christ with our communities.

ARTICLE IV MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Membership Categories

There shall be two categories of membership in this Church: full membership and provisional membership. Provisional members shall have all the rights and privileges of full members except voting and holding of elected office.

Section 2. Qualifications

Individuals must have met the following qualifications to be considered for membership:

- (a) Confessed Jesus Christ as his/her personal Lord and Savior;
- (b) Experienced Christian believer's baptism by immersion;
- (c) Expressed written agreement with the Foothill Community Church's Statement of Belief, Covenant and Bylaws.

Section 3. New Members

After giving satisfactory testimony as to conversion, baptism and commitment to faith and practice, individuals desiring membership may be recommended by the Pastor

and Diaconate to the Church. Membership applications will follow the following procedures:

- (a) The Pastor and Diaconate shall recommend the candidate for provisional membership based on the qualifications stated in Section 2.
- (b) Provisional members will have all rights and privileges of full members except voting or holding of elected office.
- (c) After one year of provisional membership the Pastor and Diaconate may recommend the candidate to the Church for full membership.
- (d) Upon the recommendation of the Pastor and Diaconate the Church will vote at the next regular or special business meeting on whether to accept the candidate into full membership .
- (e) Members in good standing of other Seventh Day Baptist churches may be accepted to full membership without the one year provisional period on the recommendation of the Pastor and Diaconate and vote of the Church.

Section 4. Separation or Termination of Membership

All dismissals shall be made upon recommendation of the Pastor and/or the Diaconate, and a majority vote at any Church business meeting. Where dismissal of the Pastor is under consideration, the Pastor will abstain from making any recommendation.

- (a) Any member in good and regular standing, who so desires, may obtain a letter of transfer to another Seventh Day Baptist church.
- (b) Any member in good and regular standing, who so desires, may obtain a letter of fact for dismissal to other than a Seventh Day Baptist church.
- (c) The Pastor, Diaconate and Church Clerk shall constitute a committee for annual review of the membership. Any member who, for a period of one year, has not attended services or made contact with the Church may be dropped from active Church membership.

Section 5. Discipline

The term "discipline," as used in this Article, refers to the method of correction or problems and difficulties in the Church body. It is that procedure including Christian teaching, training, admonition and rebuke that intends to help the individual grow spiritually and corrects unchristian attitudes and practices.

- (a) A member of the Church shall be subject to Church discipline for:
 - 1) Having a contentious or disruptive attitude toward the Church or its leadership or;

- 2) Treating the acts and decisions of the Church contemptuously or;
- 3) Promoting discord, disunity or dissension in the Church.

(b) Procedure for discipline: The Pastor and Diaconate are responsible to see that discipline is administered in love, patience and understanding with a calm spirit. The principles and steps described in Matthew 18:15-17 will be followed as a guide in all matters requiring Church discipline.

- 1) Dismissal: If the member in question neglects to respond to the discipline procedures and a proper solution in accordance with the Scriptures and Church's faith and practice cannot be worked out the member may be dismissed from the membership upon recommendation of the Pastor, Diaconate, and a majority vote of the members at a regular or special Church business meeting.
- 2) Restoration: Dismissed members may be restored to membership upon recommendation of the Pastor, Diaconate and a majority vote of the members at any regular or special business meeting.

ARTICLE V MEETINGS

Section 1. Worship

Public worship services shall be held regularly on the seventh day Sabbath. Other meetings except business meetings may be scheduled by the Pastor, Diaconate or Steering Committee at any time or place.

Section 2. Business Meetings

There shall be an annual business meeting at which time the officers of the Church shall be elected and the business of the Church conducted. The annual meeting shall be held on the second Sunday in October each year unless the Steering Committee or Board of Trustees fixes another date and notifies the membership as provided in Section 5 Notice of Business Meetings.

Section 3. Place of Meetings

Meeting of the membership shall be held at any place within or outside the State of California designated by the Steering Committee or Board of Trustees.

July, 1999

Section 4. Special Meetings

Special business meetings may be called by the Pastor, Steering Committee, Board of Trustees or by written request of 25% or more of the membership. Notices of special meetings must specify the general nature of the business proposed to be transacted and must be announced in accordance with the conditions of Section 5 Notice of Business Meetings.

Section 5. Notice of Business Meetings

- (a) General notice contents: All regular or special business meetings shall be announced publicly at two consecutive Sabbath services the weeks preceding the meeting. The notice shall specify the place, date and hour of the meeting and (i) in the case of a special meeting, the general nature of the business to be transacted, or (ii) in the case of the annual meeting those matters the Steering Committee or Board of Trustees intends to present for action by the members.
- (b) Notice of certain agenda items: If action is proposed to be taken at any meeting for approval of any of the following proposals, the notice shall also state the general nature of the proposal:
 - (i) Calling or dismissal of a Pastor;
 - (ii) Amending the articles of incorporation;
 - (iii) Voluntarily dissolving the corporation;
 - (iv) Disposal of all or most of the Church assets.

Section 6. Quorum

- (a) Percentage required: A quorum shall consist of a minimum of seven full members or one third of the full membership which ever is greater.
- (b) Loss of quorum: The members present at a business meeting at which a quorum is present may continue to transact business until adjournment, notwithstanding the withdrawal of enough members to leave less than a quorum, provided any action taken (other than adjournment) is approved by at least a majority of the members required to constitute a quorum.
- (c) Items requiring a quorum: A quorum shall be required for consideration of the following items:
 - (i) Calling or dismissal of a Pastor;
 - (ii) Amending the articles of incorporation;
 - (iii) Voluntarily dissolving the corporation;
 - (iv) Disposal of all or most of the Church assets.

Section 7. Adjourned Meeting

Any business meeting, annual or special, whether or not a quorum is present, may be adjourned from time to time by the vote of a majority of the members present at the meeting. But in the absence of a quorum, no other business may be transacted at that meeting, except as provided in this Article.

Section 8. Voting

(a) Eligibility to vote: Persons entitled to vote shall be full members as of the date of the meeting. Persons accepted into full membership at the meeting shall be eligible to vote on all subsequent issues at that meeting.

(b) Proxies: There shall be no proxies.

ARTICLE VI TRUSTEES

Section 1. Powers

The Board of Trustees shall be responsible for the legal affairs of the Church, including but not limited to maintaining the non-profit status of the Church, taxes, insurances, property transfers, borrowing of money and incurring indebtedness, deeds of trust, promissory notes, bonds, mortgages and other duties as delegated by the Church.. All contractual agreements must be approved as to form by the Board of Trustees and signed by the Chairman of the Board, Chief Financial Officer or Secretary.

Section 2. Number, Qualifications, and Term of Office

There shall be five members of the Board of Trustees serving three year terms. The Board of Trustees shall elect their own officers (Chairman of the Board, Chief Financial Officer and Secretary). Members of the Board shall be full members.

Section 3. Vacancies

The Board of Trustees shall be authorized to fill all vacancies in its membership pending approval at the next regularly scheduled or special Church business meeting.

Section 4. Meetings

(a) Annual meeting: The Board of Trustees shall meet annually at a time, date, and place to be set by the Board.

(b) Other meetings: The Board shall hold additional meetings as it deems necessary to conduct its duties.

Section 5. Corporate Officers

- (a) Chairman of the Board: The Chairman of the Board shall be the Chief Executive Officer of the Board of Trustees.
- (b) Chief Financial Officer: The Chief Financial Officer shall keep or cause to be kept accounts of the moneys, properties and business transactions of the Church. The Chief Financial Officer shall be responsible for the maintenance of the financial records of the Church and filing of financial documents. The accounts and properties of the Church shall be available for inspection by any Trustee at any time.
- (c) Secretary: The Secretary shall keep or cause to be kept books and records of the minutes of all meetings and actions of the Church, boards, councils, and committees. The Secretary shall also keep or cause to be kept at the principal office a list of the names and addresses of Church members. The Secretary shall be assisted in these duties by the Clerk and by appointed secretaries of boards, councils or committees. The Secretary shall be responsible for all official correspondence of the Board.

ARTICLE VII CHURCH OFFICERS

Section 1. Pastor

- (a) Employment: Pastors, assistant pastors, and student pastors may be employed and discharged by the Church at any time subject to the terms of their contract and the procedures of these bylaws.. Ministers, other than employed pastors, shall be licensed only after active and responsible service in the Church for at least one year or have otherwise demonstrated their integrity and commitment. All licenses shall be subject to annual review. All pastors and ministers shall have the qualifications and duties of ministers, teachers, bishops, preachers, elders, and shepherds as prescribed in Scripture (1 Timothy 3:2-7; Titus 1:6-9). Employed pastors must be a member of a Seventh Day Baptist Church or demonstrate complete accord with Seventh Day Baptist doctrine and practice before being employed.
- (b) Duties: The Pastor shall:
 - (i) Supervise all assistant pastors, student pastors and ministers;
 - (ii) Arrange all worship services and designate worship leaders to assist him and serve in his absence;
 - (iii) Be responsible for visitation and attention to the spiritual needs of the members;

- (iv) Serve as spiritual leader of the congregation and work according to the agreed upon job description.

Section 2. Diaconate

- (a) Qualifications: Deacons and deaconesses shall have the Biblical qualifications (Acts 6:3, I Tim. 3:8-13) of deacons and elders. The Church may elect as many qualified persons to the Diaconate as it deems necessary to fulfill their duties. They shall be elected at the annual business meeting of the Church for three year terms, arrange so that as nearly as possible a third shall be chosen each year.
- (b) Duties: All deacons and deaconesses shall serve the sick and needy of the community, assist in baptisms and communion services, encourage and counsel with the Pastor and Church members, and fulfill all other duties assigned by the Church or prescribed by the Bible.

Section 3. Moderator

The Moderator shall preside at business meetings, appoint special officers or committees as the occasion may require, and bring all necessary business before the Church for action.

Section 4. Treasurer

The Treasurer shall collect and dispense all funds as authorized by the Church and under the supervision of the Chief Financial Officer. The Treasurer shall submit a written report to the Church at the annual business meeting. The Church financial statement, showing gross income and listing expenditures, shall be open to inspection by any Church member. Access to the individual contribution records shall be restricted to the eyes of the Treasurer.

Section 5. Clerk

The Clerk shall assist the Church Secretary in keeping records of all business meetings and actions of the Church. The Clerk shall maintain a register of the names and addresses of all members with the dates of membership, dismissal, death and baptism. The Clerk shall issue letters of dismissal or transfer as voted by the Church, keep records of all correspondence, reports and documents, and give notice of all meetings required by these Bylaws.

Section 6. Election of Officers

Church officers, unless otherwise specified, shall be elected at the annual Church business meeting for one year terms.

Section 7. Vacancies in Offices:

Vacancies shall be filled by the Steering Committee pending approval at the next regularly scheduled or special Church business meeting.

ARTICLE VIII COMMITTEES

The Church or Steering Committee shall appoint such committees as deemed necessary to fulfill the purposes and mission statement of the Church.

ARTICLE IX AMENDMENTS

The Articles of Incorporation or Bylaws may be amended at any annual or special Church business meeting provided that the general meaning of the amendment has appeared in the meeting notices as required in Article V Section 5. A simple majority of those present and eligible to vote is required to amend.

ARTICLE X AFFILIATIONS

This Church shall be affiliated with the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference of USA and Canada, Inc. on the national, regional and local levels.

ARTICLE XI STEERING COMMITTEE

A Steering Committee shall be elected at the annual Church business meeting. The committee shall be composed of the Pastor, Moderator, Deacons, Clerk and Treasurer ex officio and up to three members-at-large. Members-at-large shall be elected for one year terms. The Steering Committee shall serve as the planning and administrative body of the Church between business meetings. Actions of the committee shall be subject to the review of the Church. The Church may delegate to the committee duties, ministries and authority as it deems necessary.

Appendix 5: Sample Constitutions and Bylaws

Example 4: Medium Sized Church in Small City (Minnesota)

DODGE CENTER SEVENTH DAY BAPTIST CHURCH CONSTITUTION

As Of 01/1992

ARTICLE ONE - NAME

This church shall be known as the Dodge Center Seventh Day Baptist Church, Incorporated. It shall be a member of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference (U.S.A.)

ARTICLE TWO - PURPOSES

SECTION A. The purposes shall be to promote

1. the spreading of the Gospel of Christ
2. the worship of God
3. the observance of His Commandments
4. the study of the Scriptures.

SECTION B. These will provide for

1. the nurture of those who have accepted Christ as their Savior.
2. the reaching of those who have not yet made their decision for Christ.

ARTICLE THREE - MEMBERSHIP

Any person may hold membership in this church by meeting the requirements stated in the By-laws.

ARTICLE FOUR - GOVERNMENT

The government of this church shall be vested in its members. Nine members shall constitute a quorum at any regular business meeting. Twenty members shall constitute a quorum at the Annual and any special business meetings.

ARTICLE FIVE - SERVICES

SECTION A. Sabbath Services

Services shall be conducted on the Sabbath (which is the seventh day of the week) for worship and study, thereby promoting fellowship and love, that we may be empowered to serve God more faithfully and joyfully in our daily lives.

SECTION B. Communion Services

Services for the observance of the Lord's Supper shall be on the first Sabbath in January and at such other times as directed by the Diaconate.

SECTION C. Other Services

Additional meetings for inspiration, fellowship, instruction and service shall be held as the church directs.

ARTICLE SIX - BUSINESS MEETINGS

SECTION A. Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting shall be held in January the third Sunday following the New Year unless otherwise ordered by the Advisory Committee. At this meeting officers will be elected and the budget adopted.

SECTION B. Regular Meetings

The Regular Quarterly business meetings shall be held on the third Sabbath evening in April, July and October unless otherwise ordered by the Advisory Committee.

SECTION C. Special Meetings

Special Meetings may be called as directed in the By-laws.

ARTICLE SEVEN - OFFICERS

The Officers shall be the Pastor, Deacons, Deaconesses, President, Vice-President, Treasurer, Trustees, Clerk, and others as needed.

ARTICLE EIGHT - COMMITTEES

The Committees shall be the Advisory, Finance, Pastoral Relations, Diaconate, Music, Evangelism, Christian Education, Nominating and others as needed.

ARTICLE NINE - AUXILIARY ORGANIZATIONS

The Sabbath School, Ladies Aid, Youth Fellowship and other auxiliary groups are recognized as a significant part of the word and witness of the church.

ARTICLE TEN - BRANCH CHURCHES

A Branch Church may be organized in any area where there are people committed to establishing a church. The Branch Church shall operate under the constitution and By-Laws of this church, which shall be called the mother church.

ARTICLE ELEVEN - AMENDMENTS

SECTION A. This constitution may be amended at any annual business meeting by a two-thirds majority of the members voting. Provided:

1. The amendment has been presented in writing at regular business meeting.
2. Has been referred to and considered by the Advisory Committee.
3. Notice of such amendment has been given in the church bulletin or announced to the congregation the two Sabbaths preceding the meeting at which it will be considered.

SECTION B. Vote on all proposed amendments shall be by written ballot.

DODGE CENTER SEVENTH DAY BAPTIST CHURCH BYLAWS

ARTICLE ONE - MEMBERSHIP

This church recognizes four types of membership: full, associate, inactive and branch church.

FULL MEMBERSHIP

Requirements: Membership in this church is attained by majority vote of the church on request of any candidate meeting the following requirements:

1. Whose confession of faith and acceptance of the Articles of Faith and Practice and the Covenant are followed with baptism by immersion in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
2. Who is recommended for membership by the Pastor and Diaconate following discussion with him of his faith stance and reason for requesting membership.
3. Who relinquishes Full Membership (or equivalent) in any other church.

Any person having already experienced these requirements may apply for membership by letter or testimony and be voted upon as above.

Rights and Responsibilities: to

1. Hold appointive and elective office.
2. Participate and vote in all business meetings and other church appointments.
3. Fulfill the pledges subscribed to in the Articles of Faith and Practice and the Covenant.

Termination:

1. A member, upon his request, may be released from this church to join another church of like faith by a letter of transfer, authorized by a majority vote of the church. In the same manner a member may be granted a letter of dismissal.
2. Names of members whose whereabouts are unknown or who have not communicated with the church for one year will be dropped from the ACTIVE ROLL and placed on the INACTIVE ROLL. This will be done by majority vote of the church upon recommendation of the clerk.
3. A member who has been admitted to Full Membership (or equivalent) in any other church will be released from Full Membership in this church.
4. Recommendation by the Diaconate for dismissal of a member will be acted upon by the Diaconate according to their policy. If appropriate, the Diaconate will bring a dismissal recommendation to the Advisory Committee for action. The Advisory Committee will make a recommendation to the church membership at a business meeting. Dismissal would require a two-thirds majority vote for the actual dismissal to take place. Notice of the names to be considered for dismissal must be announced on two consecutive Sabbaths in the bulletin and either from the pulpit or by the President during the worship service.

ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP

Requirements: Membership in this church is attained by majority vote of the church on request of any candidate meeting the following requirements:

1. Who professes Christian faith and chooses to follow the covenant of the Dodge Center Seventh Day Baptist Church.
2. Who is recommended for membership by the Pastor and Diaconate following discussion with him of his faith stance and reason for requesting membership.
3. Such associate membership may be held without interference with membership in any other church.

Rights and Responsibilities: to

1. Hold appointive and elective office.
2. An Associate Member shall not serve on any committee concerning the following:
 - a. Pastoral leadership
 - b. Church Covenant, Constitution, By-Laws or Articles of Faith and Practice

3. An Associate member shall not serve as one of the following:
 - a. Sabbath School Superintendent
 - b. Assistant Sabbath School Superintendent
 - c. Deacon or Deaconess
 - d. Head Trustee
4. Participate and vote in all business meetings and other church appointments, except that voting privileges for the following shall not be granted:
 - a. Calling of a Pastor
 - b. Termination of a pastor's call
 - c. Renewal of a pastor's call
 - d. Election of members to the Diaconate
 - e. Dismissal of members from the Diaconate
 - f. Election of members
 - g. Dismissal of members
 - h. Disposal of church property
 - i. Constitution, By-Laws, Covenant and Articles of Faith and Practice changes
5. Fulfill the pledges subscribed to in the Covenant.

Termination:

1. A member may, upon request and upon meeting the proper requirements be granted Full Membership.
2. A member may, upon request have their name removed from the church membership rolls. Names of members whose whereabouts are unknown or who have not communicated with the church for one year will be dropped from the membership roll. This will be done by majority vote of the church upon recommendation of the clerk. Notice of the names to be considered for dropping must be announced on two consecutive Sabbaths in the bulletin and either from the pulpit or by the President during the worship service.
3. Recommendation by the Diaconate for dismissal of a member will be acted upon by the Diaconate according to their policy. If appropriate, the Diaconate will bring a dismissal recommendation to the Advisory Committee for action. The Advisory Committee will make a recommendation to the church membership at a business meeting. Dismissal would require a two-thirds majority vote for the actual dismissal to take place. Notice of the names to be considered for dismissal must be announced on two consecutive Sabbaths in the bulletin and either from the pulpit or by the President during the worship service.

INACTIVE MEMBERSHIP

Requirements: This member has not attended or communicated with the church for a period of one year or more, and church action has been taken to place the name on the inactive roll. (See #2 under Termination of Full Membership).

Rights and Responsibilities:

1. An Inactive member may be reinstated to full membership with all its rights and privileges upon request.
2. An Inactive member may remain on inactive roll on request.

Termination:

1. Upon request may be released from this church to join another church of like faith by a letter of transfer authorized by a majority vote of the church. In the same manner the member may be granted a letter of dismissal.
2. Lacking positive response, the member will be notified of the church's action (See #2. under Termination of Full Membership) once a year for three years. Again lacking response the member may then be removed from the roll by two-thirds vote of the membership present at the Annual Business Meeting.
3. Recommendation by the Diaconate for dismissal of a member will be acted upon by the Diaconate according to their policy. If appropriate, the Diaconate will bring a dismissal recommendation to the Advisory Committee for action. The Advisory Committee will make a recommendation to the church membership at a business meeting. Dismissal would require a two-thirds majority vote for the actual dismissal to take place. Notice of the names to be

considered for dismissal must be announced on two consecutive Sabbaths in the bulletin and either from the pulpit or by the President during the worship service.

BRANCH CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Requirements: Branch church membership may be granted by the mother church to any person who requests it and who meets the qualifications of full church membership, and who desires to be active in a recognized branch work of the mother church.

Rights and Responsibilities:

1. All voting privileges and responsibilities of full membership are granted to be exercised in the Branch church in which they are involved.
2. Branch Church members are without voting privileges in the mother church, unless granted by two-thirds majority vote of the mother church members present and voting at any specific business meeting of the mother church and for that meeting alone.
3. Branch Church membership must be requested in person to the mother church at a regular business meeting or specially called meeting until the total number of members of the branch church exceeds seven from at least three family units.
After this point the Branch Church may admit its own members by majority vote of the branch church membership following review of the qualifications for membership of the candidates by the Diaconate of the mother church. Such membership shall not become official until the clerk of the mother church is notified for inclusion in the church records.

Termination:

1. A member, upon his request, may be released from this church to join another church of like faith by a letter of transfer, authorized by a majority vote of the mother church. In the same manner a member may be granted a letter of dismissal.
2. Names of members whose whereabouts are unknown or who have not communicated with the church for one year will be dropped from the ACTIVE ROLL and placed on the INACTIVE ROLL. This will be done by majority vote of the mother church upon recommendation of the clerk.
3. Recommendation by the Diaconate for dismissal of a member will be acted upon by the Diaconate according to their policy. If appropriate, the Diaconate will bring a dismissal recommendation to the Advisory Committee for action. The Advisory Committee will make a recommendation to the church membership at a business meeting. Dismissal would require a two-thirds majority vote for the actual dismissal to take place. Notice of the names to be considered for dismissal must be announced on two consecutive Sabbaths in the bulletin and either from the pulpit or by the President during the worship service.

ARTICLE TWO - GOVERNMENT

The government of this church shall be accomplished in the spirit of harmony and in accord with the Baptist tradition of congregational polity in which the direction of the church and its ministry is achieved through the guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit, the Holy Scriptures, and the voice of its membership. The parliamentary procedures utilized shall guarantee the rights and freedom of the democratic process and be in accord with the latest edition available of Roberts Rules of Order and Parliamentary Law.

ARTICLE THREE - BUSINESS MEETINGS AND REPORTS

SECTION A. Annual Business Meeting

1. The Annual Business Meeting shall be held in January the third Sunday following the New Year unless otherwise ordered by the Advisory Committee.
2. A quorum shall be twenty (20) members.

SECTION B. Regular Business Meetings

1. The regular business meetings shall be held on the third Sabbath evening in April, July and October unless otherwise ordered by the Advisory Committee.
2. A quorum shall be nine (9) members.

SECTION C. Special Business Meetings

1. Special Business Meetings may be called by the President, Trustees or any nine members. To call a Special Business Meeting, previous notice must be announced on two consecutive Sabbaths in the bulletin and either from the pulpit or by the President during the worship service.
2. Special Business Meetings may be called, without prior notice, by the President or Diaconate during Sabbath morning worship for the purpose of accepting membership recommendations from the Diaconate or for the purpose of acting on member requests for transfer or dismissal.
3. A quorum shall be twenty (20) members.

SECTION D. Reports

1. The following committees shall provide a written report of their activities at each Annual and Regular business meeting: Diaconate, Trustees, Finance, Advisory, Evangelism, and Christian Education. At these same meetings, written reports will be furnished by the pastor and the treasurer.
2. The following committees shall furnish a written report at the Annual Business Meeting: Lord's Acre, Christian Social Action, Fellowship, Music, Nominations, Pastoral Relations, Bulletin and Transportation.

ARTICLE FOUR - PASTOR

A. Calling of a Pastor: When necessary, a special business meeting of the church shall be called. Nominations for consideration shall be received by ballot. A committee of three, including the clerk, shall be appointed to seek information regarding candidates and report back as soon as possible. After prayerful consideration, one candidate shall be chosen by ballot for the committee to formally issue a call to be our pastor. If subsequent calls are necessary, this same procedure will be followed until an affirmative answer is received.

B. Term: Called for a period agreeable to both Pastor and the church.

C. Duties:

The pastor has many roles in the church. Some are undefinable, some only occasional, but generally, he is the servant, spiritual leader, preacher, teacher, example, and friend of the church.

As he performs these roles, he must remember, and so also must the church, that he is the servant of Christ, as well as the body of Christ, and in that order, and that there can be no conflict in that dual loyalty.

The pastor will serve best by leading others into active service, help others best to overcome prejudice and bias by keeping his own within the bounds of Christian love, and help others to learn the Christian art of sharing by being one who shares.

The pastor shall be the spiritual leader of the church by example and its preacher who proclaims the Word of God for the present age.

He shall be a teacher of the church, but not to the exclusion of others who have been given the gift.

He shall be a friend of all mankind but especially the membership of the local church and in the style of Jesus without reservation and without partiality.

The pastor shall also be expected to represent the church in the community at large, whenever opportunity or duty calls, giving support to charitable and moral causes as directed by the church and his own conscience.

More specifically:

1. The pastor shall be responsible for the Sabbath Worship service and responsive to the suggestions of the Diaconate in the order and content of these services.
2. He shall seek, with the help of the Diaconate, to maintain regular Bible Studies and Prayer ministries.

3. He shall initiate and maintain a calling program.
 4. He shall endeavor to involve others in the various ministries of the church.
 5. He shall be an ex-officio member of all church standing committees where he does not have official membership.
 6. He shall participate in cooperative ministries with the Semi-Annual Churches, the North Central Association of Seventh Day Baptist Churches, the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, and the local inter-denominational church council and its ministerium whenever possible.
 7. He shall consider it his duty and privilege to initiate and develop new ministries and outreach for the glory of God and the benefit of His eternal kingdom. Also to terminate, after due prayer and counsel, those which do not seem wise or beneficial.
 8. He shall be considerate of the standards of the church as well as his own in accepting and performing baptisms, weddings, and funerals.
 9. He shall report the births, deaths, marriages, and accessions in the church during his tenure to The Sabbath Recorder. Correspondent for publication when he has personal knowledge of those happenings.
- D. Vote of Confidence.
Taken by ballot at the Annual Business Meeting of the Church, or at other appropriate times upon request of the Pastor, President, Diaconate or any nine members.
- E. Termination of Services:
If there is a feeling that the pastor be replaced, the problem may be considered at a regular business meeting or upon the recommendations of the Advisory Committee a special business meeting may be called. There shall be a period of three months after notification before termination of service. If a different period of time is desired there shall be an agreement between the pastor and the church.

ARTICLE FIVE - OFFICERS

SECTION A. The following officers are elected for multiple year terms as described under each officer.

1. Diaconate

The Diaconate members are the spiritual leaders of the church. They are chosen by and agree to serve the church. The name "deacon" means "to serve", and because of the importance of the service and the high qualifications of the office [First Timothy 3:8-16] great care is taken in their selection and installation in office.

- a. Duties - Seek the Lord's will in the spiritual concerns of the church.
 - (1) Give counsel to the pastor and the people concerning spiritual matters.
 - (2) Advise and assist the pastor concerning worship, ordinances and visitation, and in the absence of the pastor to provide for these functions.
 - (3) Be responsible for the prayer and Bible study program of the church.
 - (4) Protect the purity of doctrine according to the Scripture taught within the church.
 - (5) Act on requests for membership or dismissal.
 - (6) Chairperson serves as a member of the Advisory Committee.
 - (7) Select a Diaconate member to the Christian Social Action Committee.
- b. Qualifications
 - (1) Having attained the qualifications listed in First Timothy 3:8-13.
 - (2) Full Members of the church.
- c. Number - There shall be at least six members, either men or women, plus the pastor.
- d. Selection
 - (1) The Diaconate shall seek potential candidates for the office.
 - (2) Any church member may suggest potential candidates for consideration by the Diaconate.
 - (3) The proposed candidate shall have at least a month to consider prayerfully whether they feel they can serve or not.

(4) The nominees shall be published in the bulletin for at least four consecutive Sabbaths prior to the Annual Business Meeting of the church.

e. Election

- (1) Election shall be for a three-year term.
- (2) Members are to be elected at the Annual Business Meeting to maintain a working Diaconate.
- (3) Election shall be by a two-thirds vote.

f. Commissioning - The Diaconate shall plan a Commissioning Service for each newly elected member

g. Organization

- (1) They shall elect their own officers, including a chairperson.
- (2) They shall meet once a month or as often as necessary to do their assigned work.

2. Trustees

a. Election:

- (1) There shall be three trustees. One shall be elected each year for a three year term at the Annual Business Meeting.
- (2) If desired a junior trustee may be elected for a one year term.
- (3) The trustees shall elect their own chairperson who shall be a full member and who shall be identified as the Head Trustee.

b. Duties:

- (1) Transact the financial business of the church subject to its direction.
- (2) See to the maintenance of all property.
- (3) Assist the Pastor in all ways when moving.
- (4) Approve expenditures by the Treasurer as the need arises, but not exceed the limits of the approved budget.
- (5) In the event the budget proves to be inadequate for unforeseen expenses, submit a revised budget to the Regular Business Meeting when possible, or request a Special Business Meeting.
- (6) Keep signatures current for the Church Lock Box at the Norwest Bank of Dodge Center or its successor.
- (7) Buy or sell church real estate at the express vote of the church.
- (8) Ensure that the Incorporation of the church is maintained.
- (9) Upon securing a Pastor, the Trustees shall complete all arrangements, after the call is made by the church, reporting the same in writing at the first Business Meeting following such arrangements.
- (10) Secure the services of a Janitor each year.
- (11) Keep a current inventory of church property, real and personal.
- (12) All trustees are members of the Finance Committee.
- (13) Select a Trustee member to the Christian Social Action Committee.

SECTION B - The following officers are elected by ballot for one year terms at the Annual Business Meeting of the church and serve until their successors are elected.

1. Church Officers

a. **President- Duties**:

- (1) Preside at all business meetings of the church by the Roberts Rules of Order methods.
- (2) Follow up on committees and appointments and urge them to act promptly to fulfill their responsibilities.
- (3) Provide each new officer or committee head with a copy of the By-laws pertaining to his office.
- (4) Call Regular and Special Business Meetings when needed.

- (5) Immediately call a meeting of the church to call a pastor when necessary.
- (6) Chair of the Advisory Committee.
- (7) Appoint (from the membership of the respective committees) the chairperson of the Bulletin, Transportation, Lord's Acre, and Nominating Committees.
- (8) Is a member of the Finance Committee.

b. Vice President - Duties:

- (1) Officiate in absence of the President.
- (2) Other duties as delegated by the President.
- (3) Serve as a member of the Advisory and Finance Committees.

c. Clerk - Duties:

- (1) Notify all officers and committees of their election or appointment.
- (2) Maintain the minutes of all Business and Advisory Committee Meetings.
- (3) Write all letters to the General Conference, Association, and Semi-Annual Meetings unless otherwise provided.
- (4) Keep current the statistical tables in the record book concerning deaths, accessions, dismissals, etc.
- (5) Correct the list of members as needed by deaths, dismissal, or marriage, and to maintain the membership roll according to ARTICLE ONE.
- (6) Seek communication of members on inactive roll once a year for three years before presenting their names for termination.
- (7) Record the By-Laws in conformity with the vote of the church.
- (8) Send a memorial gift to the family of deceased members.
- (9) Submit the Statistical Report yearly to the Denomination.
- (10) Serve as a member of the Advisory and Finance Committees.
- (11) Prepare certificates of membership for new Full or Associate members.

d. Treasurer - Duties:

- (1) Keep an accurate record of receipts and see to their deposit in the appropriate accounts.
- (2) Keep updated record of disbursements. This information shall be itemized under headings as listed in the approved budget, and shall be readily available upon request to the trustees.
- (3) Pay all utility bills as they come due and other bills authorized by the trustees, when sufficient funds are available.
- (4) Make a brief written statement of all funds and indebtedness at each regular business meeting.
- (5) Send an annual financial report to the Denominational Headquarters once a year.
- (6) Chair the Finance committee of the church.
- (7) Serve as a member of the Advisory Committee.

2. Sabbath School Officers

a. Superintendent -The superintendent shall be a full member.

Duties:

- (1) Lead Sabbath School meetings and assemblies.
- (2) Be aware of Teacher's absences and secure substitutes.
- (3) Chair the Christian Education Committee.
- (4) Implement goals set by the Christian Education Committee.
- (5) Order materials for Graded Department classes.
- (6) Be responsible for implementation of the policy: "Reducing the Risk of Child or Youth Sexual Abuse."
- (7) Be responsible for screening and training all child/youth workers in our church using the policy "Reducing the Risk of Child or Youth Sexual Abuse."

- (8) Be responsible for appropriate monitoring of all child/youth workers under the "Reducing the Risk of Child or Youth Sexual Abuse" policy until screening and training can occur.
- (9) Securely keep records associated with the policy: "Reducing the Risk of Child or Youth Sexual Abuse."
- (10) Serve as a member of the Advisory and Finance Committees.

b. **Assistant Superintendent** - The assistant superintendent shall be a full member

Duties:

- (1) Serve in absence of Superintendent.
- (2) Serve as Secretary of the Christian Education Committee.
- (3) Lead Graded Department Assemblies.
- (4) Keep all Sabbath School records.
- (5) Other duties as requested by Superintendent.

3. Other Officers

a. **Head Usher** - Duties:

- (1) Arrange for ushers to take up tithes and offerings at Sabbath morning service.
- (2) Provide ushers for services of the church, giving special attention to visitors.
- (3) Assist special ushers when wanted at weddings or funerals.

b. **Assistant Usher** - Duties: Assist the Head Usher and fulfill those duties when the Head Usher is absent.

c. **Chorister** - Duties:

- (1) Direct the Senior Choir.
- (2) Chair the Music Committee.
- (3) Is a member of the Finance Committee.

d. **Assistant Chorister** - Duties: Assist the Chorister and fulfill those duties when the Chorister is absent

e. **Sabbath Recorder Correspondent** - Duties:

- (1) Send reports of all major activities to The Sabbath Recorder at least once a quarter.
- (2) Ensure reports of births, deaths, marriages and accessions to our membership are sent to The Sabbath Recorder.

f. **Historian**- Duties:

- (1) Keeps a written record of significant church events. This includes births and marriages within families of church members.
- (2) Makes historical records available as needed and for special events.

ARTICLE SIX - COMMITTEES

SECTION A. Advisory Committee

1. Purpose: This committee shall plan, initiate, and coordinate the overall work of the church.
2. Membership: This committee shall include the following officers: Pastor, Diaconate Chairperson, Head Trustee, President, Vice President, Clerk, Treasurer, Sabbath School Superintendent, Youth Fellowship President and Ladies Aid President or their representative.
3. The President shall serve as chair, and following the Annual Business Meeting, the chair shall be authorized to establish monthly meetings, preferably during the last week of the month.
4. Duties:
 - a. Advise together at the call of the chair or three members of the committee desiring said meeting.

- b. Orient any new Pastor concerning the organization and work of the church.
 - c. Act as a central planning committee for the whole church in the development of a well-rounded program for Christ.
 - d. Consider proposed changes, such as church reorganization and policy, and present recommendations to a church business meeting for action.
5. Church members are welcome to attend the Advisory Committee meetings in a non-voting capacity.

SECTION B. Finance Committee

- 1. Purpose: This committee shall, in cooperation with the trustees, work towards a sound program of stewardship and finance for the work of the church.
- 2. Membership: This committee shall include: Treasurer (of the church), President, Vice President, Trustees, Clerk, Sabbath School Superintendent, Ladies Aid President, Representative of the Evangelism Committee, Representative of the Fellowship Committee, Chorister, and two members elected annually by the church.
- 3. The Treasurer shall chair this committee and shall call meetings as often as needed.
- 4. Duties:
 - a. Provide a program of stewardship training in the church which should include an emphasis on tithing.
 - b. Survey church resources, needs, etc., in preparation for the proposed Annual Budget; also keep check as to the adequacy of giving during the year.
 - c. Present the proposed Annual Budget to the church at least two weeks before the Annual Business Meeting.

SECTION C. Pastoral Relations Committee

- 1. Purpose: This committee shall evaluate and mediate the differences between the Pastor and the church, after the procedures in Matthew 18:15-17 have been followed.
- 2. Membership: One member, elected by the church, shall be chairperson. When either this chairperson or the church president or the Diaconate chairperson determines a need for this committee to act, the Pastor then selects a member to represent him. These two committee persons then select a third member for the committee.
- 3. They shall meet when necessary. Suggestions and concerns from any member of the church shall be welcomed and considered at these times. Persistent, unresolved problems shall be taken to the appropriate committees.

SECTION D. Music Committee

- 1. Membership: The Music Committee shall be composed of the director of each choir, the Chorister, Assistant Chorister, the Accompanists, and one representative elected by the church.
- 2. Meetings: The meetings shall be called as needed by the Chairperson, who is the Chorister, or the Pastor.
- 3. Duties:
 - a. Establish a schedule of pianists and/or organists for each Sabbath Service and any Special services of the church.
 - b. Select and secure music.

SECTION E. Fellowship Committee

- 1. Membership: This Committee shall consist of three members. One from the Ladies Aid, one from the Youth Fellowship, and one to be elected at the Annual Business Meeting. Their term of office shall be one year.
- 2. Duties:
 - a. Make arrangements for one (1) social activity each quarter.
 - b. Make arrangements to honor new families, special anniversaries (at the committee's discretion), persons or families leaving our fellowship for another Seventh Day Baptist Church and other events as seem appropriate.

- c. The member elected at the Annual Business Meeting is a member of the Finance Committee.

SECTION F. Evangelism Committee

1. Purpose: We believe that Jesus Christ by His life and ministry, and His final command to the disciples, commissions us to promote evangelism, missions and religious education, and that it is through these agencies that the church must promote Christianity throughout the whole world in all human relationships. [Deuteronomy 6:6-7; Matthew 28:18-20; 4:19,23; Acts 5:42; 20:28-32; 1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-22]
2. Membership: This committee is composed of the Diaconate and two members elected by the church. The committee will select its own chairperson from the members elected by the church.
3. Meetings: They shall meet regularly (at least quarterly) at a time decided upon by the elected members, in consultation with the Pastor and the Diaconate chair.
4. Duties:
 - a. Discuss and plan for evangelistic outreach.
 - b. Select one of their members as a member of the Finance Committee.

SECTION G. Christian Education Committee

1. Membership: Sabbath School Superintendent (chair), Assistant Superintendent, Youth Fellowship Advisor(s), Vacation Bible School Director, Youth Fellowship President and Sabbath School Teachers.
2. Duties:
 - a. Provide for the Christian Education program of the church and appoint teachers, advisors and other personnel as needed.
 - b. Ensure both the Youth Fellowship Advisor(s) and program are established yearly (by August).
 - c. Evaluate and select helps and programs periodically.
 - d. Have emphasis of Seventh Day Baptist beliefs each year.
 - e. Review the policy: "Reducing the Risk of Child or Youth Sexual Abuse" and report this review to the Annual Business Meeting. This review shall take place yearly by November, and at other times at the discretion of the Chairperson of this committee. All updates to this policy shall be brought to the next church Business Meeting for approval.

SECTION H. Nominating Committee

1. Membership:
 - a. Three members of varying ages shall be selected at the October Business Meeting.
 - b. The chairperson shall be appointed by the President.
2. Duties:
 - a. Gain consent of prospective nominees.
 - b. Present a double slate of officers, where possible, for election at the Annual Business Meeting of the church.
 - c. Publish this list at least two weeks in advance of the Annual Business Meeting.

SECTION I. Lord's Acre Committee

1. Membership:
 - a. This committee shall be made up of three members elected for one year terms at the Annual Business Meeting. They should be of varying ages.
 - b. The chairperson shall be appointed by the President.
2. Duties:
 - a. Propose ideas of projects to be used by families and church classes and groups throughout the year to earn money for Our Lord's Acre.
 - b. Propose a goal or project for the money to be used for within the church needs.
 - c. Carry out a program for the ingathering of the monies.

SECTION J. Christian Social Action Committee

1. Membership: This committee shall consist of a Trustee, a member of the Diaconate, each to be selected by their own committee, and two members elected by the church for a one year term at the Annual Business Meeting. One member elected by the church will be known as the Christian Social Action Keyworker. The second member elected by the church will be known as the Missions Keyworker, both to receive their respective Denominational mailings. The committee shall elect its own chairperson.
2. Duties:
 - a. Consider Denominational mailings and the ministries and issues that they present and advise the church regarding its responsibilities to these ministries and issues.
 - b. Solicit and administer aid and comfort to needy people.

SECTION K. Transportation Committee

1. Membership: This committee shall consist of three members elected for one year terms at the Annual Business Meeting. The chairperson shall be appointed by the President.
2. Duties:
 - a. Arrange transportation to Sabbath Worship service and other church meetings, such as baptisms, picnics, special worship services, prayer meetings and others as may be significant or appropriate, for persons having no other means of transportation or who are unable to attend without assistance.
 - b. Arrange for a phone number to call that may be published, that may be called for transportation to our church functions.
 - c. Arrange for transportation to Association Camp and retreats when needed.

SECTION L. Bulletin Committee

1. Membership: This committee shall consist of three members elected for one year terms at the Annual Business Meeting. The chairperson shall be appointed by the President.
2. Duties:
 - a. Prepare the bulletin masters or arrange for their preparation.
 - b. Make the bulletin copies from the masters for use in the worship service and for mailing.
 - c. Keep a mailing list of the membership and mail copies of the bulletin to nonresident members and other interested people every two weeks. Also, mail to resident members the bulletin they miss in the first mail following their absence from the Sabbath service.

ARTICLE SEVEN - AUXILIARIES

SECTION A. Sabbath School

1. Membership:
 - a. The church shall elect at its Annual Business Meeting a Superintendent, and Assistant Superintendent, for one year terms.
 - b. The Sabbath School is supervised by the Christian Education Committee which shall appoint all other necessary personnel.
 - c. The Sabbath School monies shall be handled by the church Treasurer.
2. Duties:
 - a. Provide classes and material for the graded department, youth and adults.
 - b. Emphasize missions here and abroad.

SECTION B. Ladies Aid

All ladies of the church who meet for fellowship once a month and endeavor to follow the duties and privileges outlined in the Seventh Day Baptist Ladies' Aid's Preamble. The Ladies Aid President is a member of the Advisory and Finance Committees.

SECTION C. Christian Fellowship Groups

These groups are arms of the Seventh Day Baptist Church, dedicated to building relationships between church families and family members. Regular meetings provide social opportunities with spiritual overtones for fellowship and sharing.

SECTION D. Youth Fellowship

1. Purpose:

- a. Provide spiritual and social fellowship among Christian youth.
- b. Provide encouragement in Christian living.
- c. Study the Bible and use helps to answer questions of the members.

2. Membership: Seventh grade through twelfth grade youth.

3. Advisor(s): Chosen by the Youth Fellowship and approved by the Christian Education Committee. They are advisors, directing the leadership as provided by the group. The Christian Education Committee will ensure that the advisor(s) and program are selected yearly (by August).

4. The Youth Fellowship president is a member of the Advisory and Christian Education Committees.

ARTICLE EIGHT • AMENDMENTS

These By-Laws may be amended at any Annual, Regular or Special Business Meeting of the church, provided that:

SECTION A. The proposed amendment has been presented in writing to the Advisory Committee at least 30 days prior to said meeting.

SECTION B. The Amendment has been submitted in writing to the church at least two Sabbaths prior to said meeting.

SECTION C. The Advisory Committee may or may not recommend the adoption. If the Advisory Committee does not approve of the proposed amendment, it may still be submitted by the individual or group that has proposed it.

SECTION D. Vote may be by voice, show of hands, or ballot, and must have a two-thirds majority to pass.

ARTICLE NINE - BRANCH CHURCHES

In order to establish a Branch Church of the Dodge Center Seventh Day Baptist Church, the following process will be used:

Section A. Proposal: A Proposal for Branch Church Status may be put forward in writing by any Full Member of this church and given to the Advisory Committee to begin the approval process. This proposal must include:

1. The name of the Branch Church.
2. The names of the officers of the Branch Church.
3. The Articles of Faith of the Branch Church
4. A copy of the incorporation papers of the Branch Church (if applicable)

Section B. Approval:

1. The Proposal for a Branch Church may be approved at any Annual, Regular or Special Business Meeting of the church.

2. This Proposal must be approved by both the Diaconate and the Advisory Committee and submitted by the Advisory Committee in writing to the church at least two Sabbaths prior to said meeting.
3. The vote of the church will be by written ballot. A two-thirds majority of voting members present is required for the vote to succeed.

Section C. Monitors: Prior to the business meeting vote, the Advisory Committee will appoint three Full Members of this church to be Branch Church Monitors. These Monitors, whose term will be reviewed and subject to an annual renewal vote at the February meeting of the Advisory Committee, will report at least quarterly to both the Advisory Committee and the Diaconate so that the Advisory Committee and the Diaconate can each report the status of the Branch Church to the Regular and Annual Meetings of the church.

Section D. Report: The Branch Church will provide a written report containing their progress (goals, activities, attendance, meeting place, etc) to each Regular and Annual meeting of the church.

Section E. Termination: This Branch Church Status may be terminated in three ways:

1. The Branch Church Status may be ended by a Vote of this church. A Termination Vote may be taken at any Regular, Annual or Special Business meeting of the church. The Termination Vote will be by written ballot. To succeed, the Termination Vote must be a simple majority of voting members present.
2. The Branch Church may be promoted to Full Church Status according to the guidelines of the Seventh Day Baptist General Convention.
3. The Branch Church may dissolve its Status as a Branch Church by a majority vote of the Branch Church members.

ARTICLE TEN - AFFILIATED ORGANIZATIONS

In order for an organization that is separate from the Dodge Center Seventh Day Baptist Church to become Affiliated with this church, the following process will be used:

Section A. Proposal: A Proposal for Affiliation may be put forward in writing by any Full Member of the church and given to the Advisory Committee to begin the approval process. This proposal must include:

1. The name of the organization that wishes to become affiliated.
2. The names of the officers of that organization.
3. The purpose of that organization.
4. The purpose of the affiliation.
5. A copy of the By-Laws of that organization so that those By-Laws may be readily reviewed by any member of this church.
6. A copy of the incorporation papers (if applicable) (for example: an organization having any paid employees will be incorporated)

Section B. Approval:

1. The Proposal for Affiliation may be approved at any Annual, Regular or Special Business Meeting of the church.
2. This Proposal must be approved by both the Diaconate and the Advisory Committee and submitted by the Advisory Committee in writing to the church at least two Sabbaths prior to said meeting.
3. The vote of the church will be by written ballot. A two-thirds majority of voting members present is required for the vote to succeed.

Section C. Monitors: Prior to the business meeting vote, the Advisory Committee will appoint three Full Members of this church to be Affiliation Monitors. These Monitors, whose term will be reviewed and subject to an annual renewal vote at the February meeting of the Advisory Committee, will report at least quarterly to both the Advisory Committee and the Diaconate so that the Advisory Committee and the Diaconate can each report the status of the Affiliation to the Regular and Annual Meetings of the church.

Section D. Report: The Affiliated Organization will provide a written report containing their status (including financial status, activities, and attendance (when applicable)) to each Regular and Annual meeting of the church.

Section E. Termination: This Affiliation Status may be terminated in two ways:

1. A Termination Vote may be taken at any Regular, Annual or Special Business meeting of the church. The Termination Vote will be by written ballot. To succeed, the Termination Vote must be a simple majority of voting members present.
2. The governing body of the Affiliated Organization may vote, according to their By-Laws, to dissolve the Affiliation.

Appendix 5: Sample Constitutions and Bylaws

Example 5: Church Constitution and Bylaws Template (Modified from the Southern Baptist Convention Template)

Church Constitution Template

Preamble

This Constitution and Bylaws are made to:

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

I. Name

The name of this church shall be _____. It shall be affiliated with the _____ Association and the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference USA and Canada.

II. Business Location

The address of the principal office of this church shall be: _____.

III. Purpose

The purposes of _____ (name of church) _____ are:

1. To worship and serve God and to fulfill the Great Commission of Jesus Christ as set forth in Matthew 28:19-20.
2. To minister to the needs of the members and others as the church is able to do so.
3. To do any and all things related to and in connection with the carrying out of the object and purpose herein above set forth.

IV. Statement of Belief (from the Statement of Belief of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference USA and Canada)

Introduction

2 Corinthians 3:17-18; 2 Timothy 2:15; Romans 12:2; Ephesians 4:3-6, 15; Romans 10:17; 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Seventh Day Baptists consider liberty of thought under the guidance of the Holy Spirit to be essential to Christian belief and practice. Therefore we encourage the unhindered study and open discussion of Scripture. We uphold the individual's freedom of conscience in seeking to determine and obey the will of God.

The following statement is not intended to be exhaustive, but is an expression of our common belief, which is derived from our understanding of Scripture.

1. God

1 Timothy 1:17; Deuteronomy 6:4; 1 Kings 8:27; 1 John 1:5; Genesis 1:1-2; Acts 17:24-25, 28; Psalm 90:1-2; Matthew 28:19; John 3:16; Isaiah 57:15; 2 Peter 3:9.

We believe in one God, infinite and perfect, the Creator and Sustainer of the universe who exists eternally in three persons—Father, Son, and Holy Spirit—and desires to share His love in a personal relationship with everyone.

The Father

We believe in God the Father, who is sovereign over all, and is loving and just as He forgives the repentant and condemns the unrepentant.

1 Corinthians 8:6; Ephesians 4:6; Ezekiel 33:11; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8; John 5:24; John 3:16-18.

The Son

We believe in God the Son, who became incarnate in Jesus Christ, our Lord and Savior. He gave Himself on the cross as the complete and final sacrifice for sin. As our Risen Lord, He is the mediator between God the Father and mankind.

John 1:34; Hebrews 1:3; John 1:14-18; Romans 1:3-4; 1 John 3:16; 1 Peter 2:24; Hebrews 10:10-14; 1 Corinthians 15:20-21; 1 Timothy 2:5; John 14:6; 1 John 2:1-2.

The Holy Spirit

We believe in God the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, who gives spiritual birth to believers lives within them, and empowers them for witnessing and service. We believe the Holy Spirit inspired the Scriptures, convicts of sin and instructs in righteousness.

John 14:16; 3:5-8; 14:17; Romans 5:5; 1 Corinthians 12:4-7; 2 Peter 1:20-21; John 16:7-11.

2. The Bible

2 Peter 1:20-21; Romans 3:2; 2 Peter 3:1-2, 15-16; 2 Timothy 3:14-17; Matthew 5:17-19; Psalm 119:105; John 20:30-31; Hebrews 1:1-2.

We believe that the Bible is the inspired Word of God and is our final authority in matters of faith and practice. We believe that Jesus Christ, in His life and teachings as recorded in the Bible, is the supreme interpreter of God's will for mankind.

3. Mankind

Genesis 1:26-27; Psalm 8:3-9; Micah 6:8; Matthew 5:44-48; 1 John 1:3; John 1:12

We believe that mankind was created in the image of God and is therefore the noblest work of creation. We believe that human beings have moral responsibility and are created to enjoy both divine and human fellowship as children of God.

4. Sin and Salvation

1 John 3:4-5; Romans 3:23-25; Isaiah 59:2; 1 John 1:8-10; Romans 5:6-8; Romans 6:23; Hebrews 10:10-14; 1 Peter 1:3; John 3:16-18, 36; Ephesians 2:8-9; John 14:6; Matthew 25:41-46; Romans 5:10

We believe that sin is disobedience to God and failure to live according to His will. Because of sin all people have separated themselves from God. We believe that because we are sinners, we are in need of a Savior.

We believe that salvation from sin and death is the gift of God by redeeming love accomplished by Christ's death and resurrection, and is received only by repentance and faith in Him. We believe that all who repent of their sin and receive Christ as Savior will not be punished at the final judgment but enjoy eternal life.

5. Eternal Life

1 Corinthians 15:3-4, 20-23; John 14:1-3; Matthew 24:30; Titus 2:13; John 17:3; 1 John 5:11-13; 1 Corinthians 15:42-44; John 10:27-28; John 6:40

We believe that Jesus rose from the dead and lives eternally with the Father, and that He will come again with power and great glory. We believe that eternal life begins in knowing God through a commitment to Jesus Christ. We believe that because He died and lives again, resurrection with spiritual and imperishable bodies is the gift of God to believers.

6. The Church

Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 12:13, 14, 27; Romans 12:4-5; Colossians 1:18; Acts 2:42; Ephesians 2:19-22; Romans 15:5-7; Ephesians 4:11-16; 2 Peter 3:18; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Matthew 18:20; Hebrews 10:24-25

We believe that the church of God is all believers gathered by the Holy Spirit and joined into one body, of which Christ is the Head. We believe that the local church is a community of believers organized in covenant relationship for worship, fellowship and service, practicing and proclaiming common convictions, while growing in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

We believe in the priesthood of all believers and practice the autonomy of the local congregation, as we seek to work in association with others for more effective witness.

7. Baptism

Romans 6:3-4; Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 2:41; Colossians 2:12; Romans 6:11; Galatians 3:26-27

We believe that baptism of believers in obedience to Christ's command is a witness to the acceptance of Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord. We believe in baptism by immersion as a symbol of death to sin, a pledge to a new life in Him.

8. The Lord's Supper

Mark 14:22-25; Matthew 26:26-29; 1 Corinthians 10:16-17, 11:23-30

We believe that the Lord's Supper commemorates the suffering and death of our Redeemer until He comes, and is a symbol of union in Christ and a pledge of renewed allegiance to our risen Lord.

9. Sabbath

Genesis 2:2-3; Exodus 16:23-30; Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 5:17-19; Mark 2:27-28; Luke 4:16; Acts 13:14, 42-44; 16:11-13; 17:2-3; 18:4-11; Ezekiel 20:19-20; Hebrews 4:9-10; John 14:15; Isaiah 58:13-14; Luke 23:56

We believe that the Sabbath of the Bible, the seventh day of the week, is sacred time, a gift of God to all people, instituted at creation, affirmed in the Ten Commandments and reaffirmed in the teaching and example of Jesus and the apostles.

We believe that the gift of Sabbath rest is an experience of God's eternal presence with His people.

We believe that in obedience to God and in loving response to His grace in Christ, the Sabbath should be faithfully observed as a day of rest, worship, and celebration.

10. Evangelism

Matthew 24:14; Acts 1:8; Matthew 28:18-20; 2 Corinthians 4:1-2, 5-6; 1 Peter 3:15; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Ephesians 6:14-20

We believe that Jesus Christ commissions us to proclaim the Gospel, to make disciples, to baptize and to teach observance of all that He has commanded. We are called to be witnesses for Christ throughout the world and in all human relationships.

V. Government

The government of _____ (name of church) _____ is vested in its members. The membership retains unto itself the right of exclusive self-government in all phases of its life and organization. It recognizes the needs for mutual counsel and cooperation, which are common among Baptist churches. This church will cooperate with and mutually work with _____ Association and the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference USA and Canada.

VI. Nonprofit Status and Liquidation

This church is not organized for profit. In the event of liquidation or dissolution of the church, all of its assets and property of every nature and description whatsoever shall be paid over and transferred at the direction of the trustees to Seventh Day Baptist General Conference USA and Canada.

VII. Amendment

This Constitution and Bylaws may be amended provided the proposed amendment shall have been presented in writing at a regular church business meeting and then circulated to the membership. Amendments to this Constitution and Bylaws shall be two-thirds vote of members of the church who are qualified to vote and are present in the business meeting with a quorum to discuss and vote for this matter.

Church Bylaws Template

I. Church Membership

A. Qualifications: Membership of _____ (name of Church) _____ shall consist of people who have made a profession of their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, and who, having been scripturally baptized by immersion, and are in agreement with the Statement of Belief, and Covenant of the church. (Church Covenant to be written soon).

B. Reception: Membership in the church may be attained by majority vote of the church in any of its regular business meetings and in one of the following manners:

1. By scriptural baptism by immersion after profession of faith in Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior.
2. By transfer of church letter from another Baptist church.
3. By a statement of faith of their prior experience of conversion and scriptural baptism by immersion in another evangelical church of like faith and practice.
4. By restoration to the church membership after having been dropped.

C. Termination: Membership in this church shall be terminated when a member:

1. Requests a letter of transfer to join another Baptist church.
2. Is dropped from the roll of membership when he or she joins another kind of church. A letter of transfer is not necessary.
3. Dies
4. Is dismissed by a vote of the church due to reasons and circumstances provided in the church discipline. The pastor and deacons will do all they can to counsel the member for restoration prior to action of dismissal or a request of the member to be dismissed from the church membership.

D. Orientation of New Members: Candidates for membership and new members need to attend the Church Membership Class to learn and understand the privileges and responsibilities of members to God and the church.

1. Members in good standing shall have the right to a voice and vote in all church transactions and shall have the right and privileges to full participation in the life and work of the church.
2. It shall be the duty of church members to uphold the Statement of Belief, Constitution and Bylaws, and Covenant of the Church.

II. Church Officers

All church officers must be members of the church in good standing.

A. The Pastor:

1. The qualifications for pastor shall be consistent with those listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. The pastor's training, skills, and experiences are needed in this area of leadership.
2. Responsibilities of the pastor:
 - (a) These generally fall into the following areas: Preaching, teaching, pastoral counseling, administration, planning, and guiding the church to grow and fulfill its purposes.
 - (b) The pastor shall lead the church, the organizations, and all leaders of the church in performing their tasks in worship, proclamation, education, and evangelism.
 - (c) The pastor shall be an ex officio member of all church standing committees, except the Pastor's Selection Committee.
 - (d) When not available to preach, the pastor shall assist the deacons in securing pulpit supply.

3. Call:

- (a) A pastor shall be chosen and called whenever a vacancy occurs.
- (b) A Pastor's Selection Committee shall be appointed by the church to seek out a suitable pastor and this committee's recommendation will serve as a nomination.
- (c) The Pastor's Selection Committee will recommend only one candidate at a time.
- (d) The pastor's election shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least one week notice shall be given to the members.
- (e) An affirmative vote of three-fourths (3/4) of those present is necessary for a choice.

4. Terms of Service:

- (a) The chosen pastor shall serve until the relationship is terminated by either the request of the pastor or that of the church. In either case, at least sixty (60) days' notice shall be given unless otherwise mutually agreed.
- (b) There shall be a written mutual contract/agreement made between the pastor and the church.

B. Church Staff: This church shall employ or call staff, as it shall need.

- 1. Staff members other than that of the pastor shall be recommended for employment by the Church Council or a special committee.
- 2. A written job description and mutual contract/agreement will be prepared when the need for church staff is determined.

C. Deacons:

- 1. Number and term of office: There shall be five (5) deacons for the first 100 resident members and one (1) for each additional fifty (50) of portion thereof. Deacons shall be elected for a term of service of three years or longer term of service as voted upon by the church.
- 2. Qualifications:
 - (a) A church deacon must meet the qualifications listed in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
 - (b) A deacon shall demonstrate an exemplary Christian testimony in private, family, and public life; a committed Christian leader and partner of the pastor; supporter and promoter of the church faith, practice, programs, and ministries.
- 3. Election:
 - (a) When a deacon vacancy occurs, the chairman of the Deacons Committee shall announce that an election of a deacon will be held during a named church business meeting.
 - (b) The Deacon Committee will enlist active members to be recommended to the church. The duties, qualifications, and importance of the office of a deacon will be interpreted to the candidates and be reviewed to the church prior to the scheduled election of deacons.
- 4. Ordination:
 - (a) Selection, election, and ordination of deacons is a privilege of the local church.
 - (b) When ordination of deacons is planned by the church, it shall authorize the pastor to assemble a council to examine the candidates concerning their fit to serve as deacons.
 - (c) The council directed to examine the deacons shall be composed of the pastor, invited ordained pastors, and deacons of neighboring sister Baptist churches.
 - (d) When the council recommends the ordination of deacons, the ordination service shall be scheduled as led by the pastor.

5. Duties:

- (a) Elected deacons shall elect the chairman of their committee.
- (b) Deacons serve as a committee of counsel to assist the pastor concerning the progress and welfare of the church.
- (c) Assist the pastor in ministering to the members by implementing the Deacon Family Ministry.
- (d) Seek to solve any fellowship problem of the church.
- (e) Assist the pastor in administering the church ordinances.
- (f) Serve as church membership committee.
- (g) In the absence of the pastor, the chairman of the Deacons Committee shall serve as an advisory member to all organizations, departments, and committees of the church.

D. Moderator:

- 1. The church moderator may be the pastor or a lay leader elected to this position.
- 2. The moderator shall preside at all regular and called business meetings of the church.
- 3. In the absence of the moderator, the chairman of deacons shall preside of the regular and called business meetings of the church.
- 4. In the absence of the moderator and the chairman of deacons, the church clerk shall call the church to order and an acting moderator will be elected.

E. Clerk:

- 1. The church clerk shall be elected and be responsible for keeping an accurate record of all business meeting transactions of the church and preparing the annual report to the association.
- 2. He or she shall keep a register of the names and addresses of the church members, with dates of admission, dismissal, dedication of children, and deaths of members of the church family.
- 3. He or she shall issue letters of dismissal voted by the church and write letters of transfer of membership, prepare written reports of the church, and keep an accurate history of the church.
- 4. An assistant church clerk may be elected or the clerk's responsibilities shall be delegated to a church secretary if and when the church can afford to employ one.

F. Treasurer:

- 1. The church treasurer shall be elected as the custodian of all moneys of the church and shall disburse these moneys by checks as authorized by the church.
- 2. He or she shall keep, at all times, an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements and shall render a monthly and annually written report of this account to the church.
- 3. The treasurer's report shall be audited annually by an auditing committee.

G. Financial Secretary:

- 1. The church financial secretary shall be elected and shall be responsible for seeing that the offerings are properly received, counted, and deposited in the church's bank account.
- 2. He or she shall properly credit each contributor and their offerings.
- 3. He or she shall be responsible for preparing for mailing a quarterly or annual record of contribution to donors.

H. Trustees:

1. At least three (3) trustees shall be elected by the church to hold trust the property of the church.
2. They shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer any property of the church without a specific vote of the church authorizing each action.
3. It shall be the function of the trustees to sign any, and all legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, or lease of church property or any other legal documents requiring the signature of the trustees for and in behalf of the church.

I. Church Council:

1. The Church Council shall have as regular members the pastor, clerk, treasurer, chairman of deacons, Sunday School director, discipleship director, chairperson of each church standing committee, presidents of men's, women's, and youth fellowships.
2. The Church Council shall be to recommend to the church objectives and goals; review the coordinated program plans recommended by the pastor, church officers, organizations, and committees; to recommend to the church the use of leadership, calendar time, and other resources according to program priorities; and to evaluate program achievements in terms of church goals and objectives.
3. All matters agreed on by the Church Council calling for action not already provided for shall be referred to the church to be voted upon.

J. Vacancies: In case of vacancy in any office, except that of the pastor and staff members, the vacancy shall be filled by the church at a regular or special meeting as soon as possible after such vacancy has occurred.

III. Church Committees

All church committee members shall be elected by the church from nominations presented by the Nominating Committee, and nominations from the floor with the consent of the nominee. There shall be a minimum of three (3) committee members with a chairperson. Any committee member elected to fill any vacancy shall serve the unexpired term of the position vacated. Each committee chairperson shall submit an annual budget request to the Budget and Finance Committee.

A. Nominating Committee:

The Nominating Committee shall be responsible throughout the year for nominating and presenting to the church people to serve in various positions of the church (unless provided for otherwise in these Bylaws) vacated by expiration of term of office, by death, by resignation, or by removal. Each person contacted shall be informed of his or her responsibilities.

B. Budget and Finance Committee:

This committee shall have the responsibility of assuring that the adopted budget is adhered to. It shall recommend financial policies to the church and shall foster and promote programs of stewardship. In consultation with the Church Council for the new church year, it shall draw up and submit to the church an annual budget during the month of October for the next calendar year and recommend the chairperson of budget promotion annually. The taking of special

offerings shall be approved by this committee. This committee shall be responsible for the annual audit of the treasurer's books.

C. Properties Committee:

This committee shall be responsible in matters related to properties administration. Throughout the year, this committee shall give attention to and study the condition and state of repair and appearance of the building and grounds of the church and equipment therein, making arrangements for repairs and improvements authorized by the church and included in the church budget. All matters of major repairs, changes, improvements or items of equipment not included in the budget shall be referred to the Stewardship Committee for fiscal review. Purchase of equipment shall be through this committee unless another committee is directed specifically to make studies, report to the church, and make necessary arrangements as the church decides.

D. Missions Committee

This committee shall be responsible for discovering possibilities for starting new congregations. If this occurs, this committee will work out a mutual agreement with the church mission congregation(s) as approved by the church. It shall seek also possibilities for local, state, national missions projects, share findings with church program organizations, and serves the church in establishing and conducting such missions projects. This committee shall lead the church in its involvement with the Baptist association, state convention, and other Southern Baptist Convention mission related ministries or programs that mutually benefit the church.

E. Music Committee:

This committee will plan and evaluate the music program of the church, in the formation of choirs in the church and planning special musical programs throughout the year. It is responsible for recommending people for the positions of pianist and organist, song leader, and in assisting the pastor with special music in the regular and other services of the church. In the event that a music director is needed as a staff of the church, this committee will look for a qualified person to be recommended to this compensated position, which requires approval by the church.

F. Youth Committee:

This committee is responsible in planning and coordinating youth programs and activities inside and outside of the church. These activities are to be correlated with the activities of the church program organization in attaining objectives set forth by the church. An elected representative of the Youth Committee shall serve as a member of the Church Council.

G. Social and Recreation Committee:

This committee shall be responsible for all social and recreation activities of the church, formulating policies and supervising the services rendered to the church through the kitchen and promoting regular church functions to build the fellowship of the church.

H. Kitchen Committee:

This committee shall have general supervision of the supplies, equipment, and use of the

church kitchen suggesting to the church rules and regulations as they deem wise. It shall enforce policies necessary to properly maintain the kitchen in a clean, orderly, and acceptable condition.

I. Ordinance Committee:

This committee shall assist the pastor in preparing for the two ordinances of the church. The members of this committee shall be responsible for preparing the candidates and the baptistery for the ordinance of baptism and will prepare the elements of the Lord's Supper.

J. Christian Education Committee:

This committee shall lead the church in developing and implementing an effective education-training program. Foremost of these are:

1. Sabbath School:

The Sabbath School shall be divided into classes and departments as it grows and conducted under the direction of a director for the study of God's Word. The tasks of the Sabbath School shall be to teach the Bible; lead in reaching all prospects; lead all church members to worship, witness, learn, and minister daily; provide and interpret information regarding the work of the church and denomination.

2. Church Training:

The discipleship program shall serve as the training organization and arm of the church. Its tasks shall be to teach Christian doctrine, ethics, church policy and organization; train leaders for the church and denomination; provide for specialized training for special projects of ministry for the church; and to provide organization and leadership for special activities in the church.

3. Missionary Education Ministry:

There shall be a missionary education with such officers and such forms of organizations to teach missions, lead members to participate in missions, and provide organization and leadership in special missions projects of the church.

K. Outreach Committee:

This committee is under the immediate leadership of the pastor. He forms a committee to develop and implement a strategy for effective programs of community evangelism outreach such as visitation; Bible studies in homes, offices, places of works; special evangelistic meetings inside and outside of the church; and other needed programs to reach people with the gospel. This committee is also responsible for planning training events for soul-winning, as well as the production or securing evangelistic printed materials to be used by the church.

L. Other committees may be formed as needed by the church.

IV. Church Meetings

A. Worship Services:

The church shall meet regularly each Sabbath morning and at other times designated for worship, prayer, and Bible study. These meetings will be open for the entire membership of the church and for all people and shall be conducted under the direction of the pastor or designated church officer in the absence of the pastor.

B. Regular Business Meetings:

Regular business meetings shall be held quarterly. The agenda shall be circulated or made known to the church one week prior to the business meeting. Should there be any unusual meeting or matter of unusual interest to be brought before such regular meeting, notice shall be given to the membership one week prior to that meeting.

C. Special Business Meeting:

A special called business meeting may be called by the pastor, and with other church officers, or by action of the church to consider special matters of significant nature. A one-week written notice or announcement must be given for the especially called business meeting.

D. Quorum:

The quorum consists of those who attend the business meeting, provided it is a stated meeting or one that has been properly called. At least one-fourth of the members shall constitute a quorum.

E. Parliamentary Rules:

Robert's Rules of Order (revised edition) is adopted as the authority for parliamentary rules of procedure for all business meetings of the church and for all other meetings that demand voting of the church members, including committee meetings.

V. Licensing and Ordaining

A. Licensing:

Any member of the church who has shown by his or her life and has felt the call to the gospel ministry may by vote of the membership at a regular meeting be licensed by the church to the Christian ministry.

B. Ordination:

The authority for ordination of pastors lies in the local congregation. It is the congregation which calls one of its members to service and leadership. It is the congregation which ordains. However, each local church has a responsibility, not only to the candidate and to itself, but also to the Seventh Day Baptist denomination, the Association, and to the Christian world in general, to act responsibly and in the true spirit of the New Testament precedent. Two advisory bodies assist a local Seventh Day Baptist church in the ordination process: the Ordination Preparation Committee, and the Ordination Council. These advisory bodies and the overall process of pastoral ordination should be advised by the Director of Pastoral Services who will help in the ordination process. (See the *Manual of Procedure* – Section H for details in the ordination process.)

VI. Church Discipline

A. Should any unhappy difference arise among members, the aggrieved member shall follow in a tender spirit, the rules given by our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17.

B. Should any case of gross breach of covenant, or of public scandal occur, the deacons shall endeavor to resolve the conflict; and if this effort fails, shall report the case to the church.

C. All such proceedings shall be pervaded by a spirit of Christian kindness and forbearance, but should an adverse decision be reached, the church may proceed to admonish or declare the offender to be no longer in the membership of the church.

D. Any person whose membership has been terminated for any offense may be restored by vote of the church, upon evidence of repentance and reformation; or if an account of continued absence, upon satisfactory explanation.

Ratified by action of the church in its business meeting on _____(day/date)_____

Moderator: _____

Church Clerk: _____

Note: Seventh Day Baptists were given permission to use and modify this document by Shannon White and Clark Berryman of the North American Mission Board of the Southern Baptist Convention.

Model 1: Submitted by Rev. Leland W. Bond and Donald M. Graffius¹

MODEL BYLAWS

Outline

- Article I Name
- Article II Purpose
- Article III Denominational Cooperation and Affiliation
- Article IV Church Membership
 - Section 1. Qualifications
 - Section 2. Duties
 - Section 3. Inactive Members
 - Section 4. Separation or Dismissal
- Article V Officers
 - Section 1. Pastor
 - Section 2. Diaconate
 - Section 3. Moderator
 - Section 4. Clerk
 - Section 5. Treasurer
 - Section 6. Trustees
- Article VI Meetings
 - Section 1. Worship
 - Section 2. Communion
 - Section 3. Business Meetings
- Article VII Committees
 - Section 1. Standing Committees
 - Section 2. Special Committees
 - Section 3. Pastoral Search Committee
- Article VIII Religious Education
- Article IX Parliamentary Authority
- Article X Church Dissolution

¹ The legal requirements for Articles of Incorporation vary from state to state and perhaps from province to province. Therefore, no proposed Articles of Incorporation or Constitution are included. The examples in the Appendix may be reviewed, in order to determine the type of information which may be needed in one's own state or province. These should be drafted in cooperation with the attorney handling the church's incorporation.

MODEL BYLAWS

Bylaws Article I Name

The name of the corporation shall be the _____ Seventh Day Baptist Church of _____, ____.

Article II Purpose

As reflected in its covenant, the general purposes of this corporation shall be to conduct religious worship and instruction, to provide guidance in the faith taught by our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, and to carry out the "Great Commission" of Matthew 28:19-20. It shall call, train, educate, license, and ordain ministers of the gospel and deacons; seek to advance spiritual education, growth, enlightenment and purity; promote home and foreign missions; and aid in the spread of the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the ends of the earth.

Article III Denominational Cooperation and Affiliation

The church may seek membership in an association of Seventh Day Baptist churches and/or the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, USA and Canada, to the mutual benefit of the church and these organizations, and for the purpose of promoting cooperative efforts in advancing the cause of Christ. Authorization to seek membership in these organizations shall be by majority vote of the members at a regular or special business meeting.

Article IV Church Membership

Section 1. Qualifications: Any person who subscribes to the church covenant and statement of faith may become a member of the church by a majority vote of the membership by:

- a. confession of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, baptism by immersion, and acceptance of the Seventh Day Sabbath, or by
- b. letter from some other Seventh Day Baptist church, or by
- c. statement of Christian experience (or letter from another Christian Church) and acceptance of the Seventh Day Sabbath, if previously baptized by immersion

Section 2. Duties: The duties of members are outlined in the church covenant, which shall be presented to prospective members in order that they may understand their church responsibilities. Members in good standing may from time to time be asked to renew their covenant with the church.

Section 3. Inactive Members: Members who, for a period of one year, have not attended services or made contact with the church shall be put on an inactive list, upon recommendation of the

diaconate and approval by the church. Upon renewed participation, such members may be restored to active status by the same procedure.

Section 4. Separation: Members may be released from membership by vote of the church, at their own request or upon recommendation of the Pastor's Advisory Committee. Any member may receive from the church clerk, a letter recommending him or her for membership in another Seventh Day Baptist church, by vote of the church. Such a letter of transfer shall refer to the date action was taken to grant it, and shall identify the member's status as active or inactive.

Article V Officers

Section 1. Pastor: The pastor shall be called by a vote of two-thirds of members present at a regular or special business meeting. After an initial call of at least two years, the church shall vote annually to renew the pastor's call. The vote shall be taken at the annual business meeting immediately preceding expiration of the initial period of the pastor's call, and at each annual business meeting thereafter. The pastor shall be informed of the tally of votes ("for" or "against") that were recorded on the first ballot. In the absence of a pastor, acting pastors may be called by a vote of the church. The pastor shall possess the qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and shall be responsible for promoting the spiritual welfare of the church. Other responsibilities shall be spelled out in the letter by which the church's call is extended to the pastor. The pastor shall meet with the Trustees and shall be an ex-officio member of all committees of the church except the Pastor-Church Relations Committee and the Pastoral Search Committee. The pastor shall report to the church at the annual and quarterly business meetings.

Section 2. The Diaconate:

a. Deacons and deaconesses may be called by the church in such numbers as deemed necessary. They shall have been members of the church, or some other Seventh Day Baptist Church, for at least two years before their call, and they shall have the Biblical qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.

b. Their duties shall be to lead in the absence of the pastor, assist the pastor in administering baptism and communion, and assist the church in its ministry to people in distress. They shall report to the church at the annual and quarterly business meetings.

Section 3. Moderator: The moderator shall be elected for a one-year term. The moderator's duties shall be to preside at the business meetings, to appoint special officers or committees as occasions require, and to bring all necessary business before the church for action. An assistant moderator may also be elected for a one-year term.

Section 4. Clerk: The clerk shall be elected for a one-year term. The clerk's duties shall be to keep church records and to attend to correspondence related to church business. An assistant clerk may be elected for a one-year term.

Section 5. Treasurer: The treasurer shall be elected for a one-year term. The treasurer's duties shall be to keep account of church finances and the offerings of individuals in a way which meets IRS requirements (and is otherwise in accordance with the law), to disperse funds as directed by the church, to be responsible for the safe keeping of all church funds, and to report to the church at the annual and quarterly business meetings. An assistant treasurer may be elected for a one-year term.

Section 6. Trustees:

- a. There shall be no fewer than three, nor more than seven, trustees elected by the church for three-year terms. At least one third of the trustees shall be elected annually after the initial election, when one third are elected for one year, one third for two years, and one third for three years.
- b. The trustees shall transact all legal and financial business of the church. In case of purchase, sale and encumbering of property, they shall have received approval from the church by a two-thirds affirmative vote at a business meeting. They shall have charge of all property and fund raising. They shall help prepare the church budget for submission at the annual church business meeting and shall report to the church at the annual and quarterly business meetings. They shall provide for the auditing of the church financial records annually.

Article VI
Meetings

Section 1. Worship: The church shall meet for worship on the seventh day of the week, the Sabbath, at such time and place as shall be determined by the members.

Section 2. Communion: A service of communion shall be held on the second Sabbath of January, April, July and October unless alternate dates are arranged by the steering committee.

Section 3. Business meetings: A quorum shall consist of five active members or one third of the active membership (as determined by the clerk), whichever is greater. Announcement shall be given of the date, place and time of any business meeting, on the two Sabbaths immediately preceding the meeting.

- a. The annual meeting shall take place on the second Sunday in January. Annual reports are to be received from the pastor, treasurer, diaconate, trustees and standing committees. All officers and committees shall be elected at this meeting.
- b. Quarterly business meetings shall take place on the second Sunday in January, April, July and October.
- c. Alternate dates for the annual and quarterly business meetings may be scheduled by the steering committee, and special meetings may be called by the moderator, provided the required announcement of the date, place and time of these meetings has been made.

Article VII
Committees

Section 1. Standing Committees:

- a. Pastor's Advisory Committee. This committee shall consist of the pastor and the deacons and deaconesses. It is before this committee that questions of membership, discipline and spiritual matters relating to the church and its members shall be considered, with final action referred to the church body.
- b. Steering Committee. This committee shall consist of the pastor, moderator, clerk, treasurer, and a representative of the trustees. They shall meet prior to the quarterly meetings, or as needed, to transact business approved by the church, and to prepare an agenda for church business meetings.
- c. Pastor-Church Relations Committee. This committee shall be composed of two members elected by the church and a third member named by the pastor. They shall interact with the pastor and the church to promote harmony and understanding in their working relationships.

Section 2. Special Committees: Special committees may be appointed by the moderator or elected at any business meeting. It is understood that these committees will be terminated when their purpose has been accomplished.

Section 3. Pastoral Search Committee: When necessary to call a pastor, the church shall form a pastoral search committee, composed of three or more members, to take the necessary steps for calling a pastor. The committee may want to consult with the Seventh Day Baptist Center on Ministry for suggestions and help. Their function will be completed when a candidate has been named as pastor of the church.

Article VIII Christian Education

Educational interests of the church may be promoted by such activities as the Sabbath School, youth groups, vacation church school, Bible clubs, camps, etc. Each such group shall be constituted in a manner that includes its own organization and officers. The pastor and Steering Committee will generally oversee these groups.

Article IX Parliamentary Authority

Unless a vote is carried to the contrary, Robert's Rules of Order, Revised, shall be used as parliamentary authority.

Article X Church Dissolution

In the event that it becomes necessary to dissolve the church, the following actions should be taken by the trustees and remaining members:

- a. Allocate the remaining assets, including real property, to nonprofit organizations such as the Seventh Day Baptist Memorial Board, the Seventh Day Baptist Missionary Society, or other nonprofit organizations.
- b. Notify the state where incorporation took place of action taken by the church to dissolve the corporation.
- c. Forward all records and items of historical interest to the Seventh Day Baptist Historical Society.

Article XI Amendments

These Bylaws may be amended at any regular business meeting, provided the proposed amendment has been submitted to the entire membership in writing at least three weeks before the business meeting. The Bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of those attending the meeting.

Appendix 6.1

Conference Membership Procedures¹ Seventh Day Baptist General Conference USA and Canada, Ltd.

The Seventh Day Baptist General Conference recognizes that local churches develop in unique ways as they respond to the needs and opportunities of their communities. The procedures presented here are designed to assist the local church in becoming a member of the Conference. The following points are important for groups to understand during the time preceding membership.

- We encourage groups that are similar to us in faith and practice to develop relationships with local Seventh Day Baptist churches. Attendance at Association and General Conference sessions can strengthen ties, promote understanding, and create a climate in which new and struggling groups will receive prayer support and encouragement from their brothers and sisters in other congregations.
- We want local churches to have healthy, effective ministry. These procedures help the Conference determine if a congregation has sufficient strength and stability to conduct its ministry and business affairs as an autonomous congregation. A young group or a very small congregation may function better as branch of an established Seventh Day Baptist Church. As members of a branch church they can participate fully in the activities and ministries of the General Conference while they strengthen their new congregation.
- We encourage small congregations to concentrate their energy and resources on ministries that have direct impact on the lives of people in their communities. A church building and other facilities can be helpful, but debt on such property can drain the group of resources needed for direct ministry.
- Churches that are planning to seek membership in the General Conference are encouraged to use the resources available to them through the boards and agencies of the General Conference. These agencies may be of help in the planning and development of churches that are not yet members of the Conference.

Churches seeking membership in the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, USA and Canada, Ltd. shall demonstrate the following characteristics that are expected of all Seventh Day Baptist Churches.

- A. A covenant relationship among the members of the church.
- B. Doctrinal harmony with the current Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Belief
- C. Congregational church government (authority exercised by the congregation).
- D. Stability of operation and ministry.

The following material describes these four areas in greater detail.

A. Covenant

1. Develop a covenant that reflects the principles of congregational life consistent with those expressed in the paragraphs on “The Church” in the current Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Belief (Normally a covenant will include statements about commitment to God through Christ, to the word of God, to the people of God, to the work of God in the world, and to the Sabbath.)
2. Membership in the church needs to be understood as agreement to the relationship expressed in the covenant.

B. Doctrinal harmony

1. Develop a doctrinal statement that accurately reflects the beliefs of the congregation.
2. A vote of the congregation shall be taken confirming the church’s doctrinal statement.
3. A vote of the congregation shall be taken stating that the congregation believes that their local statement is consistent with the current Statement of Belief adopted by the General Conference.
4. The results of this vote shall be submitted with the doctrinal statement.

C. Congregational church government

Organize in a manner that is consistent with the laws of the state or province in which the church is located and in a manner consistent with the principles of congregational church government stated below. The church constitution and bylaws shall be developed to establish these principles.

1. The congregation establishes and revises its own constitution and bylaws.
2. The congregation votes on receiving and dismissing members.
3. Final decisions on matters of church discipline are by vote of the congregation.
4. The congregation selects and dismisses its own leaders.
5. Leaders are accountable to the congregation.
6. The congregation reviews and can modify or reject leadership decisions.
7. The congregation votes on the purchase and sale of property.
8. The congregation is the legal owner of church property.
9. All church funds are held in the name of the congregation. They are expended as directed by the congregation. Periodic reports of all financial transactions shall be presented to and reviewed by the congregation.

The constitution should include the following points. (Examples of several constitutions and bylaws are included in this manual.)

1. Official name of the church
2. Purpose of the church
3. Affiliation— seek and maintain membership in the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference.
4. Membership procedures
 - Qualifications (personal acceptance of Christ as Lord and Savior, baptism by immersion, etc.)
 - Methods of receiving members (following baptism, letter of transfer, testimony, etc.)
 - Methods of separation (request of member, breach of covenant, etc.)
5. Officers (pastor, deacons, trustees, etc.)
 - Duties
 - Election and terms of service
6. Meetings
 - Worship and study
 - Business (regular and special)
 - Quorum required to transact business
7. Committees
 - Regular (duties, method of selection, terms of service)
 - Special (method of selection, special considerations)
8. Dissolution of the church and disposal of assets
9. Method of amendment and notice required to amend.

The bylaws should describe the procedures to be followed by the congregation in implementing the requirements of the constitution.

D. Stability

Stability of a church is difficult to determine accurately. There is always a subjective element in such evaluations. It is not the wish of the General Conference to deprive any church of membership. However, it is not helpful to local congregations, or to the General Conference, to have new churches established and recognized, only to dissolve after a brief period. We would remind churches seeking membership in the Conference of the help and encouragement available to them during the time before formal membership is granted. Some of these opportunities are stated at the beginning of this section. The following indicators of stability shall guide the General Conference when considering a church for membership.

1. Sufficient members to carry forward an effective ministry at the local level
 - Holding weekly Sabbath worship services for a period of at least one full year at the time of application.
 - Average attendance at weekly Sabbath worship service of twenty-five for six consecutive months, or of twenty for an entire year.
 - Twenty-five members from at least five households are generally needed to indicate stability. In rare instances groups that have met for at least five years and have a consistent membership of between twenty and twenty-five may apply.
 - If General Council determines that a church has demonstrated stability for several years and that the church can carry forward effective ministry at the local level, General Council may recommend the church for Conference membership regardless of the church's attendance and membership.
(This bullet point added by vote of the Conference in 2012)
2. Recommendation for Conference membership by a member church, or by action of the appropriate Association.
3. Completion and submission to the General Conference all the required information by October 1 of the year before Conference action is requested. (See included checklist.)

Prior to formal application, the church shall arrange for one visit by the Executive Secretary (or his/her designee) and one additional visit by another conference representative.

Upon receipt of the completed application information, General Council shall:

1. Send to Faith and Order those portions of the application dealing with faith and practice for evaluation and preparation of a written report.
2. Review and evaluate the application, supporting documents, and the report from Faith and Order Committee.
3. Review written reports from the Executive Secretary and another conference representative giving information about the required visits.
4. Recommend to General Conference appropriate action on the application.

Upon receipt of the recommendation of General Council, General Conference shall:

1. Refer the application and recommendation to the Interest Committee on Reference and Counsel.
2. Take action on the recommendation presented by Reference and Counsel regarding the application.
- The Conference may vote to recognize the applicant church. If action is affirmative, the church shall be a member at the time of the vote by Conference. An official welcome will be arranged at an appropriate time.

- The Conference may vote to defer action to the next Conference session. Reasons for such an action shall be stated so that any deficiencies in the application may be resolved during the ensuing year.
- The Conference may vote to reject the application, stating the reasons for the rejection. A rejected church may apply again at a later date.

Letter of Recommendation

General Conference is an association of churches whose members highly value the relationships that exist between churches. Because we value these relationships and want to ensure that new member churches both understand and experience these interchurch relationships, we require an applying church to obtain a letter of recommendation from a member church or regional association of churches.

This letter of recommendation for membership should grow out of an established relationship between the applying church and regional association providing the recommendation. The recommending group must state that they have had an ongoing relationship with the applicant church that they are confident the people and leadership of the church have a thorough knowledge of Seventh Day Baptist polity, history, and belief, and that they believe the church will work well with the other churches and the Conference.

(above section by vote of Conference 2008, pg A-7 & A-34,35 Conference minutes)

Membership Application Check List

- Statement of factors leading to the church's organization
- Copy of the minutes of the organizational meeting
- List of church officers and time of their election Copy of the constitution and bylaws
- Copy of the covenant
- Copy of the doctrinal statement
- Record of the vote by the congregation confirming the doctrinal statement adopted by the church.
- Record of the vote by the congregation stating that they consider their doctrinal statement to be consistent with the current Statement of Belief of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, USA and Canada Ltd.
- Evidence that Sabbath worship services have been held for at least one year, and a record of attendance at those services.
- A list of current members of the church, with addresses, and information about the pattern of membership increase or decrease.
- A letter of recommendation from a sponsoring member church or association.

¹Conference Minutes, SDB Yearbook (2003), pp. A- 15 through A1 9 and A-23.

Seventh Day Baptist General Conference USA and Canada, Ltd.

Church Responsibilities

Member churches of the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, USA and Canada, have responsibilities towards each other. These include

- Praying for each other,
- Encouraging each other through participating in group gatherings and ministries such as Camps, General Conference, Yearly Meetings, and Associations,
- Encouraging members to move membership to a sister Seventh Day Baptist Church when moving to a location near another Seventh Day Baptist church,
- Notifying sister churches when members move to locations near them,
- Showing interest and encouragement to members of other churches who have moved to nearby locations, and
- Reporting their statistics annually to the Seventh Day Baptist Center by the set deadline for the Seventh Day Baptist Yearbook Directory. This reporting is a way of sharing important current information with brother and sister Seventh Day Baptists.

Conference Responsibilities

The Seventh Day Baptist General Conference, USA and Canada, which is the member churches working together, has responsibilities toward member churches. These include

- Establishing, maintaining, and restoring fellowship between the churches of the Conference,
- Providing opportunity for shared ministry and training beyond the reach of individual churches,
- Giving voice to member churches as they direct the vision, mission, and activity of the Conference,
- Providing common experience by organizing an annual family-oriented Conference session,
- Providing common language by creating and maintaining a statement of common belief,
- Communicating ongoing Conference action and ministry, and
- Offering counsel and support to encourage the continuing vitality of all Conference churches.

Appendix 7: Faith & Order Committee Criteria for Evaluating Applications of New Seventh Day Baptist Churches¹

I. STATEMENT OF BELIEF

Review Statement, comparing it to the Seventh Day Baptist Statement of Belief adopted in August, 1987. Questions:

1. Is it in accord with the beliefs expressed in that Statement?
2. Are there statements that compromise any of the denominational statements?
3. Is one of the statements omitted?

Remember: A local church may have statements that expand in more detail upon the Seventh Day Baptist Statement or add beliefs not in contradiction of the beliefs it expresses.

II. COVENANT

Does the covenant reflect Seventh Day Baptist understanding of “covenant”? *Manual of Procedure (1972)*: “A covenant is a freely entered mutual agreement.”

Normally, a covenant will include commitment to Christ, to the Word of God, to the Sabbath, and to the Body of Christ and its work in the world.

III. CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

Do the constitution and bylaws follow these guidelines for basic Congregational form in Polity?:

1. Congregation chooses and revises its own constitution.
2. Members are received and dismissed by the congregation.
3. Leaders are chosen and dismissed by the congregation.
4. Leaders are responsible to, and for, the congregation.
5. Any leadership decision is subject to review and possible reversal by the congregation.
6. Church property is legally held by the congregation for its benefit.
7. Funds are reviewed and distributed by the congregation.
8. Final decisions on matters of discipline are made at the congregational level.

The Constitution should include the following:

1. Name of the church organization.
2. Purpose of the church
3. Affiliation – desire to affiliate with the Seventh Day Baptist denomination
4. Membership
 - A. Qualifications

¹ This is an internal document, not passed by Conference action, displayed here for informational purposes.

B. Method of Reception – baptism, letter, reaffirmation after previous baptism

C. Separation

5. Officers – Pastor, Deacons, Trustees, etc.
6. Meetings – worship, business, quorum
7. Committees – standing or special
8. Dissolution of the church and disposal of its property
9. Amendments – adequate advance notice

The bylaws should outline the procedures to be followed by the congregation in the operation of the articles of the constitution.

Seventh Day Baptist General Conference

Articles of Incorporation

State of Wisconsin
Department of State
Corporation Bureau

In compliance with the requirements of Wisconsin law relating to articles of incorporation, the undersigned, desiring to be incorporated as a non-profit corporation, hereby certify that:

1. The incorporators are:

Dale D. Thorngate, 1345 Hawthorne Ave., Janesville, WI 53545
Don A. Sanford, 346 College St., P.O. Box 145, Milton, WI 53563
James A. Skaggs, 344 W. Dayton St., Apt. 802, Madison, WI 53703

2. The name of the corporation is: Seventh Day Baptist General Conference USA and Canada, Ltd. The location and post office address of the initial office of the corporation is: 3120 Kennedy Rd., P.O. Box 1678, Janesville, WI 53547.

3. The purpose of the corporation is: To provide advice and assistance to the member churches in the accomplishment of their tasks; to advise the churches and their respective members, admitted to membership, in matters pertaining to doctrine and discipline, faith and practice; to promote divine worship, the spread and maintenance of the Christian religion, Sabbath observance, Sabbath or Bible Schools, and religious education; to provide for pensions for ministers of the Gospel and other persons engaged in denominational work; to provide for any charitable purposes pertaining to the interests of Seventh Day Baptists; and that the operations of this corporation may be conducted and its purposes be promoted in any and all parts of the world, or any other lawful purpose incident to the above.

4. The powers: To do any lawful act which is or may be necessary or proper to accomplish the purposes of this corporation. In pursuit of this object the corporation shall have power to hold real or personal property by purchase, bequest, by will or otherwise, and to have power to make good and legal title and conveyance in law for same; they shall sue and be sued, and make and use a corporate seal and alter the same at pleasure.

The corporation does not contemplate pecuniary gain or profit, incidental or otherwise. The corporation shall have no power to issue shares of capital stock.

No member, representative or delegate, officer, or employee shall receive, or be entitled to receive, any pecuniary profit from the operations of this corporation, except reasonable compensation for services in effecting one or more of its purposes; and that no part of the property, real or personal, belonging to this corporation or within its custody or control, shall be divided or distributed among its members, representatives or delegates, officers or employees, except as provided for in this section, but the same shall be held and applied solely for the purposes and objects of this corporation.

To have and to exercise all the powers now or which may hereafter be conferred by the laws of Wisconsin upon corporations formed under the act and laws referred to above, amendments thereof and supplements thereto.

5. Membership: Shall consist of the directors listed below in paragraph 9(b) (General Council) and all other members in good standing of churches admitted to membership in the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference USA and Canada, and those who may hereafter be associated with them and their successors.

The membership shall have the power to make, alter, repeal and amend bylaws for the accomplishment of its objects and purposes not inconsistent with the laws of the United States or the State of Wisconsin.

6. The Board of Directors: The affairs of this corporation shall be managed by a board of directors presently known as the General Council, which shall consist of such number of members as shall be fixed by the bylaws, but not less than three, or such other body as the bylaws shall prescribe.

June, 2011

The General Council shall carry out the purposes of the corporation in compliance with its Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws. The manner of election and terms of office of General Council members shall be as provided by the bylaws.

7. Dissolution and liquidation: In the event the corporation is dissolved and liquidated, the General Council shall, after consultation with existing members and after paying or making provisions for payment of assets to such organization or organizations as in their judgment have purposes most closely allied to those of this corporation; provided, however, that the transferee organization or organizations shall be a qualified tax-exempt charitable organization within the meaning of S 501(c)(3) and S 170(b)(1)(A), other than in clauses (vii) and (viii) of the Internal Revenue Code or their successor provisions. Any of the property or assets not so distributed shall be disposed of by the court having jurisdiction of the dissolution and liquidation of a Wisconsin non-profit corporation exclusively to such charitable organization or organizations as are then qualified tax-exempt organizations as defined above.

8. Amendments: These articles of incorporation may be repealed, altered or amended at any regular meeting of the General Conference by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of delegates present, provided that notice in writing of such amendment shall have been given at the last previous General Conference session.

9. Miscellaneous:

a. Registered Agent and Office. The registered agent of this corporation shall be the executive secretary of the General Conference, Dale D. Thorngate; the registered agent's address shall be 3120 Kennedy Road, P.O. Box 1678, Janesville, WI 53547.

b. Constituting board of directors (General Council):

President: Leland E. Davis

President-Elect: Calvin Babcock

K. Duane Hurley

Mayola Warner

Norman Burdick

Mynor G. Soper

Mary G. Clare

J. Paul Green

Leon R. Lawton

Dorothea Shettel

D. Scott Smith

Dale D. Thorngate

Don A. Sanford

James A. Skaggs

State of Wisconsin

Office of the Secretary of State

TO ALL TO WHOM THESE PRESENTS SHALL COME:

Date: June 13, 1984

The undersigned, as secretary of State of the State of Wisconsin, hereby certifies that, on the date above written, Articles of Incorporation of

Seventh Day Baptist General Conference USA and Canada, Ltd.

were filed in my office under the provisions of Chapter 181 of the Wisconsin Statutes, for an organization to be formed

WITHOUT STOCK AND NOT FOR PROFIT

THE STATE OF WISCONSIN does hereby grant unto said organization the powers and privileges conferred upon such organization by the Wisconsin Statutes for the pursuit of any purposes lawful under Chapter 181 of the Wisconsin statutes except as such purposes may be further limited in said Articles.

IN TESTIMONY WHEREOF, I have
hereunto set my hand and affixed
my official seal, at Madison,
June 25, 1984

DOUGLAS LaFOLLETTE
Secretary of State

Appendix 8.2:

General Conference Bylaws

Article I. Name. The name of this corporation shall be Seventh Day Baptist General Conference USA and Canada, Ltd.

Article II. Membership. The membership of this corporation shall consist of all members in good standing of Seventh Day Baptist churches which now comprise, or may hereafter be admitted to, the voluntary association known as the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference.

The corporation at its General Conference session or at some scheduled meeting may admit to membership any church applying and submitting such credentials and articles of faith as shall show it to be in harmony with the distinctive faith and practice of the Seventh Day Baptist denomination.

After careful research and upon recommendation of the General Council, the corporation at its General Council session may, by two-thirds majority vote of the delegates present, remove a church from its membership rolls.

If, after the General Council has had time to carefully research issues and pursue reconciliation and it chooses not to recommend a church for removal from membership, the Corporation may, by a 2/3 majority of a vote by churches at a General Conference session, remove a church from its membership rolls.

Article III. Meetings. A meeting, session, or conference, herein called "General Conference" shall be held annually or at such times and places as the General Conference may from time to time determine. Delegates when assembled under the corporate name and in the manner prescribed by its Certificate of Incorporation and Bylaws shall have and may exercise all the powers, rights and privileges of a meeting of the corporation. Roberts Rules of Order (the most recent edition) shall guide parliamentary procedure at meetings.

Article IV. Delegates to General Conference. Delegates to meetings of the corporation shall be determined as follows: two delegates for each member church, as a church, and one additional delegate for each ten members of the church or major fraction of ten members. Churches not able to represent themselves by their own members may appoint, in writing, delegates from other member churches to represent them. Seventy-five delegates representing at least ten churches shall constitute a quorum.

Only delegates to General Conference are authorized to vote. They shall cast their votes on all questions as individuals, except when a vote by churches has been called. A vote by churches is an important vote in which each church casts the total number of votes to which it is entitled. A vote by churches shall occur only when General Conference votes to call one. General Conference shall frame the question to be voted upon and shall then refer it to the churches. General Conference may instruct that the churches vote by mail to the General Conference office, or that the vote be cast at the next Conference session. In either case, the question as framed is not amendable. Local churches shall determine how their votes are cast and may vote as a block or may split their votes.

Article V. Officers. This corporation shall be directed by officers elected at regular sessions of General Conference and shall serve until successors are duly elected. Vacancies in any office may be filled by General Council appointments until the next session of General Conference.

The General Conference may from time to time provide for such assistants, boards, committees and/or agencies as may be deemed necessary, expedient, or convenient.

All candidates for the respective offices shall be presented to General Conference by the Committee on Nominations, or may be nominated from the floor upon prior consent to serve, and shall be elected by vote of the delegates present and voting. They shall enter upon their respective duties at the close of the session of General Conference at which they are elected and shall continue in office until their successors are duly elected, except for secretaries and treasurers who will take office at the beginning of the next fiscal year.

The powers and duties of the offices shall be such as pertaining to like officers in similar organizations, together with such specific powers and duties as the General Conference may determine.

The officers and their specific duties are as follows:

Section 1. President of General Conference. The president shall serve from one session of General Conference through the next scheduled session. He shall, with the assistance of the General Council, plan and present the program

for the annual General Conference session during his term of office. He shall appoint such Conference interest committees as are listed in Article XI, Section 2. Insofar as may be practical, during the year of his presidency, he shall visit the churches of the denomination encouraging their active participation in the General Conference sessions. His reasonable and necessary expenses in this effort shall be paid by General Conference. The president, president-elect or a vice-president shall preside over and conduct the business sessions of General Conference.

Section 2. President-Elect. The president-elect shall assist the president as needed. The president-elect shall be elected with the understanding that unless unforeseen circumstances arise to prevent such action, that person shall be elected president at the next General Conference.

Section 3. Vice-President. Vice-presidents may be provided as shall be determined by General Conference.

Section 4. Recording Secretary and Program Secretary

(a) The recording secretary shall prepare, read publicly, and submit for approval minutes of each business session of General Conference. He shall accurately prepare the minutes for publication. He shall cause them to be published, attested to and furnished in sufficient copies to the following: General Conference office, Library of Congress, libraries of Alfred University and Salem College, the Seventh Day Baptist Historical Society and such other agencies as appropriate. He shall also cause to be published, as soon as practicable, a list of any corrections to these minutes. A stipend for the work incurred in attending the regular sessions of the General Conference and in preparation of his work shall be paid by the corporation.

(b) The program secretary shall record the program events and note key persons involved. He shall accurately prepare this record for publication to be distributed along with the business minutes of the same General Conference session. A stipend for the work incurred in attending the regular sessions of the General Conference and in preparation of his work shall be paid by the corporation.

Section 5. Treasurer and Assistant

(a) The position of treasurer shall normally be filled by the Financial Officer [see Article VII, Section 2]. The treasurer shall hold and distribute funds received by him for the denominational operation and program in accordance with the direction of the General Council as approved by General Conference or in accordance with the direction of the donor. He shall be bonded. He shall provide for an annual audit of his books and shall make an annual report to General Conference through the General Council along with such supplemental reports as are requested by the General Council.

(b) The assistant treasurer shall assist the treasurer in carrying out the duties of this office, become acquainted with all duties of the office and be prepared to carry out these duties in any eventuality. He shall be bonded and authorized to sign checks.

Article VI. General Council of the General Conference

Section 1. Composition of the General Council. There shall be a General Council of the General Conference herein called the General Council which shall be composed of five members elected by General Conference in session. The Executive Director and the Financial Officer shall be ex-officio, non-voting members of General Council.

Section 2. Election of the General Council Members. Five members at large shall be elected for five-year terms or until their successors are duly elected. One member shall be elected each year. No elected member may serve consecutively for more than two five-year terms. Vacancies which may occur because of death, resignation or otherwise, shall be filled for the unexpired term either by the General Conference in regular session or by the General Council *ad interim*. Nominations for General Council should require of nominees Christian commitment, evidence of leadership ability, vision, active involvement in the Seventh Day Baptist General Conference and membership in a local Seventh Day Baptist church and take into consideration a diversity of geographical representation. No elected member of General Council may concurrently serve in any other elected or executive position for General Conference or its Allied Societies.

Section 3. Officers. The General Council shall elect a chairman and vice-chairman from among its elected members.

Section 4. Meetings. The General Council shall hold at least six bi-monthly meetings each year. At least four of the meetings shall take place with a quorum physically present. Three elected members shall constitute a quorum. Additional

meetings may be called upon proper notice, and necessary action between meetings may be taken by mail ballot or electronic means. Any action taken by mail or other means is to be confirmed and entered into the minutes of the next regular meeting. All reasonable and necessary expenses incurred by members shall be paid by the corporation.

Section 5. Duties. The General Council shall provide creative leadership and initiative for Seventh Day Baptists. It shall implement the resolutions and budget adopted by General Conference in session. It shall report annually to General Conference, including in its report an account of the implementation of previous General Conference action. The General Council shall act with the authority of General Conference in all denominational matters between sessions of General Conference.

The General Council shall employ the Executive Director, the Financial Officer, and all other General Conference executives. It shall define their job descriptions, conditions of employment, compensation, and benefits. It shall regularly review the work of the executives and shall annually evaluate that work. The General Council shall regularly consult with and receive the advice of the executives and boards of General Conference agencies and allied societies regarding Seventh Day Baptist ministry.

The General Council shall hold, manage and control all real property in accord with the provisions of the Certificate of Incorporation and bylaws of the corporation. All General Council decisions shall be guided by their understanding of previous Conference action and shall be subject to the will of Conference and to the review of Conference. Each member shall have a vote on every issue.

Matters of policy, plans for the raising of finances, promotion, change in level of operating expenditures, acquisition of property for purpose of operation or expansion, changes in the fundamental basis of operation originating in General Conference agencies and allied societies must be submitted to the General Council for consideration and approval prior to being implemented.

The General Council shall act as a liaison between the General Conference and the various agencies, societies and associations; develop a cooperative strategy for denominational programs; provide for a unified denominational budget; provide, with the President of General Conference, for the program of the sessions of General Conference; make recommendations upon any matter of business which may properly come before the General Conference; be responsible for the audit of the books of the treasurer; review and make recommendations concerning materials presented by General Conference agencies and allied societies; confirm executive personnel appointed by action of allied societies prior to their employment; and perform such other duties as the General Conference may impose and make such report as the General Conference may direct, including in its report an account of implementation of previous General Conference action.

Article VII. Conference Office Executives

Section 1. Executive Director

The Executive Director shall be appointed by the General Council with the approval of General Conference. He shall work at the direction of the General Council in carrying out the responsibilities and duties outlined in Article VI, Section 5, of these bylaws, and shall communicate for the General Conference and General Council as they may direct. He shall serve as an ex-officio, non-voting member of the General Council

The Executive Director acting on behalf of, and reporting to, General Council, shall manage the day-to-day operations of the Seventh Day Baptist Center, conducting regular staff meetings at which implementation of General Conference and General Council actions will be reviewed and responsibilities coordinated.

The term of office of the Executive Director shall be three years and reappointment for additional terms shall be confirmed by General Conference at least one year in advance of expiration of the current term. The Executive Director should give at least a one year notice to General Council prior to leaving the position. The Executive Director may be removed for cause within his term of employment.

Section 2. Financial Officer

(a) The Financial Officer shall be employed by the General Council. He shall be a consultant on financial matters to the General Council as an ex-officio, non-voting member.

(b) The Financial Officer shall be responsible for the financial operations of the General Conference, preparing financial reports, preparing and implementing budgets, making corporate and tax filings, and coordinating with the Executive Director to execute the financial decisions of General Conference, General Council, and the Memorial Board.

The term of office shall be three years and reappointment for additional terms shall be confirmed at least one year in advance of expiration of the current term. The Financial Officer should give at least a one year notice to General Council in advance of leaving the position. The Financial Officer may be removed for cause within his term of employment.

Section 3. Other executives. The General Council may employ additional executives. Such appointments shall be presented at the earliest time possible, to General Conference for approval. Such executives shall work at the direction of General Council to carry out the ministries of Seventh Day Baptists.

Article VIII. Agencies of General Conference

Section 1. In order to advance the purposes and the objectives as stated in Section 3 of the Certificate of Incorporation, agencies which are a part of the General Conference have been established to promote the Gospel of Jesus Christ and the distinctives of Seventh Day Baptists. These agencies of General Conference act under its Articles of Incorporation and these Bylaws. The elected members of these agencies advise General Conference, General Council, and the responsible executives respecting their areas of ministry. Executives who carry out the responsibilities of these agencies are employed by General Council with the advice and consent of the agency's board or council. These bodies are

(a) The American Sabbath Tract and Communication Council.

An agency of the General Conference established for the selection, production, and distribution of materials. Its council members-at-large shall be elected by General Conference.

(b) The Council on Ministry.

An agency of the General Conference established to provide education for ministerial students and in-service training of active ministers as well as recruitment of ministerial prospects, through the operation of the Center on Ministry. Its council members shall be elected by the General Conference.

(c) The Women's Society.

A General Conference society to encourage the women of the denomination in the interests of Christian culture, to foster individual responsibility and united action in matters of citizenship, to enlist and direct efforts of the women in projects of Christian service, and to stimulate interest in the various enterprises of the denomination. The board of directors shall be elected by the General Conference.

Article IX. Allied Societies

Section 1. Allied Societies are independently incorporated bodies related to General Conference in mission and purpose. They are governed by their own articles of incorporation and bylaws and by the conditions set by General Conference for their participation in the unified budget. They may contract with General Conference for the services of General Conference executives or for other services. Those bodies in this category are:

(a) The Seventh Day Baptist Missionary Society.

A society incorporated in the State of Rhode Island to direct Seventh Day Baptist missionary interests throughout the world.

(b) The Seventh Day Baptist Board of Christian Education.

A board incorporated in the State of New York to promote programs, curricula and organization for the teaching of the Christian witness through Seventh Day Baptists.

(c) The Seventh Day Baptist Historical Society.

A society incorporated in Wisconsin to preserve and expound Seventh Day Baptist history and heritage.

(d) The Board of Trustees of the Seventh Day Baptist Memorial Fund.

A board incorporated in Wisconsin to keep in trust gifts and bequests received for investment; manage the bequests; and distribute the funds to designated and discretionary causes related to Seventh Day Baptists. It shall manage any permanent funds or endowments and all trusts accepted and administered by the corporation. Profits accruing thereto and therefrom shall be collected and expended in accordance with the terms, provisions, and conditions imposed by or embodied in any deed of trust, last will and testament, or donation of donor. Its trustees are elected by General Conference.

Section 2. Rights, Duties and Responsibilities of Allied Societies

(a) General Conference recognition of these societies shall be understood to include participation in the unified denominational budget, reporting on use of funds received annually or as deemed appropriate, reporting annually on the implementation of General Conference recommendations, responding to Conference policies and sentiments within the limits of budget allowances, and sharing lists of their officers for Conference approval.

(b) These societies shall be recognized as having such other rights, duties, and responsibilities as may be provided for in their respective charters and bylaws under their own incorporation agreements. Societies directly dependent upon General Conference for election of trustees or directors shall have such rights, duties, and responsibilities as may be established by General Conference.

(c) In the event that independently incorporated societies decide to corporately merge with General Conference, the conditions under which that merger takes place shall be negotiated between the parties, but the resulting structure within General Conference shall resemble those of the agencies already so incorporated.

Article X. Coordinating Leadership Team. There shall be a coordinating leadership team composed of all executives employed by General Conference, executives of allied societies, and the president of the Women's Society. The Executive Director of General Conference shall be its chairman. Its duties shall be to coordinate the plans, programs, and activities of all denominational organizations as directed by General Conference and General Council.

Article XI. Standing, Special and Ad Hoc Committees. The General Conference shall have authority to establish such standing committees, special committees and ad hoc committees as it may deem necessary or appropriate to conduct General Conference business.

Section 1. Standing Committees. Standing committees to conduct interim work between conferences on matters of special concern are as follows:

- (a) Committee on Christian Social Action
- (b) Committee on Faith and Order
- (c) Committee on Support and Retirement

Section 2. Special Committees. Interest committees are special committees of the General Conference business sessions with areas of concern which have been delegated to them. The President of General Conference shall appoint a chairman for each committee and five additional members to the Committee on Budget and Finance. With the exception of the Nominations Committee, anyone attending the annual General Conference session may also attend and participate in the discussions of each committee; however, only a member of a Seventh Day Baptist church may vote. The following interest committees shall be appointed for each annual Conference, but additional committees may be created by General Conference or General Council action.

- (a) Committee on Budget and Finance
- (b) Committee on Christian Education

- (c) Committee on Christian Social Action
- (d) Committee on Communications
- (e) Committee on Ministerial Interests
- (f) Committee on Missions, International
- (g) Committee on Missions, National
- (h) Committee on Nominations
- (i) Committee on Reference and Counsel
- (j) Committee on Women's Interests
- (k) Committee on Youth Work

Section 3. Ad Hoc Committees. Ad hoc committees shall be created by General Conference from time to time as may be desirable.

Section 4. Nominations

A Nominations Committee shall be elected at each General Conference session to present a slate of nominees to the next session of the General Conference.

Each member of the Committee on Nominations shall be a member of a member church of the General Conference. The Nominations Committee shall consist of one former President of General Conference, one former member of the General Council, one member of the immediately previous Nominations Committee, eight additional members, and two alternates. Nominations for this committee shall ensure a wide geographical distribution of the membership. No person may serve on the Nominations Committee more than two consecutive years. Vacancies which occur on the committee between annual sessions of General Conference because of death or resignation shall be filled by General Council appointment.

Article XII. Proposed Amendments to the Statement of Belief

Proposed amendments to the Statement of Belief may be presented on the floor of General Conference by action of any member church, by the Committee on Faith and Order, or by the General Council. All such proposed amendments shall be referred to Faith and Order Committee who shall prepare a report and recommendation for presentation to the next General Conference. If General Conference recommends adoption of amendment to the Statement of Belief, the proposed changes shall be sent to the churches and a "vote by churches" (See Article VI) may be conducted the following year. The proposed changes in the Statement of Belief shall not be adopted unless they are passed by a two-thirds majority of the votes cast by churches.

Article XIII. Amendments to the Bylaws

These bylaws may be repealed, altered or amended at any regular meeting of the General Conference by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of delegates present or by a two-thirds (2/3) majority cast in a vote by churches as defined in Article IV of these bylaws, provided that notice in writing of such amendment shall have been given at the previous General Conference session.

Appendix 9: Resources for Weddings, Baby Dedications and Funerals

Many Seventh Day Baptist pastors prefer to plan their own services for special occasions such as weddings, baby dedications and funerals. These pastors believe that each such occasion merits a service planned for that one occasion. Other pastors prefer to use liturgies that are professionally prepared and published in pastor's manuals. Such manuals are readily available in most Christian bookstores. The following resource materials may be found helpful, whether the pastor creates his own special service or chooses to use a prepared service.

A Funeral Manual

Perry H. Biddle, Jr.
William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
Grand Rapids, MI. 1976

Supplies basics of a funeral service and gives funeral liturgies from different denominational perspectives.

A Marriage Manual

Perry H. Biddle, Jr.
William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
Grand Rapids, MI. 1974

Supplies basics of a marriage service and gives marriage liturgies from different denominational perspectives.

**Baker's Funeral Handbook
Resources for Pastors**

Paul E. Engle, Editor
Baker Books, Grand Rapids, MI. 1996

Has funeral services for many occasions from free style to liturgical style, including death by unusual circumstances.

Difficult Funeral Services

James L. Christensen
Fleming H. Revell & Company, Old Tappan, NJ. 1985

36 suggested funeral services for death by unusual circumstances.

Memorable Baby Dedications

Kay Kuzma
Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1996

Seventh Day Adventist publication.
Worth looking at.

Minister's Service Book for Pulpit and Parish

Jesse Jai McNeil
William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.
Grand Rapids, MI. 1993

Runs the whole gamut of special services from a Baptist perspective.

Orders and Prayers for Church Worship:

A Manual for Ministers

Compiled by Ernest Payne and Stephen Winward
The Carey Kingsgate Press, London
Third Edition (Revised). 1965

Includes weddings, funerals and baby dedications.

The Complete Handbook for Ministers

James L. Christensen
Fleming H. Revell & Company, Old Tappan, NJ. 1985

Includes services for baby dedications, baptisms, marriages, funerals and other special services.

The Minister's Handbook

Orlando L. Tibbetts
Judson Press, Valley Forge, PA

A practical manual of resources for worship services and special observances.

The Pastor's Ideal Funeral Manual

Nolan B. Harmon, Editor
Abingdon Press, New York-Nashville. 1942

Old, but useful.

The Pastor's Manual

James Randolph Hobbs
Broadman Press, Nashville, TN 1962

Runs the whole gamut of special services. From a Baptist perspective.

The Star Book for Ministers

Compiled by Edward T. Hiscox
Judson Press, Valley Forge, PA
Second Revised Edition 1994

Includes funeral and marriage services and other helps. Prepared by a Baptist for use by Baptists.

Seventh Day Baptist General Conference USA and Canada, Ltd.

There may arise an occasion when a member church of the General Conference displays conduct which is alleged to be no longer in harmony with the distinctive faith and practice of Seventh Day Baptists.

- The General Council may initiate investigation of such troubled situations, seeking to reconcile the church to its sister churches. If the offending church refuses to return to the distinctive faith and practice of Seventh Day Baptists, the General Council may recommend that the church be removed from the Conference membership rolls, in accord with the provisions of the bylaws.
- **or** upon petition of three member churches of the Conference (at least one of which shall be from the Association of the alleged offending church) related to the same allegation, and received within a period of one year by the Executive Director. The Executive Director shall present the matter to General Council. The General Council shall initiate an investigation as described above.

General Council shall establish a four-member investigation committee. This committee shall consist of a representative selected by each of the following: General Council, the Faith and Order Committee, Council on Ministry, and the petitioning churches. Efforts to reconcile the subject church to the distinctive faith and practice of Seventh Day Baptists should always be the preferred goal.

Steps in the investigation may include:

- Conversation and correspondence with the petitioning churches.
- Conversation and correspondence with the church that is the subject of the inquiry.
- Visits to the subject to determine the validity of the allegations.
- Such other methods as the committee deems appropriate.

A thorough investigation shall be done as quickly as possible. General Council shall report as needed to the churches. In no case shall this investigation last more than fifteen months from the time of its initiation without express instruction from General Conference. The investigation committee shall report its finding to General Council, with a copy presented to the subject church. General Council will determine what report should be made to General Conference. Action recommended might include:

- Information shared, with no recommendation for action against the church.
- Formal, written warning to the church of possible expulsion if certain conditions are not met, with specific suggestions of steps toward reconciliation.
- Recommendation of removal from membership in the Conference, in accordance with the provision of the bylaws.

¹ Conference Minutes, SDB Yearbook (2003) p. A-32 through A-33 as amended
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