



REDEEMER CHURCH / *Membership Guide*

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PROCLAIMING *the* EXCELLENCIES *of* CHRIST

But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

1 Peter 2:9

This booklet is for those who are considering becoming a member of Redeemer Church. The difference between attending and being a member is like the difference between a guest and a member of the family at Thanksgiving dinner. Our hope is that all who are a part of our fellowship, those who attend our large group or small group gatherings, or those looking for a church home would choose to become members of Redeemer Church. However, it is important that those who are interested in becoming members of our church know what they are getting into. We have included what we think will be helpful in understanding who we are, why we exist (our purpose), why we think church membership is important, what we ask members to affirm, what we believe, and what makes us different. We don't require membership to come to Redeemer, but we invite you to become part of the family.

the **PURPOSE** *of* **REDEEMER CHURCH**

Why do we exist? What is our purpose? These are good questions—and not necessarily easy to answer. What follows is our attempt to respond to these questions. We hope our response will be useful not just once but have an ongoing role in shaping how we “do church.” Ministries can take on a life of their own and there is always more to do. We hope this purpose statement will be useful to all of us in evaluating in our efforts to be good stewards of the gifts and “talents” we have been given.

PURPOSE STATEMENT

Belonging to God as his treasured possession and for the fullness of our own joy, we are sent to proclaim the excellencies of Jesus Christ through the scriptures, good works, and our fellowship, so that all may be conformed into the image of the Son of God and that we might share in the increase of his kingdom on the earth.

EXPLANATION

*Belonging to God*¹

When we seek to understand who we are, we must begin with the fact that we are not our own. Not only were we created by God, but we have also been bought by God. Thus, the challenge is not to forge our own identity, but to enjoy the freedom of relying on our Creator and Savior for who we really are.

¹Rom. 14:7–8; 1 Cor. 6:19–20; 2 Cor. 5:14–15

*as his treasured possession*²

We are God’s people because he chose us. Left to ourselves we would never choose Him. As Peter says, we are a “chosen race” and “a people for his own possession.” He loved us not for anything in us but because he loved us (Deut. 7:6). We need the power of the Holy Spirit to know the greatness of God’s love for us (Eph. 3:16–19).

*for the fullness of our own joy*³

A close reading of the Scriptures shows that Christ came to give us joy. Satan would have us settle for lesser pleasures in every temptation. However, Christ has given us His promises that our “joy may be full” (John 15:11).

*We are sent*⁴

Even as God sent Christ, so Christ sends us. In the Old Testament, the nations were invited to come and see, in the New Testament we are tasked to go and tell the good news. We are not just recipients of grace, but witnesses of it.

*to proclaim the excellencies of Jesus Christ*⁵

Each person’s testimony will vary in its details, but at its core is Jesus. We encourage one another and witness to the world by proclaiming His sufficiency and perfections. He is the ultimate focus of all Scripture, the reason for our hope, and the answer for our deepest longings.

*Through the Scriptures*⁶

Some have referred to the church as a “creature of the word.” By this, they meant that apart from the Word the church would have no shape or purpose. The Scripture reveals who we are and what we do and the church is where the reality of Christ’s birth, life, death, and resurrection is played out. It is through the Word that we are born again (1 Pet. 1:23), come to know Jesus (John 5:39), and are equipped for every good work (2 Tim. 3:16).

²Exo. 19:5–6; Deut. 7:6; 26:18; Eph. 3:16–19; Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9

³Ps. 35:27; 67:4; John 15:11; 1 John 5:3

⁴Matt. 10:16; 28:18–20; John 20:21; Rom. 10:13–17; 2 Cor. 5:11, 18–20

⁵Acts 5:52; 8:35; 9:20; 10:36; 17:3; 1 Cor. 1:23; 2 Cor. 4:5; Eph. 3:8; Phil. 1:15–18; Col. 1:28; 1 Peter 2:9

⁶Luke 24:25–27, 44–45; John 1:45; 8:31–32; Acts 2:42; Eph. 4:11–16; 2 Tim. 3:14–16; 2 Peter 3:1–2, 18

*Good works*⁷

The grace of God leaves a mark. We are saved by grace not works, but that grace allows us to perform the good works God has planned for us. How this grace plays out will vary, but as Paul tells Titus:

For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation for all people, training us to renounce ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright, and godly lives in the present age, waiting for our blessed hope, the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave himself for us to redeem us from all lawlessness and to purify for himself a people for his own possession who are zealous for good works. (Titus 2:11–14)

In a similar way, Jesus says in the Sermon on the Mount: “In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

*Our fellowship*⁸

It would be impossible to overstate the role of fellowship for the Christian. This means more than just chatting with one another weekly—although that is not a bad place to start! The New Testament is filled with “one another” commands. We cannot obey these commands unless we are sharing our lives with each other. It is interesting to note that for Jesus, our unity and love for one another is a witness to the world that He is from God (John 17:21). Sincere love for one another carries with it a strong evangelistic element.

*So that all*⁹

Christ’s rule and reign is a present reality and the church is the vehicle God has chosen where they would be manifest. Therefore, our goal is that our community reflects, to the extent that God’s grace allows, what the perfected kingdom will be like. For Paul, in the book of Ephesians, one of the best ways this is illustrated is that those who have long been separated by race and culture have been reconciled.

⁷Isa. 58; Matt. 5:13–16; Eph. 2:10; 1 Tim. 6:17–19; Titus 2:7–8, 11–14; 3:1–2, 8, 14; Heb. 10:24–25; Peter 2:12; 1 Peter 3:16

⁸John 13:34–35; 17:20–23; Acts 4:32–35; 1 John 3:10–14; 4:20–21

⁹1 Cor. 9:19–23

It would be a small thing if God were to just gather some people that already had much in common. Rather, God is creating for himself a new community based on Christ. This new community will be made up of people from every tribe and tongue (Rev. 5:9). Our desire is that the local body reflects this spectacular diversity.

*May be conformed into the image of the Son of God*¹⁰

God's ultimate desire for his people is that they become like Jesus. We are to take on the family identity, with Jesus as our elder brother. Living upright and moral lives is part of this process but it must not end there. Love for God and his people must be our distinguishing characteristic.

*That we might share in the increase of his kingdom on earth*¹¹

The kingdom of God is at hand. The resurrection of Jesus is the proof that His reign has begun. "Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end. . ." (Isa. 9:7). This is very good news for a world where so much seems to be coming apart. The local church is an outpost of this new kingdom. For all of our very real concerns, our ultimate comfort is that God is building his church. God has put all things under Christ for the church so that God's wisdom would be made known.

¹⁰Rom. 8:29; Gal. 4:19; Col. 1:28–29

¹¹Isa. 9:6–7; Matt. 28:18–20; Acts 1:8

why CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

What does it mean to be a “member” of Redeemer Church? Are there any benefits? How about obligations? Our desire is that becoming a member would be something that is not done casually or fearfully. Rather, membership is a step that allows for greater joy in relationships, opportunities, and worship of God. To become a Christian is not only to enter into a personal relationship with the risen Christ but also to identify with the people he has chosen, loved, and is preparing for himself. The Bible gives no explicit command to become a member of a local church, but clearly, Christ identifies himself with his people and following his example we should also be glad to be formally united with his followers. The following are five reasons we believe in local church membership:

To become part of a community that cares for one another

To be a member of a local church is to be a part of a community that shares your burdens with you (Galatians 6:2) and that seeks to love you well (1 John 3:16). Being a member of a local church also means being under the care of the elders/pastors/overseers of the church (1 Peter 5:2; Hebrews 13:17). In the same way and for the same reasons that others in the local church would care for you, you also would care for them. “So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith” (Galatians 6:10).

To identify with the body of Christ

Paul describes the church as the body of Christ. He goes on to explain that the church is one body but made up of many members.

For the body does not consist of one member but of many. If the foot should say, “Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. And if the ear should say, “Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body,” that would not make it any less a part of the body. If the whole body were an eye, where would be the sense of hearing? If the whole body were an ear, where

would be the sense of smell? But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. If all were a single member, where would the body be? As it is, there are many parts, yet one body. (1 Corinthians 12:14–20)

Therefore, in the same way that a limb cannot function without a body, a follower of Christ must be attached to a local body of believers.

To be under biblical leadership

Hebrews 13:7 says, “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.” Submission to leadership implies recognition of the role of leadership and a posture of submission to that leadership. It is difficult to see how this pattern could be exercised or enjoyed without the clarifying step of formally becoming a member.

To encourage spiritual fruit & participate in church discipline

The New Testament sees spiritual fruit as taking place within the context of a community. The “one another” commands necessarily involve not just other people, but other Christians. The writer of Hebrews instructs us “to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near (Hebrews 10:24–25). Formally committing to membership facilitates this process.

In addition, sometimes encouragement takes the form of spiritual restoration and church discipline as commanded by the New Testament (Matthew 18:15–17; 1 Corinthians 5). These passages instruct the church to remove a person from fellowship who is involved in blatant and unrepentant sin. This removal from fellowship is a last resort option that would ultimately be chosen by the one removed who chooses not to repent. Jesus described this process in Matthew 18:15–17. His instructions involve an escalating process that begins by approaching a brother privately, then bringing witnesses, telling it to the church, and finally treating the offender as an unbeliever. The goal of this process and all church discipline is to bring the person back to the Lord and restored fellowship within the church. The church is not to stand idly by while believers bring reproach on the name of Christ and his church. However, the church should not rest satisfied until this straying believer is fully restored

(Galatians 6:1; James 5:19–20). In order for this kind of care and oversight to be administered, one must belong to a fellowship of believers, or in other words, be a member of a local church.

To be a witness to the world

After washing his disciples' feet and acknowledging that one of them would betray him, Jesus said, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are my disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34–35). To put it another way, love for one another is to be the Christian's distinguishing characteristic. See how in his high priestly prayer Jesus prayed, "that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me" (John 17:23). Jesus' prayer for the church was for unity. However, his prayer was not just a request for unity for the sake of unity. Jesus prayed for unity for the sake of the world believing that he was who he said he was. We bear witness to the divinity of Christ by loving one another.

the MEMBERSHIP AFFIRMATIONS

Those who join Redeemer Church make the affirmations listed here. These affirmations have been taken from the Presbyterian Church in America's Book of Church Order. The leadership holds to more than is listed here but all members must agree with these statements. We encourage you to consider these affirmations carefully and seek clarification from one of the elders if you have any questions about them.

1. Do you acknowledge yourself a sinner in the sight of God, justly deserving His displeasure, and without hope except in His sovereign mercy?

2. Do you believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, and Savior of sinners, and do you receive and rest upon Him alone for salvation as He is offered in the Gospel?

3. Do you now resolve and promise, in humble reliance upon the grace of the Holy Spirit, that you will endeavor to live as becomes the followers of Christ?

4. Do you promise to support the church in its worship and work to the best of your ability?

5. Do you submit yourselves to the government and discipline of the church, and promise to commit yourself to its purity and peace?

our CONFSSIONAL STATEMENT

Sometimes to “confess” means admitting guilt about something. Here it means something different—more like a declaration. It is a way of “showing our cards.” Rather than being contentious, it is an effort to be clear. It is necessarily a summary rather than an exhaustive list of what we believe. Unless otherwise noted, each of these statements has been taken from The Gospel Coalition’s “Foundation Documents.”

The Tri-une God

We believe in one God, eternally existing in three equally divine Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, who know, love, and glorify one another. This one true and living God is infinitely perfect both in his love and in his holiness. He is the Creator of all things, visible and invisible, and is therefore worthy to receive all glory and adoration. Immortal and eternal, he perfectly and exhaustively knows the end from the beginning, sustains and sovereignly rules over all things, and providentially brings about his eternal good purposes to redeem a people for himself and restore his fallen creation, to the praise of his glorious grace.

Revelation

God has graciously disclosed his existence and power in the created order, and has supremely revealed himself to fallen human beings in the person of his Son, the incarnate Word. Moreover, this God is a speaking God who by his Spirit has graciously disclosed himself in human words: we believe that God has inspired the words preserved in the Scriptures, the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments, which are both record and means of his saving work in the world. These writings alone constitute the verbally inspired Word of God, which is utterly authoritative and without error in the original writings, complete in its revelation of his will for salvation, sufficient for all that God requires us to believe and do, and final in its authority over every domain of knowledge to which it speaks. We confess that both our finitude and our sinfulness preclude the possibility of

knowing God's truth exhaustively, but we affirm that, enlightened by the Spirit of God, we can know God's revealed truth truly. The Bible is to be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it teaches; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; and trusted, as God's pledge, in all that it promises. As God's people hear, believe, and do the Word, they are equipped as disciples of Christ and witnesses to the gospel.

Creation of Humanity

We believe that God created human beings, male and female, in his own image. Adam and Eve belonged to the created order that God himself declared to be very good, serving as God's agents to care for, manage, and govern creation, living in holy and devoted fellowship with their Maker. Men and women, equally made in the image of God, enjoy equal access to God by faith in Christ Jesus and are both called to move beyond passive self-indulgence to significant private and public engagement in family, church, and civic life. Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union that establishes the only normative pattern of sexual relations for men and women, such that marriage ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ and his church. In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways. God ordains that they assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, the husband exercising headship in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to her husband in a way that models the love of the church for her Lord. In the ministry of the church, both men and women are encouraged to serve Christ and to be developed to their full potential in the manifold ministries of the people of God. The distinctive leadership role within the church given to qualified men is grounded in creation, fall, and redemption and must not be sidelined by appeals to cultural developments.

The Fall

We believe that Adam, made in the image of God, distorted that image and forfeited his original blessedness—for himself and all his progeny—by falling into sin through Satan's temptation. As a result, all human beings are alienated from God, corrupted in every aspect of their being (e.g., physically, mentally, volitionally, emotionally, spiritually) and condemned finally and irrevocably to death—apart from God's own gracious intervention. The supreme need of all

human beings is to be reconciled to the God under whose just and holy wrath we stand; the only hope of all human beings is the undeserved love of this same God, who alone can rescue us and restore us to himself.

The Plan of God

We believe that from all eternity God determined in grace to save a great multitude of guilty sinners from every tribe and language and people and nation, and to this end foreknew them and chose them. We believe that God justifies and sanctifies those who by grace have faith in Jesus, and that he will one day glorify them—all to the praise of his glorious grace. In love God commands and implores all people to repent and believe, having set his saving love on those he has chosen and having ordained Christ to be their Redeemer.

The Gospel

We believe that the gospel is the good news of Jesus Christ—God’s very wisdom. Utter folly to the world, even though it is the power of God to those who are being saved, this good news is christological, centering on the cross and resurrection: the gospel is not proclaimed if Christ is not proclaimed, and the authentic Christ has not been proclaimed if his death and resurrection are not central (the message is: “Christ died for our sins. . . [and] was raised”). This good news is biblical (his death and resurrection are according to the Scriptures), theological and salvific (Christ died for our sins, to reconcile us to God), historical (if the saving events did not happen, our faith is worthless, we are still in our sins, and we are to be pitied more than all others), apostolic (the message was entrusted to and transmitted by the apostles, who were witnesses of these saving events), and intensely personal (where it is received, believed, and held firmly, individual persons are saved).

The Redemption of Christ

We believe that, moved by love and in obedience to his Father, the eternal Son became human: the Word became flesh, fully God and fully human being, one Person in two natures. The man Jesus, the promised Messiah of Israel, was conceived through the miraculous agency of the Holy Spirit, and was born of the virgin Mary. He perfectly obeyed his heavenly Father, lived a sinless life, performed miraculous signs, was crucified under Pontius Pilate, arose bodily from the dead on the third day, and ascended into heaven. As the

mediatorial King, he is seated at the right hand of God the Father, exercising in heaven and on earth all of God's sovereignty, and is our High Priest and righteous Advocate. We believe that by his incarnation, life, death, resurrection, and ascension, Jesus Christ acted as our representative and substitute. He did this so that in him we might become the righteousness of God: on the cross he canceled sin, propitiated God, and, by bearing the full penalty of our sins, reconciled to God all those who believe. By his resurrection Christ Jesus was vindicated by his Father, broke the power of death and defeated Satan who once had power over it, and brought everlasting life to all his people; by his ascension he has been forever exalted as Lord and has prepared a place for us to be with him. We believe that salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name given under heaven by which we must be saved. Because God chose the lowly things of this world, the despised things, the things that are not, to nullify the things that are, no human being can ever boast before him—Christ Jesus has become for us wisdom from God—that is, our righteousness, holiness, and redemption.

The Justification of Sinners

We believe that Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of all those who are justified. By his sacrifice, he bore in our stead the punishment due us for our sins, making a proper, real, and full satisfaction to God's justice on our behalf. By his perfect obedience he satisfied the just demands of God on our behalf, since by faith alone that perfect obedience is credited to all who trust in Christ alone for their acceptance with God. Inasmuch as Christ was given by the Father for us, and his obedience and punishment were accepted in place of our own, freely and not for anything in us, this justification is solely of free grace, in order that both the exact justice and the rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners. We believe that a zeal for personal and public obedience flows from this free justification.

The Power of the Holy Spirit

We believe that this salvation, attested in all Scripture and secured by Jesus Christ, is applied to his people by the Holy Spirit. Sent by the Father and the Son, the Holy Spirit glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ, and, as the other Paraclete, is present with and in believers. He convicts the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment, and by his powerful and mysterious work regenerates spiritually dead sinners,

awakening them to repentance and faith, and in him they are baptized into union with the Lord Jesus, such that they are justified before God by grace alone through faith alone in Jesus Christ alone. By the Spirit's agency, believers are renewed, sanctified, and adopted into God's family; they participate in the divine nature and receive his sovereignly distributed gifts. The Holy Spirit is himself the down payment of the promised inheritance, and in this age indwells, guides, instructs, equips, revives, and empowers believers for Christ-like living and service.

The Kingdom of God

We believe that those who have been saved by the grace of God through union with Christ by faith and through regeneration by the Holy Spirit enter the kingdom of God and delight in the blessings of the new covenant: the forgiveness of sins, the inward transformation that awakens a desire to glorify, trust, and obey God, and the prospect of the glory yet to be revealed. Good works constitute indispensable evidence of saving grace. Living as salt in a world that is decaying and light in a world that is dark, believers should neither withdraw into seclusion from the world, nor become indistinguishable from it: rather, we are to do good to the city, for all the glory and honor of the nations is to be offered up to the living God. Recognizing whose created order this is, and because we are citizens of God's kingdom, we are to love our neighbors as ourselves, doing good to all, especially to those who belong to the household of God. The kingdom of God, already present but not fully realized, is the exercise of God's sovereignty in the world toward the eventual redemption of all creation. The kingdom of God is an invasive power that plunders Satan's dark kingdom and regenerates and renovates through repentance and faith the lives of individuals rescued from that kingdom. It therefore inevitably establishes a new community of human life together under God.

God's New People

We believe that God's new covenant people have already come to the heavenly Jerusalem; they are already seated with Christ in the heavenlies. This universal church is manifest in local churches of which Christ is the only Head; thus each "local church" is, in fact, the church, the household of God, the assembly of the living God, and the pillar and foundation of the truth. The church is the body of Christ, the apple of his eye, graven on his hands, and he has pledged himself

to her forever. The church is distinguished by her gospel message, her sacred ordinances, her discipline, her great mission, and, above all, by her love for God, and by her members' love for one another and for the world. Crucially, this gospel we cherish has both personal and corporate dimensions, neither of which may properly be overlooked. Christ Jesus is our peace: he has not only brought about peace with God, but also peace between alienated peoples. His purpose was to create in himself one newhumanity, thus making peace, and in one body to reconcile both Jew and Gentile to God through the cross, by which he put to death their hostility. The church serves as a sign of God's future new world when its members live for the service of one another and their neighbors, rather than for self-focus. The church is the corporate dwelling place of God's Spirit, and the continuing witness to God in the world.

*Baptism and the Lord's Supper*¹

We believe that baptism and the Lord's Supper are ordained by the Lord Jesus himself for the church. Baptism is appropriately administered through immersion to those who give a credible profession of faith in Jesus Christ, symbolizing their union with Christ in his death, burial, and resurrection. The Lord's Supper is a memorial and a proclamation of the death of Jesus Christ where the broken bread symbolizes the breaking of Christ's body and the wine symbolizes the blood that was poured out for the forgiveness of sins.

The Restoration of All Things

We believe in the personal, glorious, and bodily return of our Lord Jesus Christ with his holy angels, when he will exercise his role as final Judge, and his kingdom will be consummated. We believe in the bodily resurrection of both the just and the unjust—the unjust to judgment and eternal conscious punishment in hell, as our Lord himself taught, and the just to eternal blessedness in the presence of him who sits on the throne and of the Lamb, in the new heaven and the new earth, the home of righteousness. On that day the church will be presented faultless before God by the obedience, suffering and triumph of Christ, all sin purged and its wretched effects forever banished. God will be all in all and his people will be enthralled by the immediacy of his ineffable holiness, and everything will be to the praise of his glorious grace.

¹The original description from The Gospel Coalition's Foundation Documents have been modified here to reflect our position on these ordinances.

OUR DISTINCTIVES

Here we have a number of theological distinctives. You could probably find other churches locally that would hold to one or more of these distinctives. However, we believe that this combination of theological distinctives would probably distinguish us from most other churches in this area. So don't view these theological stances as that upon which we want to build our reputation. Rather, this is an attempt to succinctly describe what makes us different from other evangelical churches. Redeemer Church had its beginnings in the desires of a small group of Christians here in Starkville who wanted a church with these elements.

Divine sovereignty in salvation

It is difficult to find a Christian who wouldn't agree that God is in control of everything. However, when it comes to how people come to faith, the extent of God's sovereignty becomes a source of controversy. We do not want to further the controversy, but we do want to be clear about what we believe. Namely, we believe that it is ultimately God who determines who comes to a saving faith in Christ. We are saved completely by grace. This does not minimize our responsibility to evangelize; rather, it provides a basis and a real hope in sharing the gospel. We invite all to come to Christ, confident that He can enable anyone to respond. This same power that draws sinners to Christ keeps them until the final day. This position is often referred to as Reformed or Calvinist. We don't deny those labels but recognize that their definitions can vary. In addition, sometimes people associate those terms with perspectives or practices that are not consistent with our own.

Credo-baptist

We believe that baptism is an initiatory rite given by Christ. It does not save but is a sign of obedience to Christ's command and "an appeal to God for a good conscience through the resurrection of Christ" (1 Pet. 3:21). In addition, it illustrates dying and being buried with Christ in his death so that we might be raised with him in life (Rom. 6:3-5). In the New Testament, baptism follows acceptance of Christ as Savior. In fact, sometimes the term "baptism" functions as a euphemism for being saved (Rom. 6:3; Eph. 4:5; 1 Pet. 3:21). There is more that can be said, but we believe the subjects of baptism are those who have

expressed faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and we believe immersion to be the mode of baptism referenced in the New Testament.

Complementarian

Men and women are absolutely equal in personhood and dignity while distinct in their roles in the home and church. This position is to be distinguished from both ancient patriarchy that often neglects the equality of the sexes and egalitarianism which neglects the clear Scriptural role distinctions. We believe this statement from The Gospel Coalition nicely captures the direction of Scripture:

Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a oneflesh union that establishes the only normative pattern of sexual relations for men and women, such that marriage ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ and his church. In God's wise purposes, men and women are not simply interchangeable, but rather they complement each other in mutually enriching ways. God ordains that they assume distinctive roles which reflect the loving relationship between Christ and the church, the husband exercising headship in a way that displays the caring, sacrificial love of Christ, and the wife submitting to her husband in a way that models the love of the church for her Lord.¹

Elder Led/Congregational Rule

The New Testament has comparatively little to say about church government. Our survey focuses on two priorities that do appear. First, the early church had elders. Whenever Paul planted a church, he appointed multiple elders. When he was writing to both Timothy and Titus, he set out criteria for elders. Thus, we are confident that God intended that a plurality of elders take the lead in each local church. Secondly, we find a principle of congregational rule. In Matt. 18:15–17 Jesus sets out a process to follow when a brother sins against you. The final step, the last court of appeal, is the congregation. Similarly, in 1 Cor. 5:4–5 Paul instructs the Corinthians to pronounce judgment on a flagrant sinner when the church is assembled. Ultimately, Christ is the head of His church. In addition, every member has direct access to Christ. Therefore, we readily affirm the “universal priesthood of believers.” Nevertheless, God does set apart some men as leaders. These leaders are accountable to the congregation and all are ultimately accountable to God.

¹This statement is taken from The Gospel Coalition, “Foundation Documents”, www.thegospelcoalition.org/about/foundation-documents/confessional-statement, (March 22, 2016)

the MEMBERSHIP PROCESS

Perhaps now that you know more about Redeemer Church you would like to become a member and are wondering what the next step is. There are six things that we ask of those who would like to join our church. The first thing is to review the membership booklet in order to have a better understanding of who we are. Second, we ask that they be baptized if they have not already been baptized. Third, it is expected for each member to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the church. Fourth, write out your story of faith and give it to the elders. There are instructions for how do that below. Fifth, meet with an elder. Sixth, be formally introduced to the church on a Sunday by answering the membership affirmations.

WRITING YOUR STORY

We would like for those who join our church to write a brief (one-page) testimony. There are at least two reasons we think this is helpful. First, we want to know the story of how you came to faith in Christ. Everyone has a story, every story is different, and we value knowing how Christ has brought you to himself. Second, we believe it is good for you to think through your story. You will benefit on reflecting on God's work in your life and it will help be "prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for the hope that is in you." A personal testimony is irrefutable and one of the most powerful tools we have in sharing the gospel. The following is an outline to help you to think through and write out how you came to trust and follow Jesus. We hope that this process will be helpful for you as you reflect on what God has done in your life. Below are some questions that might help you to think through your story/testimony. Do not feel as if you need to answer all the questions, they are only there to help you to think through your story. The basic outline we are looking is what your life looked like before you trusted and followed Christ, how you came to trust and follow Christ, and how you are currently trusting and following Christ.

1. While a book could be written on the story of your life, we are asking that you only write one page limiting the details to what helps explain God's work in your life.

2. Some people come to faith early in life or without a "dramatic" change in outward appearances. If that describes you, don't believe the lie that you don't have a "good" testimony. A testimony is really about God—not you. Your story might include the influences that God put into your life even while you were young. In addition, it might include more on how God has revealed Himself to you after you became a Christian and how your understanding of the gospel has grown over time.

3. What was your life like before you trusted and followed Jesus? What was most important to you? What did you fear most? What stressed you out? Where did you find hope, comfort, security, significance?

4. What happened to make you realize your need for Jesus? How did you come to understand the gospel? What Scriptures did God use? What people did God use?

5. How did your life change after you began trusting and following Christ? In what ways are you currently hoping in Christ and following him?

the CONSTITUTION *of* REDEEMER CHURCH

Adopted by the membership on October 27, 2021

Preamble

In 2012, a core group of approximately 25 men and women decided to begin a church in Starkville, MS. They met regularly for months to consider what would be its core values and distinctives. These included a robust theology and deep community among its members. In April, 2013, they began meeting formally. The early days saw many changes.

But the desire for teaching and community remained. At one time groups met in homes on Sundays and a large gathering midweek. Later, small and large gatherings met on alternate Sundays. In January 2016, after some of the early leaders left, the Lord set apart 6 men from among those meeting as Redeemer Church to serve as elders. Soon after that, under the direction of those elders, Kevin Shoemaker was called as Senior Pastor. The Lord has continued to move his people around and it is apparent that a formal process for choosing leaders and structures were needed.

The Elders have developed various documents including a Confessional Statement, distinctives of our body, which are included in our Membership Guide. The goals of robust theology and real community have persisted.

The Lord has blessed Redeemer with new families, and we have continued to grow. We believe it is fitting that we adopt a Constitution to formalize a process for adding officers and describing how we intend to function in conducting our business. We are not responding to a crisis, rather we believe that agreeing on how we will be organized, choose leaders, and conduct our normal business are decisions best made in the calm. look to Scripture as our ultimate guide and rule. We also recognize that Scripture is limited in how it speaks to matters of church

government. The purpose of this Constitution is to set down how we believe this process should occur in our context.

Article 1 – Name

The name of this church is Redeemer Church of Starkville, Mississippi.

Article 2 – Purpose and Mission

Purpose: This church exists by the grace of God, for the glory of God, which shall be the ultimate purpose in all its activities.

Mission: Belonging to God as his treasured possession and for the fullness of our own joy, we are sent to proclaim the excellencies of Jesus Christ. We do this through the study and proclamation of Scripture, good works, and our fellowship, so that all may be conformed into the image of the Son of God and that we might share in the increase of his kingdom on the earth.

Article 3 – Membership

Section 1 – Qualifications

To qualify for membership in this church, a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration, who has been baptized in obedience to Christ, and who wholeheartedly believes in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible. Each member must agree to submit to the teaching of scripture as expressed in our Confessional Statement and must promise to keep the commitments expressed in the membership vows. The elders shall be responsible for determining each person's qualification for membership. In making this determination, they may rely on a person's profession of faith, or such other evidence, as the elders deem appropriate.

Section 2 – Admission of Members

To be admitted into church membership, applicants shall write out their testimony. This may be quite brief. We believe it is a good thing to think through our testimony of how Christ has worked to bring us to himself. In addition, this process will help each member to be "prepared to make a defense to anyone who asks you for a reason for

the hope that is in you.” (1 Peter 3:15) In addition, the prospective member will meet with an elder of the church to share his or her testimony of Christian conversion.

To be admitted into church membership, applicants shall be recommended by the elders for admission and must be accepted by vote of the members at any regular or special meeting of the members, and shall at that point relinquish their membership in other churches. At least two weeks' notice of the vote for any prospective member shall be given.

Section 3 – Duties and Privileges of Membership

Each member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the church, consistent with God’s leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God. Only members shall be eligible to serve in the ministries of the church; non-members may serve on an ad-hoc basis with the approval of the elders.

Under Christ this congregation is governed by its members. Therefore, it is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend all members’ meetings and vote on the election of officers, on decisions regarding membership status, and on such other matters as may be submitted to a vote.

Section 4 – On Church Discipline

Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so opposing the welfare of the church, shall be subject to the admonition of the elders and the discipline of the church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18: 15–17 and the example of scripture. Church discipline, then, should ordinarily be contemplated after individual private admonition has failed.

Church discipline can include admonition by the elders or congregation, deposition from office, and excommunication (see Matthew 18: 15–17; 2 Thessalonians 3: 14–15; 1 Timothy 5: 19– 20; 1 Corinthians 5: 4–5).

The purpose of such discipline should be for the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined (see Proverbs 15: 5; 29: 15; I Corinthians 4: 14; Ephesians 6: 4; I Timothy 3: 4–5; Hebrews 12: 1–11; Psalm 119: 115; 141: 5; Proverbs 17:10; 25: 12; 27: 5; Ecclesiastes 7: 5; Matthew 7: 26–27; 18: 15–17; Luke 17: 3; Acts 2:40; I Corinthians 5: 5; Galatians 6: 1–5; II Thessalonians 3: 6, 14–15; I Timothy 1: 20; Titus 1: 13–14; James 1: 22);

For the instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to them (see Proverbs 13: 20; Romans 15: 14; I Corinthians 5: 11; 15: 33; Colossians 3: 16; I Thessalonians 5: 14 [note this is written to the whole church, not just to leaders]; I Timothy 5: 20; Titus 1: 11; Hebrews 10: 24–25);

For the purity of the church as a whole (see I Corinthians 5: 6–7; II Corinthians 13: 10; Ephesians 5: 27; II John 10; Jude 24; Revelation 21: 2);

For the good of our corporate witness to non-Christians (see Proverbs 28: 7; Matthew 5: 13–16; John 13: 35; Acts 5: 1–14; Ephesians 5: 11; I Timothy 3: 7; II Peter 2: 2; I John 3: 10); and

Supremely for the glory of God by reflecting His holy character (see Deuteronomy 5: 11; I Kings 11: 2; II Chronicles 19: 2; Ezra 6: 21; Nehemiah 9: 2; Isaiah 52: 11; Ezekiel 36: 20; Matthew 5: 16; John 15: 8; 18: 17, 25; Romans 2: 24; 15: 5–6; II Corinthians 6: 14–7: 1; Ephesians 1: 4; 5: 27; I Peter 2: 12).

Section 5 – Termination of Membership

The church shall recognize the termination of a person's membership following his or her death and may do so after he or she has voluntarily resigned or joined with another church. Membership may also be terminated as an act of church discipline (ordinarily, but not necessarily, at the recommendation of the elders) upon the vote of at least two-thirds of the members present at any regular or special meeting of the members.

The church shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation or transfer of membership to another church, either for

the purpose of proceeding with a process of church discipline, or for any other biblical reason.

The elders shall on a regular basis review the membership roll to ensure that it reflects active members. There are occasions where attendance is limited due to very legitimate reasons (e.g., illness, care-giving, a temporary move.) As a rule, however, those in the area who no longer participate in the life of the church should be removed from the roll. Whenever possible, notice should be given to anyone before that person is removed from the roll.

Article 4 – Meetings

Section 1 – Worship Meetings

Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day and may be held throughout the week as determined by the elders.

Section 2 – Members' Meetings

In every meeting together, members shall act in that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

There shall be a regular members' meeting at least three times per year, at some time apart from a public worship service agreed upon by the membership.

An elder designated by the elders shall preside as moderator at all members' meetings of the church. The elders shall see that the stated meetings of the church are regularly held and that required reports are submitted to the church by the responsible members.

Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those members present. All votes shall be tallied based on the number of votes cast by members present.

A budget shall be approved by the membership at a members' meeting not more than three months after the start of the fiscal year. Prior to this approval and subject to the elders' discretion, expenditures may continue at the prior year's level.

At any regular or special members' meeting, officers may be elected and positions filled as needed, so long as all relevant constitutional requirements have been met.

Special members' meetings may be called as required by the elders, or at the written request, submitted to the elders, of ten percent of the voting membership. The date, time, and purpose of any special meeting shall be announced at all public services of the church within two weeks preceding the meeting. In the event of a written request from the members, the elders shall call a special meeting to be held within one month of their receipt of the request.

Robert's Rules of Order is the authority for questions of any parliamentary procedure necessary for members' meetings to function properly.

Section 3 – Proper Subjects of Discussion and Votes at Member Meetings

Redeemer Church is a congregationally-governed and elder-led church. Therefore, the congregation willingly delegates much decision-making power to the board of elders. The specifically enumerated issues set forth in this section are proper subjects of discussion and vote at member meetings. Other items may be put up for discussion and vote as the elders may determine.

- 1.** The congregation shall discuss and vote on termination of membership and discipline, as set forth in Article 3.
- 2.** The congregation shall discuss and vote on elders, the senior pastor, and associate pastors, as set forth in Article 5.
- 3.** The congregation shall discuss and vote on any future changes to this Constitution, and the Confessional Statement, as set forth in Article 10.
- 4.** The congregation shall discuss and vote on the church budget each year, as set forth in Article 4, section 2.
- 5.** The congregation shall discuss and vote on the purchase of any real property by the church.
- 6.** Examples of decisions reserved for the elders to make are, but not limited to: adopting or changing personnel and facilities use policies, all decisions on spending within the parameters of the annual church budget, the hiring of assistant pastors and interns,

and decisions regarding worship services (including the time, place, and order of the services).

Article 5 – Officers

Section 1 – Summary

The officers of the church are elders, and deacons. In addition, our church recognizes the administrative position under this constitution of clerk and treasurer. All officers must be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

Section 2 – Elders

The elders shall be comprised of not less than three men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of elder set forth in I Timothy 3: 1–7 and Titus 1: 6–9. No elder shall hold the office of deacon during his tenure.

Subject to the will of the congregation, the elders shall oversee the ministry and resources of the church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6: 1–6 and I Peter 5: 1–4, the elders shall devote their time to prayer, the ministry of the Word (by teaching and encouraging sound doctrine), and shepherding God’s flock.

The church shall recognize men gifted and willing to serve in this calling, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as elders. This recognition shall be reaffirmed by the church triennially. After an elder, other than the senior or associate pastor(s), has served two consecutive three-year terms, he may only be elected to the office of elder after at least one year.

An elder's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members with reason to believe that an elder should be dismissed should express such concern to the elders and, if need be, to the congregation. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18: 15–17 and I Timothy 5:17–21. Any of the elders (including the pastor and the associate pastors) may be dismissed by a two-thirds vote of the members at any members’ meeting of the church. The elders shall take particular responsibility to examine and instruct prospective

members, examine and recommend all prospective candidates for offices and positions, oversee the work of the deacons and appointed church agents and committees, conduct worship services, administer the ordinances of baptism and communion, equip the membership for the work of the ministry, encourage sound doctrine and practice, admonish and correct error, oversee the process of church discipline, coordinate and promote the ministries of the church, and mobilize the church for world missions. The elders are further to ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share our fundamental convictions.

The elders may establish ministry positions or committees to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities. The elders may also propose funding for new paid staff positions (e.g., music ministry, youth, administration). The membership shall approve all candidates to fill the positions of senior and associate pastor. The scope and approval of job descriptions for any staff position shall reside in the hands of those with hiring authority for that position.

The elders shall have primary responsibility for the employment, supervision, and evaluation of staff members. This responsibility may, on a case-by-case basis, be delegated to another staff member.

Each year the elders, after consultation with the deacons, the and the membership, shall present to the church an itemized budget. No money shall be solicited by or on behalf of the church or any of its ministries without the approval of the elders. The elders shall elect a chairman of elders' meetings and shall also elect one of their number to serve as moderator of members' meetings. For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the State of Mississippi, the elders shall elect one of their number to serve as the president of the corporation.

Section 3 – The Senior Pastor

The senior pastor shall be an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in Section 2, above, and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching.

His call shall not be subject to the triennial reaffirmation or to the term limitation set out in Article 5, Section 2, for elders. His call

shall be defined as per Article 6, Section 3.

He shall preach on the Lord's Day, administer the ordinances of baptism and communion, and perform such other duties as usually pertain to that office, or as set forth in the constitution.

In the absence or incapacity of the senior pastor the elders shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which can be delegated.

Section 4 – The Associate Pastors

The church may call additional pastors whose relationship to the senior pastor is that of associate.

An associate pastor shall be an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in Section 2, above. His call shall not be subject to the triennial reaffirmation or to the term limitation set out in Article 5, Section 2, for elders. His call shall be defined as per Article 6, Section 4.

He shall assist the senior pastor in the performance of his regular duties and shall perform any other duties as usually pertain to the office of pastor, or as set forth in the constitution, or which may be specifically assigned to him by the congregation.

In the absence or incapacity of the senior pastor for defined periods of time (such as sabbatical or illness), the associate pastor(s) shall assume the responsibility for his duties under the oversight of the elders.

Section 5 – Pastoral Interns

The elders may hire additional staff to assist with pastoral ministry, designated as pastoral interns. These men are not required to be elders, though they may be recognized as elders should they be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation, in accordance with Article 5, Section 2.

The elders shall assign the responsibilities of the pastoral assistant(s). They shall serve at the will of the elders for a term of not more than one year, though that term may be extended with the approval of the elders.

Section 6 – Deacons

The office of deacon is described in I Timothy 3: 8–13 and Acts 6: 1–7. The elders shall recognize, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections, men and women who are giving of themselves in service to the church, and who possess particular gifts of service. These members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as deacons and deaconesses. They shall be elected to one term lasting for a maximum of five years and may only be elected to another term after one year.

Deacons and deaconesses shall care for the temporal needs of members, attend to the accommodations for public worship, and encourage and support those able to help others and those with gifts of administration.

The deacons and deaconesses shall receive, hold, and disburse a fund for benevolence, reporting on its use to the elders at their request, and reporting to the church its total receipts and total disbursements only.

The deacons and deaconesses, with the agreement of the elders, may establish unpaid administrative positions or committees of members to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities in the church.

Section 7 – Clerk

It shall be the duty of the clerk to record the minutes of all regular and special members' meetings of the church, to preserve an accurate roll of the membership, and to render reports as requested by the pastor, the elders, the deacons, or the church.

The clerk shall be chosen by the elders. In the absence or incapacity of the clerk the elders shall appoint a member to perform the duties of the church clerk.

For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation law of the State of Mississippi, the clerk shall serve as the secretary of the corporation.

The church clerk shall ensure that dated copies of the most recent

revision of this constitution shall be available for all church members.

Section 8 – Treasurer

The treasurer shall be chosen by the elders and shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as appropriate. The treasurer shall also be responsible for presenting regular reports of the account balances, revenues and expenses of the church at each members' meeting. The responsibility may be delegated with the approval of the elders. The treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church. The treasurer shall render to the elders annually, or whenever they may require it, an account of all transactions as treasurer and of the financial condition of the church.

Section 9 – Trustees

The elders shall select Trustees in order to effect certain commercial transactions. The purpose of the Trustees is to act as the responsible officials for signing legal and financial documents on behalf of Redeemer Church. In order for such signatures to be binding on the church, at least 3 trustees are required to sign in order for the church to be obligated by that agreement.

Article 6 – Elections

Section 1 – Principles

The process for church elections shall be interpreted and carried out to fulfill the following principles: substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, should be an integral part of the election process; nominations should proceed with the support of the elders; all candidates for church office should be treated with the grace, kindness, and honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow members; the election process shall express that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration that is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Section 2 – Selection of Elders & Deacons

The election of Elders and Deacons shall be held at a members' meeting of the church. Names of nominees to serve as elders and deacons shall be presented at least 4 weeks prior to the members' meeting. The election shall proceed as directed by the moderator.

The elders shall seek recommendations and involvement from the general membership in the nomination process. The elders shall review the nominations from the membership. After the review, the elders shall notify the prospective elders and deacons and allow for an evaluation period. This period should allow both the elders and the candidates to understand the expectations of the office and whether the candidate is interested in pursuing the office. The elders shall select those who shall appear on the slate at the member's meeting after the evaluation period.

Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for an office should express such concern to the elders. Members should express their objection to the elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant church members' meeting.

The moderator shall declare elected all men receiving at least a two-thirds majority of all votes cast for the office of elder. For all other offices, the moderator shall declare elected all person receiving a simple majority off all votes cast; abstentions will not be considered as votes casts. The persons elected shall assume their respective offices upon election, unless another date has been specifically designated.

Section 3 – Calling of the Senior Pastor

In the calling of any man to this position, the same basic process of calling an elder must be followed. In addition, however, the church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential senior pastor and, before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Confessional Statement. Notice of the nomination of a man to be elected to membership and called as senior pastor (which shall include, if necessary, election to

membership of his wife if he is married) must be given at two Sunday morning services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a members' meeting.

Section 4 – Calling of Associate Pastor

In the calling of any man to the position of associate pastor, the same basic process of calling an elder must be followed. In addition, however, the church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential associate pastor and, before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Confessional Statement. Notice of the nomination of a man to be called as associate pastor (which shall include, if necessary, election to membership of him and his wife if he is married) must be given at two Sunday morning services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a members' meeting.

Article 7 – Indemnification

Section 1 – Mandatory Indemnification

If a legal claim or criminal allegation is made against a person because he or she is or was an officer, employee, or agent of the church, the church shall provide indemnification against liability and costs incurred in defending against the claim if the elders determine that the person acted (a) in good faith, (b) with the care an ordinarily prudent person in a similar position would exercise under similar circumstances, and (c) in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the church, and the person had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful.

Section 2 – Permissive Indemnification

At the discretion of the elders, the church also may indemnify any person who acted in good faith and reasonably believed that his or her conduct was in the church's best interest and not unlawful.

Section 3 – Procedure

If a quorum of the elders is not available for an indemnification determination because of the number of elders seeking indemnification, the requisite determination may be made by the membership or by special legal counsel appointed by the membership.

Article 8 – Dispute Resolution

Believing that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian Church (see, e.g., Matthew 18: 15–20, I Corinthians 6: 1–8), the church shall require its members to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblically based principles, without reliance on the secular courts. Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the church shall encourage the use of biblically based principles to resolve disputes between itself and those outside the church, whether Christian or pagan and whether individuals or corporate entities.

Article 9 – Offices

Section 1 – Principal Office

The principal office of the Church in the State of Mississippi shall be located in Oktibbeha County. The Church may have such other offices, either within or without the State of Mississippi, as the Board of Elders may designate or as the affairs of the church may require from time to time.

Section 2 – Registered Agent

The Church shall have and continuously maintain in the State of Mississippi a registered agent whose office or address is identical with the principal office of the Church, as required by the Mississippi Nonprofit Corporation Act. The address of the registered agent and the principal office of the corporation may be changed from time to time by the Board of Elders by filing the appropriate documents with the Mississippi Secretary of State.

Article 10 – Amendments

The Confessional Statement may be amended by a three-quarters vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous members' meeting, and shall have been announced from the pulpit at church services two successive Sundays prior to such vote.

This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous members' meeting, and shall have been announced from the pulpit at church services two successive Sundays prior to such vote.

