

AGAPE BAPTIST CHURCH PROPOSED BYLAWS CHANGE.

Email your questions to: Info@Agapepinson.com or call/text (205) 681-LOVE 5683.

Highlights of proposed changes:

1. "Membership" in previous Bylaws changed to "Fellowship" and "Family Membership" in new Bylaws. New membership commitments proposed. (See Section I)
2. Overall Leadership structure changed from Leadership Team to Elders led + Ministry Counsel. Potential Elders must affirm ten core theological beliefs to serve. Provision added for the congregation (or other elders) to remove an Elder or the Senior Elder/Pastor with cause. (See Section II)
3. Ministers (previously "Deacons") proposed to include men and women and to have expanded ministry roles. (See Section II)
4. The formation of a Ministry Counsel, made up of Elders and Ministers, is proposed with bi-monthly meetings anticipated. (See Section III)
5. Some changes and simplifications made to a few other sections. These changes include making allowance for the financial secretary to function as a Treasurer in absence of a willing Treasurer candidate and a proviso that a (80 percent) congregational vote is needed to approve a change to the ten Elder affirmations below.

I. CHURCH FELLOWSHIP

A. Agape reserves the exclusive right to determine who shall be family members of this church and the conditions of such fellowship.

B. To be part of the fellowship at Agape, an individual must be a saved follower of Jesus Christ who is devoted to living a Biblical lifestyle. By joining with the congregation, an individual is making the following commitments:

- 1) Regular, consistent fellowship with the congregation at Agape
- 2) Ministry to each other and to the world according to one's spiritual gifts
- 3) Material giving for the benefit of the body. (Note - this is not a requirement that family members "tithes". While we believe the Bible teaches that financial giving to a local church is a blessed and right activity - this commitment is referring to family member's agreeing to care for each other with their time, talents and possessions.) (Acts 2:44-46.)
- 4) Pursuing life together and holding one another accountable according to the teaching of the Bible.

C. Family members whose conduct is deemed unfitting to the Christian life, and whose influence hinders the cause of Christ, may be excluded from the fellowship on the condition that reasonable efforts have been made in keeping with Matthew 18:15-17.

D. Definition of an Active Family Member:

An individual is considered an active part of the fellowship if they are regularly and consistently upholding the commitments outlined above. Family membership is available to those 13 and older (with parental permission in the case of those unmarried and still living with their parents) People who are physically able, yet do not regularly and consistently uphold these commitments will not be considered as active parts of the fellowship. In the case of the latter, efforts will be made to contact the individual(s) and encourage them to return to the fellowship of believers at Agape, or another God honoring, Bible embracing fellowship.

1. Those in the fellowship can expect the congregation to practice the biblical command of Galatians 6:10: especially doing good to each other in every way.

2. Those active in the fellowship will also have privileges in voting on issues that are brought before the congregation, provided that the family member is present for the vote. Voting issues shall be announced to the congregation ahead of time. One who is physically able. but has attended less than three Agape gatherings in the past two months should refrain from voting.

3. A family member is considered inactive if they are not regularly upholding the four commitments of fellowship.

E. Disciplining Of Family Members:

1. Should some condition exist which would cause a family member to become a liability to the general welfare of the church, the elders and/or ministry counsel will take every reasonable measure to resolve the problem in accordance with Matthew 18:15-17. If it becomes necessary for the church to take action to exclude a family member, such action will be done in accord with Biblical instructions (1 Cor. 5:1-13, Matthew 18, etc). Biblical church discipline will be engaged in with humility and fidelity to the Bible.

II. CHURCH OFFICERS, MINISTRY TEAMS

All who serve as officers and ministerial staff members of the church and those who serve on church ministry teams must be **ACTIVE** family members of the church.

A. Church officers

The officers of this church shall be the Elders and the Ministers.

1. Elders.

a. The Elder team at Agape will have the overall responsibility for leading the congregation, especially in spiritual matters. Elders will function in the following way:

- 1) Preaching and teaching God's word accurately and clearly [Titus 1:9]
- 2) Eagerly shepherding the flock while paying careful attention to the spiritual walk of both themselves and the congregation [1 Peter 5: 1-4; Acts 20:28]
- 3) Confronting false teaching, empty words and gossip while protecting the flock from wolves [Titus 1:9-11; Acts 20:29-31]
- 4) The laying on of hands for the purpose of ministry and for setting apart leaders [James 5:14-16; 1 Timothy 4:14]
- 5) Working hard to help the weak, not for personal gain [Acts 20:33-35]
- 6) Appointing search teams for paid-Minister Staff positions, when needed, and giving final approval on hires before they are brought before the congregation for a vote. Ideally, ministerial candidates should come from current members of Agape.
- 7) Selecting people for non-paid Minister Positions.
- 8) Selecting people for paid-staff positions (non-Minister).
- 9) Termination of all paid or non-paid positions with just cause.

b. Agape will call as many Elders as are qualified and motivated towards the above functions in the congregation. Qualifications for Elders are found in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 and will be followed closely when examining an Elder candidate. Agape will only call men to serve on the Elder team. Elder candidates will come from recommendations of the congregation and/or the existing Elders via a recommendation letter. Candidates will be interviewed by the Elder team and if they are approved then they will be subject to a 2/3 majority affirmation vote by the congregation.

c. All Elders, including the Senior Leader, will be subject to a $\frac{2}{3}$ majority affirmation vote by the congregation at some point in the third year of their ministry. This vote, which will be written and signed, is designed to maintain proper accountability between the congregation and Elders. Elders may also be removed by the existing Elder team with just biblical cause.

d. The Elder team can be comprised of both staff Elders (paid) and non-staff Elders (non-paid). An Elder can be moved from non-paid to paid at the recommendation of the Elder team and a 2/3 majority affirmation vote of the congregation. The staff Elders will be responsible for oversight of week to week operations of the congregation and will therefore meet on a weekly basis as a general rule. The entire Elder team (staff and non-staff) will meet once a month and/or as needed as a general rule.

e. Decision making on the Elder team will be done through the process of coming to one mind as outlined in Acts 15:25.

f. Elders must agree to a covenant between themselves and the congregation in these key areas:

- 1) Doctrinal and lifestyle purity
- 2) Unity
- 3) Accountability
- 4) Brotherly love

g. The Senior Leader will have an additional job description from the other Elders. If the Senior Leader position is vacated, the next Senior Leader will be selected by the Elder Team. The Elders may appoint a search team if necessary. A 2/3 majority affirmation vote by the Ministry Counsel and then the congregation would be necessary to hire the Senior Leader candidate.

h. If more than one family member (1 Timothy 5:19) has a serious issue with an Elder, including the senior leader, that family member should raise the issue at a Ministry Counsel meeting. If the Ministry Counsel, after prayerful investigation, believes the issue has merit, then the Elder in question will either be rebuked publicly (1 Timothy 5:20) or, if necessary, the Counsel will vote on bringing the Elder before the congregation for a dismissal vote. That Elder's position will be vacated upon a 2/3 vote by the congregation.

i. The Ministry Counsel shall bring a recommendation to the church for severance pay for the senior leader. Any amount in excess of that recommended shall be made only to the extent such funds are available.

h. All Elders, including the Senior Elder, must sign a written statement affirming their belief in the following:

1. We believe in one sovereign, living, active and glorious God that eternally exists in three infinite Persons as God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit.

2. The Bible is the inerrant Word of God and is the ultimate written rule for Agape. It is the infallible, written Word of God and is useful for teaching, preaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness. Decisions made by Agape Elders must obviously be done in line with the clear teachings of the New Testament and never in contradiction to them.

3. Jesus is the incarnate son of God, and lived on earth in the flesh. He lived without sin and worked real miracles, and cast out real demons. He raised people from the dead, turned water into wine, healed the lame and blind, walked on water and calmed the storms. He was crucified on a cross and resurrected bodily, conquering death. He ascended into Heaven and now sits at the right hand of God the Father.

4. God created the Universe out of nothing and sustains it. God also directly created Adam from the ground and Eve from Adam's side. Thus Adam and Eve were the historical parents of the entire human race and were created male and female equally in the image of God.

5. Adam, as head of the human race, fell into sin, and his sin has infected the entire human race in such a way that corruption, guilt, condemnation and death belong to every person. All have sinned and fallen short of God's glory. (Romans 3:23)

6. Salvation is only found through Jesus Christ. There is one God and one Mediator. (John 14:6 1 Timothy 2:5). By His perfect obedience to God the Father, and by His suffering, death and resurrection as the immaculate Lamb of God, Jesus obtained forgiveness of sins and perfect righteousness for all who trust in Christ. Through living a perfect life, and dying in the place of believers in Him, Jesus absorbed the punishment due to us - the just dying for the unjust - and thus appeased the righteous wrath of God. The destination of all who die apart from Jesus is hell - an everlasting place of torment and separation from God. Though the Father desires that all would come to Jesus, Jesus Himself testified to the reality that most would not come to God through Him.

7. The Holy Spirit is God, is a person (not an impersonal force), and has always been at work in the world. He quickens people to the work of Jesus, empowers believers to follow God and testify of Him, and without the work of the Spirit, nobody would ever come to salvation, because all are dead in sin and trespasses.

8. There is one universal Church, composed of all people in every time and place, who are saved in and by Jesus and united to Him through faith and by the Spirit. They are united into one Body and Jesus Himself is the all-sustaining, all-supreme, all-authoritative Head. The ultimate purpose of the Church is to glorify God in the everlasting and ever increasing gladness of worship. Baptism is to be administered by immersion to all of those who have repented and come to faith in Jesus.

9. Jesus has given His church a Great Commission to make disciples of Jesus in all places. This involves proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus to every tribe and tongue and people and nation, baptizing them in Jesus' name, and teaching them His ways and words. This Commission extends right up until the time of Jesus' sure and certain bodily return to the Earth as a mighty King.

10. The work of an Elder is not to lord it over the flock, but rather to lead in humility and servant-heartedness with Jesus Christ as the ultimate model. The work of an Elder is to preach and teach the truth and to shepherd the local Body of Christ. As an Elder, I agree to lead humbly, to seek Biblical unity with the other Elders, to point to the ultimate authority of Jesus, and to seek the unity prayed for by Jesus in John 17. I agree to be diligent in my study and teaching of the Word of God, in prayer, and in shepherding my own family. I agree to also shepherd the Body of Christ and fulfill the Biblical obligations of being an Elder. I agree to voluntarily resign this position of Elder if I am unable to maintain these 10 affirmations and beliefs

2. Senior Leader/Elder/Pastor.

a. The Senior Leader is part of the Elder team, and as such, he must meet the qualifications as set forth in 1 Timothy 3: 1-7 and Titus 1: 6-9. He, along with the other elders, will be responsible for leading Agape to function as a New Testament Church as set forth in Acts 6:4, Acts 20:28, Titus 1: 9-11, and I Peter 5:2-5.

b. He is a teacher of the Word of God, the Bible. He is to teach and exhort by precepts and example. His goal is to mature the saints through insightful and accurate presentation and proclamation of the Word, stressing both the understanding and application of Divine truths and principles.

c. If the Senior Leader position is vacated, the next Senior Leader will be selected by the Elder Team, and that choice will be presented to the overall Ministry Counsel (Elders, Ministers) for approval. The Elders may appoint a search team if necessary. A $\frac{2}{3}$ majority affirmation vote by the congregation would be necessary to hire the Senior Leader candidate.

Family Members may use absentee ballots only if they are not able to attend for just cause. An absentee vote must be submitted prior to the written vote. Family Members desiring to vote by absentee ballot must contact the church office at least one week prior to obtain a ballot. The ballot must include a statement as to the reason for using an absentee ballot, and must include the signature of the member and one witness.

d. After accepting the call, the Senior Leader/Elder shall serve until the relationship is terminated by his request or the church's request. He may relinquish the office of Senior Leader/Elder by giving at least a one month notice to the church at the time of resignation.

e. The Ministry Counsel shall bring a recommendation to the church for severance pay for the senior leader. Any amount in excess of that recommended shall be made only to the extent such funds are available.

f. This church will only call men as Elders and Senior Elders/Leaders.

3. Ministers

a. Ministers will serve Agape in servant-leader roles in response to the needs and vision of the congregation as established by God and communicated by the Elder team. This fellowship recognizes that God calls both men and women into ministry, and as such, Ministers of Agape will be both men and women. Their general task is to serve with the Elders in performing the pastoral tasks of (1) leading the church in the achievement of its mission, (2) proclaiming the gospel to believers and unbelievers, and (3) caring for the church's members and others in the community. The specific function and duties of the Ministers will change as needs in the congregation change.

b. The Elder team will work closely with the Ministers to establish their responsibilities and alter them as needed. The Elder team will provide direction to ensure that these roles follow Biblical teachings and role distinctions, such as outlined in 1 Timothy 2.

c. The Elder Team will establish how many Ministers are called, based on the needs of the congregation. Qualifications for Deacons and Deaconesses are found in 1 Timothy 3 and will be followed closely when examining a Ministry candidate. Candidates will be nominated by the congregation and then must be approved by the Ministry Counsel. The Elder Team will have the ability to remove a Minister for just Biblical cause. Ministers will work with the Elder Team every two years to determine if they need a sabbatical, or time away from being a Minister. Minister nominations will happen once a year, in September, but can also be received year round, as the need for more Ministers arises.

B. STAFF

1. Ministerial Staff:

a. Non-Elder ministerial staff shall be called and employed as the Elders and Ministry Counsel determines the need for such staff. Those staff members for whom the church requires evidence of a personal call of God to minister shall be recommended to the church by the Elders or Ministry Counsel and called by church action. An affirmative vote of $\frac{2}{3}$ of the members present and voting at a special called family meeting shall be necessary for a call.

b. At the time of resignation at least one month notice shall be given to the church.

c. The church may vacate such positions upon recommendation of the Elders or Ministry Counsel with such termination's being immediate.

2. Non-ministerial Staff:

a. Non-ministerial staff shall be employed as the Elders or Ministry Counsel determines the need for their services. A job description shall be written when the need for a staff member is determined.

b. The church Elders shall have the authority to employ and terminate services of non-ministerial staff members. Generally, such employment and termination of services shall be with the recommendation of the Elders or supervising staff member and, as appropriate, with the consultation of ministry specific teams of the church.

C. Ad-Hoc Ministry Teams

The church recognizes the need for other volunteer positions or special ministries. Those positions or special teams shall be determined and filled on an as need basis as determined by the Elders

D. Ministerial Staff Search Team

1. The Elders or Ministry Counsel at large shall select a five person staff search team if necessary and helpful. This will be accomplished by requesting that each member present and voting cast a ballot containing the names of five active church members. The five candidates receiving the most votes shall be the search team. Should one or more of those selected decline to serve, the candidate(s) with the next highest number of votes will be asked to serve. Again, as noted above, it is expected that most ministerial staff will be chosen from among those called and equipped in the Agape congregation.

2. The Elders, Ministry Counsel or Search Team shall bring to the consideration of the church only one person at a time. Election will be by written ballot (must be signed) at a special called family meeting. An affirmative vote of two-thirds of the active membership present & voting shall be necessary to extend a call. Members may use absentee ballots only if they are not able to attend for just cause. Members desiring to vote by absentee ballot must contact the church at least one week prior to obtain a ballot. The ballot must include a statement as to the reason for using an absentee ballot, and must include the signature of the member and one witness.

III. Ministry Counsel and Other Church Offices

a. The Ministry Counsel will be composed of the Elders and Ministers. The Ministry Counsel will help provide the overall direction of ministries at Agape and will work to ensure all ministries are working in unison for the good of the congregation. This Counsel will also serve to set and approve the yearly church budget and to approve Ministry candidates when needed.

b. Ministry Counsel meetings should be scheduled at least bi-monthly as a general rule. Attendance by the Elders and Ministers is critical to the health of the congregation, and attendance is expected.

1. Church Clerk

a. The church shall, as necessary and needed, elect a clerk annually as its clerical officer; an assistant shall be elected to assist the church clerk in all phases of the work if an assistant is needed.

b. The church clerk shall be responsible for keeping a suitable record of all official actions of the church, except as otherwise herein provided.

c. The church clerk shall be responsible for keeping a register of names of church members, with dates of admission, death, or erasure, together with a record of baptisms.

d. The church clerk shall issue letters of dismissal voted by the church; preserve on file all communications and written official reports; and give required notice of all meetings where notice is necessary, as indicated in these bylaws.

e. The church may delegate some of the clerical responsibilities to a church secretary who will assist the elected church clerk.

2. Treasurer

a. The church shall elect a treasurer annually as its financial officer. In lieu of somebody willing to serve as a treasurer, the financial secretary will serve in aspects of that role until a willing and equipped treasurer is found.

b. It shall be the duty of the treasurer (or financial secretary) to perform or oversee the following: receive, preserve and pay out, upon receipts of vouchers approved and signed by authorized personnel, all money or things of value paid or given to the church, keeping at all times an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements.

c. It shall be the duty of the treasurer (or financial secretary) to render to the Ministry Counsel an itemized report of the receipts and disbursements during each bi-monthly meeting. The treasurer's report and records shall be internally audited as decided by the Leadership Team.

d. Upon rendering the annual account at the end of each fiscal year and its acceptance and approval by the church, it shall be filed as a part of the permanent church records.

e. The church will employ a financial secretary to perform the actual payment of vouchers and signed by authorized personnel and keeping an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements.

f. The financial secretary is responsible for posting payments & receipts, balancing check books, and providing the treasurer (if one is available) with a monthly report to prepare a financial statement.

IV. CHURCH ORDINANCES

A. This church shall receive for baptism any person who has received Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior by personal faith, who professes Him publicly at any worship service and who indicates a commitment to follow Christ as Lord.

1. Baptism shall be by immersion in water.

2. An Elder, Ministry Team Member, or whomever the church shall authorize, shall administer baptism. The active Ministers shall assist in the preparation for and the observance of baptism.

3. Baptism shall be administered as an act of worship during any worship service of the church.

4. A person who professes Christ and is not baptized after a reasonable length of time shall be compassionately counseled by the Elders or active Ministers.

B. The church shall observe the Lord's Supper as seen fit to be scheduled by the Elders or leadership of the church.

V. CHURCH MEETINGS

A. Worship Services

The church will meet regularly as directed by the Elders.

B. Family Meetings

The church may conduct called family meetings to consider matters of special nature and significance. A six day notice must be given for the specially called meeting unless extreme urgency renders such notice impractical. The notice shall include the subject, date, time, and place; and it must be given in such a manner that active members have an opportunity to know of the meeting.

Any individual, who wishes to introduce a topic for a family meeting, must notify the church office of the topic no later than one week prior to the called family meeting.

C. Quorum

The quorum consist of those active members who attend the family meeting, provided it is a stated meeting or one that has been properly called. The quorum will be expected to conduct themselves with humble, preferential love one for the other.

VI. CHURCH FINANCES

A. Accounting Procedures

All funds received for any and all purposes shall pass through the hands of the church treasurer, or financial secretary and be properly recorded on the books of the church. A system of accounting that will adequately provide for the handling of all funds shall be the responsibility of the treasurer or financial secretary.

B. Fiscal Year

The church year shall be the same as the calendar year.

VII. CHURCH OPERATIONS MANUAL

The Elders and Ministry Counsel, as needed, will set forth policies and procedures for use of the church facilities and other issues as needed. Said manual will be in the church office for review as needed under custody of the church secretary.

VIII. TERMS OF OFFICES AND POSITIONS

Unless specified otherwise within these bylaws and operations manual, the terms of office and position shall be evaluated each year by the Elders and Ministry Counsel which shall run from January 1st through the following December 31st.

IX. PERIOD OF THE CHURCH YEAR

Unless specified otherwise within these bylaws, the church year shall be January 1st through the following December 31st.

X. IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE BYLAWS

These bylaws shall be implemented immediately upon their approval by the church.

XI. AMENDMENTS

Desired amendments shall be presented to the Ministry Counsel, in writing, not less than fourteen days prior to the called family meeting in which they are to be first presented, for study and presentation to the church.

Any amendment to the ten Elder Commitments above must be by (80 percent) of the congregation, and must only be undertaken after careful study of the Scriptures as well as fasting and prayer. In order for those commitments to be changed, clear Biblical evidence must be presented that something is out of place. This is to ensure that the leadership of Agape cleaves to the Bible for many decades to come.

These bylaws may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the membership present and voting at a called family meeting. An amendment up for vote will be offered to the active membership in writing at least 14 days prior to the vote.