

**ARTICLES OF BYLAWS
PASSAGEWAY CHURCH, BLAIR, NE**

ARTICLE I – MEMBERSHIP

A. QUALIFICATIONS

1. Each person who trusts Jesus Christ for salvation is a part of the body of Christ. All believers who are regular attendees are considered an integral part of this local body and encouraged to become members of this church. Members have the right to vote at congregational meetings, the opportunity to serve as an elected officer, along with other benefits defined within this document.

2. All members are encouraged to participate in the life of the church by:
 - Attending corporate worship (large and small groups).
 - Praying for one another, and helping one another in times of need.
 - Regularly supporting the financial needs of the church.
 - Making full use of their talents and gifts as their sacred duty and privilege in the Lord's service whenever opportunity affords.
 - Seeking to develop their own spiritual life through Bible reading, meditation and prayer.
 - Teaching and leading their household in the ways of the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - Leading a peaceful life, and working to attend to their own affairs. (1 Thess. 4:11)

B. ADMISSION: Admission to membership in this church shall be as follows:

1. **Application.** Application for membership shall be made to any of the elders or pastors. Applicants must:
 - Be 18 years of age or older.
 - Have confessed Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, being born again.
 - Be in agreement with the Statement of Faith and commit to abide by the Constitution and Bylaws of the church.
 - Be free of unlawful activity or serious offense in the community. (Phil. 2:15)

2. **The application process shall include:**
 - Submission of an Application for Membership form.
 - Review of the application by the elders and pastors.
 - Attendance of a membership class.
 - A meeting with elders and/or pastors to give personal testimony of their salvation through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
 - Verification of their understanding of and agreement with the Statement of Faith and commitment to abide by the Constitution and the Bylaws of this church.
 - Any exception to the above shall be at the discretion of the elders and pastors.

3. Before the applicants are recommended at a business meeting, a list of their names shall be made known to the membership two weeks in advance of the meeting. If any member has a valid reason for objecting to the membership of any applicant, they shall immediately notify the elders and pastors and give *Scriptural reasons* for their objections. The validity of these objections shall be considered by the elders and pastors.
4. All qualified applicants shall be recommended by the elders and pastors at any business meeting of the church for approval and admission. They shall be approved for membership by at least three-fourths vote of the members present by secret ballot with results being tallied by the elders. The vote count shall not be disclosed. The applicants shall not be present in the meeting while their admission is being considered.
5. The applicants shall be notified privately of the outcome of the vote. The accepted applicants shall be publicly welcomed into the membership at a regular worship service of the church.
6. In the event that an applicant does not receive the required number of votes to obtain membership, the elders shall follow up with the applicant to encourage and develop a path toward future membership.

C. WITHDRAWAL OF MEMBERSHIP:

1. It is expected that members who move or change their church home will notify the church and request that their name be removed or transferred from the church roll. A member who is absent from the activities of the church for a period of one year shall be contacted by the elders and pastors to determine membership status. If the member indicates no desire to return to fellowship and involvement with the church, the elders shall recommend to the church that the member be removed from the church roll.
2. Removal of membership will be considered by the elders and pastors for members who disqualify themselves by:
 - Denying their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior or proving to not be born again.
 - No longer agreeing to the statement of faith, or refusing to abide by the Constitution and Bylaws of this church.
 - Being involved in unlawful activity or serious offense within the community.
 - Abusing their office / position within the church to harm another or derive profit for themselves.
3. Disqualified members do not lose the care and concern from the church, but they may be excluded from certain roles in the church. Any disqualified member serving as an officer shall immediately forfeit all rights, keys and church property to a designated officer of the church.
4. Removal of membership shall require at least a three-fourths vote of the members present at a regular or special business meeting. Voting members will be given the reason for the removal of membership for each individual before the vote.
5. A person removed from membership who desires to become a member again must go through the membership application process.

D. DISCIPLINE:

Church discipline is a Biblical process followed by the church when a believer who is a regular attendee is in serious violation of Biblical truth, is in moral failure or continues in unrepentant conflict with another believer. The goal of church discipline is not punishment. Church discipline is an act of love that has correction, repentance and restoration of the believer and the safeguarding of the church as its goal.

In each situation, it will be the responsibility of the elders and pastors to validate that the proper Biblical guidelines, time and effort of love have been followed. Special care will be exercised and mandated so that the proper scriptural procedure is followed for each incident - matching the issue to the proper passages: Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Corinthians 5, 2 Corinthians 2, Galatians 6, 1 Timothy 5, 2 Timothy 3 and Titus 3, etc.

Only after the required procedure has been completed will the elders and pastors bring the matter to the voting membership with their recommendation for action.

1. Potential Recommendations For Action

- **Information and Prayer.** The elders and pastors will inform the congregation of the issue and will solicit prayer and engage a session of corporate prayer.
- **Request for Arbitrator.** The elders and pastors may recommend a delay in voting on the discipline, and request that an independent, Biblical arbitrator be retained. The arbitrator will meet with the person(s) being disciplined and the elders and pastors to validate that all parties have correctly understood the issues, and that proper Biblical process has been followed. The church will follow the arbitrator's recommendations.
- **Removal from Fellowship.** In conjunction with this recommendation the elders, pastors and members will agree on documented expectations and steps to be followed by the disciplined person(s) before restoration to fellowship will be approved. This document shall be delivered to the disciplined person(s) and stored with the church records.

2. Potential Actions by Membership

- **Membership Confirms Elders' and Pastors' Recommendation.**
- **Membership Requests Arbitration.** The membership may recommend a delay in voting on the discipline, and request that an independent, Biblical arbitrator be retained. The arbitrator will meet with the person(s) being disciplined and the elders and pastors to validate that all parties have correctly understood the issues, and that proper Biblical process has been followed. The church will follow the arbitrator's recommendations.
- **Membership Overrides Pastors and Elders.** The voting members may disagree with need for the discipline, and request that the person(s) be restored to full fellowship. In such a case, those bringing the charge to the church must work to resolve the misunderstanding with the person(s) and restore the unity of faith with all members of the church.

3. Completing the Discipline Process

At least a three-fourths vote of the members present at any regular or announced special business meeting of the church is required to complete the discipline process. The incident(s), the Biblical directive and the process followed shall be presented to the church for their prayer, consideration and vote. Everything shall be documented for the records of the church, and written copies mailed to the person(s) in question.

If the decision of the pastors, elders and church membership is removal from fellowship, then removal of membership will be automatic.

4. Restoration After Discipline

When a disciplined person(s) has completed the documented steps and expectations for restoration to fellowship, said person(s) will contact and meet with the elders and pastors.

- If the elders and pastors agree to restoration, then the names of the disciplined person(s) will be recommended to the membership at the next business meeting for at least a three-fourths vote of restoration of fellowship.
- If the elders and pastors disagree that the disciplined person(s) is ready to be restored to full fellowship, then the elders and pastors will apprise the congregation of the ongoing status and attempt to work with the disciplined person(s) until a vote on restoration of fellowship can be brought to the membership for consideration again.

ARTICLE II – CHURCH GOVERNMENT

A. GENERAL ORGANIZATION

Being autonomous, this church shall remain its own highest authority under God, depending upon the Headship of Jesus Christ and the Presence of the Holy Spirit. The church shall govern its affairs as a congregational form of government, and shall be served by elders, deacons and trustees.

- Elders shall serve by concentrating their efforts on leading, feeding and protecting the flock.
 - Deacons shall serve by providing leadership in specific areas of ministry.
 - Trustees shall serve by managing the physical and financial aspects of the church.
1. **Church Officers.** The church officers shall be elders, deacons and trustees.
 - All church officers shall be members of the church in good standing.
 - In conformity with 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9, the elders shall be men only.
 - Deacons and trustees should be both men and women: Romans 16:1, Acts 9:36.
 - Elders, deacons and trustees shall appoint a chair and vice-chair at the first meeting of every fiscal year. A chair shall serve no more than two consecutive years. Following two consecutive years, that person is not eligible to be nominated as chair for a period of one year.
 - The elders, deacons and trustees are the only church officers created by these Bylaws.
 2. **Corporate Officers.** Article VI of the Constitution declares that the Corporate Officers of this church shall consist of the president, vice president, secretary and treasurer. The Corporate Officers are hereby declared to be:
 - President: Chair of the elders.
 - Vice President: Chair of the deacons.
 - Secretary: Vice Chair of the elders.
 - Treasurer: Chair of the trustees.

The Corporate Officers shall sign all legal documents pertaining to the corporation, and are the only Officers who have authority to execute legal documents relating to real estate, church property, and church finances.

3. **Service Teams and Leaders.** The elders, deacons and trustees have the authority to create or dissolve service teams and positions to which they may delegate any specified aspect of their responsibility.
 - Every team shall have a leader, responsible for the overall operation of the team, who shall be appointed annually by the members of the team.
 - A leader shall serve no more than two consecutive terms. Following two consecutive terms, that person is not eligible to be nominated as leader for a period of one year.
4. **Unanimity in the Holy Spirit.** God's desire for the Church of Jesus Christ is that believers be of one mind, united in the Holy Spirit. The Apostle Paul wrote to the Philippian Church, "Only conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come and see you or remain absent, I will hear of you that you are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel." (Philippians 1:27 NASB).

Unanimity in leadership decisions is accomplished through the deliberate process of believers making decisions by actively seeking the mind of the Lord and by patiently waiting upon His guidance. Followers of Christ who seek unity should not "vote their own mind" or do what seems right in their own eyes. Instead, they should live out the Lord's instruction in Luke 11:9-10, "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks, receives; and he who seeks, finds; and to him who knocks, it will be opened." The mind of the Lord is revealed by the Holy Spirit after open and honest, but respectful, biblically-based discussion and prayer.

Along with active dependence upon Jesus, unanimity is accomplished as believers obey Philippians 2:3, "Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others [including the other person's thoughts and ideas] more significant than yourselves." (ESV). Collaborative leaders who seek unanimity are not quick to say, "No!" when they disagree. Instead, Christ's love has taught them to temper their own desires and seek to do what is best for, and preferred by, others. But even leaders who seek unity are not always in full agreement, especially when faced with important decisions. The Body of Christ is multifaceted, internally motivated by the Holy Spirit Who gifts and leads His people in various ways. Minor preferences and differences are to be expected.

The goal of unanimity in decision-making is not blind or foolish conformity, especially when confronted with potential error. When a person in leadership disagrees strongly or has a strong hesitation, either on biblical grounds or based on an inner sense that a decision is not from the Lord, then the rest of the leaders should consider the other person's disagreement or hesitation as a warning from the Lord and should delay any action. "He who doubts is condemned if he eats, because his eating is not from faith; and whatever is not from faith is sin." (Romans 14:23 NASB) Delay is not bad, because it allows for further discussion, prayer, and seeking the Spirit's will through the Word. Deeper and more fervent prayer should occur as a group, calling upon the Lord to change hearts and minds and make His good and perfect will known. While a unanimous decision may not always be attainable, a unanimous decision by spiritually mature leaders, reached after open discussion based on God's Word and fervent prayer, while not infallible, is blessed by God.

B. VOCATIONAL PASTORS

1. **Definition.** Vocational pastors respond to God's call to serve the church as their vocation, and are therefore supported financially by the church in return for their labors.
 - Vocational pastors shall be men only. (1 Timothy 2:11-14)
 - Vocational pastors will be elders or deacons, as recommended by the elders and approved by the members of the church.
 - Other than the lead pastor, vocational pastors shall be non-voting elders or deacons.
 - When a vocational pastor is hired church membership is granted automatically.
2. **Duties.** In addition to the duties of an elder or deacon, vocational pastors shall perform the duties of their job descriptions as recommended by the elders and approved by the members of the church.
 - It is the responsibility of the lead pastor to collaborate with the elders on the direction of the church and the teaching for the church.
 - The duties shall be in writing at the time of the call to service, and substantial changes shall be approved by the members of the church.
3. **Vocational Call by the Church.** The church shall call vocational pastors upon recommendation of the elders and at least a three-fourths affirmative written ballot vote of the members of the church.
4. **Change in the Vocational Call by the Church**
 - a. **Resignation.** Written resignation by a Vocational Pastor is subject to any notice requirements in an employment agreement, policy manual, or, if not specified, 30 days.
 - b. **Reassignment or other change.** If the responsibilities allocated to a pastor prove inconsistent with his gifting, desires or abilities, the elders will work together to reassign or recommend a change in his status. The elders shall present their recommendation at any business meeting.
 - c. **Poor job performance.** If a Vocational Pastor persistently fails to perform his duties at an acceptable standard, written notice and ample opportunity to correct his deficiencies will be given him by the elders. If his performance continues to be unacceptable, the elders shall present their recommendation at any business meeting.
 - d. **Grievous error in doctrine or conduct.** Accusations of error in doctrine or conduct made against a Vocational Pastor must be in writing and supported by at least three members in good standing, following the procedure prescribed in Article I Section D of these Bylaws.

If the elders, after thorough investigation and consideration, believe the Vocational Pastor has committed grievous error in doctrine or conduct, or has continued to commit grievous error in doctrine or conduct after being charitably admonished by the elders, then the vocational call of the Pastor may be terminated at any business meeting upon recommendation of the elders and at least a three-fourths affirmative written ballot of those members of the church present and voting at the meeting.
5. **Interim Appointments.** If a Vocational Pastor position is vacant or a Vocational Pastor is unable to carry out his duties, the elders may appoint someone to that position on an

interim basis not to exceed twelve months. Congregational approval by a simple majority is needed to extend beyond 12 months.

6. **Licensing and Ordination.** In the matter of licensing and ordaining any person to the Gospel Ministry, the church shall follow the procedure recommended by the elders and approved by the members of the church.

C. LAY OFFICERS

1. **Definition.** Lay officers are the non-vocational elders, deacons and trustees of the church.
2. **Duties.** Lay elders, deacons and trustees shall have the duties of their offices as described in Sections D, E and F below.
3. **Calling.** The elders, as part of their shepherding duties, shall interview, and investigate candidates for lay officer positions.
 - a. During the month of May each year, the elders shall request any members of the church either to nominate candidates or to present themselves to the elders as candidates for the elders' further investigation.
 - In no instances shall any individual be considered a candidate without his/her consent.
 - If the elders conclude that a candidate is not qualified for office, they shall inform the candidate of the reasons for this conclusion and work with the candidate to prepare them for future service.
 - b. The elders shall present a ballot of candidates for calling as lay officers to the members of the church at least thirty days prior to the annual meeting.
 - In addition to the ballot of candidates, ministry involvement and biographical information regarding each candidate shall be shared in writing with the church in order for all the members of the church to know and appreciate the candidates (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13).
 - Calling of lay officers shall be by vote of the members of the church at the annual meeting as indicated below:
 - o If the number of candidates is equal to the number of positions there will be a yes/no vote for each candidate and each candidate must receive more than fifty percent "yes" vote.
 - o If there are more candidates than positions to be filled, the candidates with the greater number of votes will be those called to serve.
 - o Ties will be settled by a coin toss. (Proverbs 18:18)
 - c. Lay officers shall be called by the church for a normal term of three years. Terms shall run from October 1st through September 30th.
 - d. Lay officers shall serve no more than two consecutive terms in the same office.
 - Following two consecutive terms, lay officers are not eligible to serve in the same office for a period of two years, and shall not continue to attend meetings of the former office but should instead use the time for sabbatical, ministry growth or other service.
 - For purposes of this section, service in office for more than one-half of a term shall be deemed service for a term.

- e. The elders may also present lay officer candidates for newly created positions or to fill vacancies at any regular or special meeting, provided that the written ballot of candidates is presented to the members of the church at least thirty days prior to the meeting.

4. Change in the Call by the Church.

- a. **Resignation.** Written resignation by a lay officer.
- b. **Failure to serve.** If any lay officers persistently fail to perform their duties at an acceptable standard, written notice and ample opportunity to correct their deficiencies will be given them by the elders. If their performance continues to be unacceptable, then the call of the lay officer may be terminated at any business meeting upon recommendation of the elders and at least two-thirds vote of those members of the church present and voting at the meeting.
- c. **Grievous error in doctrine or conduct.** Accusations of error in doctrine or conduct made against a lay officer must be in writing and supported by at least three members in good standing, following the procedure prescribed in Article I Section D of these Bylaws. If the elders, after thorough investigation and consideration, believe the lay officer has committed grievous error in doctrine or conduct, or has continued to commit grievous error in doctrine or conduct after being charitably admonished by the elders, then the call of the lay officer may be terminated at any business meeting upon recommendation of the elders and at least two-thirds vote of those members of the church present and voting at the meeting.

D. ELDERS

- 1. **Purpose.** The responsibility of the elders is to shepherd the flock while they devote themselves to prayer and the ministry of the Word. Elders oversee the church, leading, feeding, teaching and equipping the saints to do the work of ministry. Elders lead by example, not by lording it over the church, and will give account to Jesus, the Head of the Church, for their ministry and service to His Body. (Acts 20:28-31; Acts 11:29-30; Ephesians 4:11-16; 2 Timothy 2:2; Titus 1:9; Hebrew 13:17; James 5:14-16; 1 Peter 5:1-3)
- 2. **Duties.** The responsibilities of the elders shall include the following:
 - a. The goal of their work is to have the church grow and mature in Christ, equipping them for the work of the ministry:
 - Oversee the ministries of the church, including the deacons, trustees and staff.
 - Help those who lead ministries to learn and mature in the grace of Jesus Christ.
 - Actively shepherd fellow church members in their walk with Christ, encouraging and exhorting them to continue to pursue Christ.
 - b. It is the responsibility of the elders to collaborate with the lead pastor on the direction of the church and the teaching for the church.
 - c. Teach the whole counsel of God, both formally and informally, refuting and correcting error with compassion and grace.
 - d. Actively develop future ministry leaders – godly men and women who are qualified for service and leadership.
 - e. Using the sufficient Word of God, the wisdom of the saints and prayer, counsel those who struggle with the challenges of life and guide them to spiritual maturity in Christ.

- f. Train the church in and oversee the process of church discipline as outlined in the Bylaws.
 - g. Recruit, examine and assist prospective candidates for church offices.
 - h. Schedule and provide a moderator and an agenda for business meetings.
 - i. Perform the annual evaluations of vocational pastors.
 - j. Annual review and evaluation of Statement of Faith, Constitution and Bylaws.
- 3. Qualifications.** The qualifications for the Office of elder shall include the following:
- a. Male members of the church in good standing. (1 Timothy 2:11-14)
 - b. Meet the biblical standards for elders. (I Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9)
 - c. Minimum age of 25.
 - d. Actively involved in ministry in the church, demonstrating leadership gifts and their ability to teach.
- 4. Number of elders.** The number of elders shall be modified as necessary on an annual basis, with each elder shepherding and caring for approximately 25-50 member family units.
- 5. Meetings.** Board of elders generally shall meet monthly and may also meet at the call of the chairman, the senior pastor, or three of its members. The presence of a majority of the members shall constitute a quorum. A majority vote shall decide all issues.

E. Deacons (Ministry Deacons)

- 1. Purpose.** The responsibility of the deacons is to minister to the needs of the church, physically, spiritually and emotionally. This is done by providing collaborative leadership and support to various ministries of the church. (Acts 6:1-6; Acts 11: 29-30; Philippians 1:1)
- 2. Duties.** The deacons are to advise and be ready to assist the elders in any service that supports and promotes the ministry of the Word, new and existing ministries of the church, and the care for the members of the congregation. Their responsibilities may include:
- a. Administering a fund to assist the poor and needy and otherwise providing aid in times of crisis or distress.
 - b. Managing the greeting and welcoming ministries of the church.
 - c. Assisting in administering the ordinances of the Gospel.
 - d. Assisting at fellowship gatherings of the church.
 - e. Examining prospective members and acquainting them with the Statement of Faith and church membership process.
 - f. Conducting worship services.
 - g. Coordinating and promoting the ministries of the church.
 - h. Mobilizing the church for world mission.

- i. Coordinate with the elders regarding ministry opportunities and needs, and with the trustees for budget requests, modifications and administration.
3. **Qualifications.** The qualifications of deacons shall include the following:
- a. Male and female members of the church in good standing. (Acts 9:36; Romans 16:1-2)
 - b. Meet the biblical standards for deacons. (Acts 6:3; 1 Timothy 3:8-13)
 - c. Minimum age of 25.
 - d. Actively involved in ministry in the church, demonstrating a desire to serve and support others in their service.
4. **Number and Organization of Deacons.** The number of deacons shall be determined by the needs of the ministry, modified as necessary on an annual basis, as recommended by the elders and approved by the church. Meetings of the deacons, or service teams thereof, shall be held as needed to best fulfill the responsibilities of the deacons and the needs of the church.

F. Trustees (Administrative Deacons)

1. **Purpose.** The responsibility of the trustees is to faithfully attend to the routine physical and financial needs and processes of the church. This is done by providing collaborative support to the elders, deacons and various ministries of the church. (Acts 6:1-6; Acts 11: 29-30; Philippians 1:1)
2. **Duties.** The trustees are to advise and be ready to assist the elders, deacons and ministry leaders with the routine physical and financial needs and processes of the church. Their duties may include:
- a. Managing the annual budget process of the church, serving the ministry vision and needs of the elders, deacons and ministry leaders.
 - b. Stewarding the routine finances of the church, including offerings, payroll, bank accounts, investments and real property.
 - c. Stewarding the physical property of the church, including facility and grounds maintenance and maintenance of all church-owned vehicles and equipment.
 - d. Supporting the ministries of the church with their physical and financial needs.
3. **Qualifications.** The qualifications of trustees shall include the following:
- a. Male and female members of the church in good standing. (Acts 9:36; Romans 16:1-2)
 - b. Meet the biblical standards for deacons. (Acts 6:3; 1 Timothy 3:8-13)
 - c. Minimum age of 25.
 - d. Actively involved in ministry in the church, demonstrating a desire to serve and support others in their service.
4. **Number and organization of trustees.** The number of trustees shall be determined by the needs of the ministry, modified as necessary on an annual basis, as recommended by the elders and approved by the church. Meetings of the trustees, or service teams thereof, shall be held as needed to best fulfill the responsibilities of the trustees.

ARTICLE III – MEETINGS

- A. The congregation meets on the Lord's Day for worship, instruction and fellowship, and during the week as may be provided for under the leadership of the pastor(s), elders, deacons and trustees.
- B. Since the government of the church is congregational, authority is vested in its membership and attendance at business meetings is highly encouraged. Major decisions shall be determined by the church membership at its business meetings.
- C. The annual meeting of the church shall be held in September.
1. At the annual meeting, the votes on new church officers and the next year's proposed budget shall be held.
 2. The dates of quarterly meetings for the following year will be published.
- D. The church shall have regular business meetings and special business meetings.
1. Special business meetings may be called by at least 25% of the church officers or by at least 25% of church membership in good standing.
 2. Notice of meetings shall be announced two Sundays prior to the date of meeting.
 3. Agendas and information pertinent to upcoming congregational meetings will be made available at least 2 weeks prior to meeting.
 4. Members may present requests to the elders for items to be included on the agenda.
- E. Quorum:
1. Regular and special business meetings shall require a quorum of at least 25% of the members.
 2. The following matters shall require a quorum of at least 50% of the members:
 - Calling or dismissal of the lead pastor.
 - Changing the Constitution.
 - The purchasing of real property.
 3. Absentee voting may be requested. Absentee ballots must be received at least 48 hours prior to meeting.
- F. Procedures:
1. Meetings will be open to non-members as well as members and both are encouraged to attend.
 2. Closed meetings for members only may be called at the discretion of the elders.
 3. Items not on the agenda may be presented for inclusion on a future agenda, but may not be acted upon.
 4. All attendees may speak when recognized by the moderator but non-members may not vote.
 5. The moderator may limit discussion after a reasonable amount of time has been allowed for every person wishing to comment on a motion.
 6. Except as otherwise specified, a simple majority of those members present will carry all business.

ARTICLE IV – AMENDMENTS

These Bylaws may be amended in accordance with Article X of the Constitution.

Document History and Version Control (sorted newest to oldest)

Version	Reason for Change (High-Level Summary)	Date Approved by Congregation
1.0	Initial Version	MM/DD/2017