

**SAMPLE DRAFT DOCTRINES AND GOVERNANCE IN THE EVENT OUR CHURCH  
VOTES TO DISAFFILIATE FROM THE UMC AND PROCEED AS AN  
INDEPENDENT METHODIST CHURCH (8/13/23)**

The following is a sample proposed draft of doctrines and governance in the event our church votes to disaffiliate from the United Methodist Church and proceed as an independent Methodist church. **This is a draft only and is subject to additions, deletions, corrections, and changes.** This is adapted from the Transitional Book of Doctrines and Discipline of the Global Methodist Church; the Doctrines and Orders of the Methodist Collegiate Church; the Book of Discipline of the United Methodist Church; and the Constitution and Bylaws of the Medina Community Church (formerly the Medina United Methodist Church). All comments, suggestions, corrections are welcomed and encouraged.

**I. CHURCH STANDING**

Our church shall worship and serve in the tradition of Methodism and John Wesley, but it is an independent church that is not a member of any larger denomination or religious organization. Our church may cooperate with other churches, denominations, and religious organizations; support home and foreign mission services; and unite in any mutual effort for the furtherance of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Any long-term affiliation with a religious denomination or organization must be approved by a majority vote of professing members in attendance and voting at a duly called church conference conducted in accordance with section VII.A. herein.

**II. THE ARTICLES OF FAITH**

(The following Articles of Faith have been adopted by the Global Methodist Church (GMC), the United Methodist Church (UMC), the Methodist Collegiate Church (MCC), and many other Methodist denominations and churches. Some of the language is archaic. References to “man” and “men” should be understood to include both men and women, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise.)

Thirty-Nine Articles of Religion were finalized in 1571 to define the doctrine of the Church of England. When Methodism emerged as a church, independent of the Church of England two centuries later, John Wesley abbreviated the formulation to 24 Articles. An additional article dealing with the duty of Christians to civil authority was added by the Methodist Episcopal Church when it was formed in 1784. The Articles were officially adopted by the General Conference of 1808. The Twenty-Five Articles are as follows:

**Article I - Of Faith in the Holy Trinity**

There is but one living and true God, everlasting, without body or parts, of infinite power, wisdom, and good; the maker and preserver of all things, both visible and invisible. And in unity of this Godhead there are three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity – the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost

## **Article II - Of the Word, or Son of God, Who Was Made Very Man**

The Son, who is the Word of the Father, the very and eternal God, of one substance with the Father, took man's nature in the womb of the blessed Virgin; so that two whole and perfect natures, that is to say, the Godhead and Manhood, were joined together in one person, never to be divided; whereof is one Christ, very God and very Man, who truly suffered, was crucified, dead, and buried, to reconcile us to His Father, and to be a sacrifice, not only for original guilt, but also for actual sins of men.

## **Article III - Of the Resurrection of Christ**

Christ did truly rise again from the dead, and took again his body, with all things appertaining to the perfection of man's nature, wherewith he ascended into heaven, and there sitteth until he return to judge all men at the last day.

## **Article IV - Of the Holy Ghost**

The Holy Ghost, proceeding from the Father and the Son, is of one substance, majesty, and glory with the Father and the Son, very and eternal God.

## **Article V - Of the Sufficiency of the Holy Scriptures for Salvation**

The Holy Scripture containeth all things necessary to salvation; so that whatsoever is not read therein, nor may be proved thereby, is not to be required of any man that it should be believed as an article of faith, or be thought requisite or necessary to salvation. In the name of the Holy Scripture we do understand those canonical books of the Old and New Testaments of whose authority was never any doubt in the church. The names of the canonical books are: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, Ruth, The First Book of Samuel, The Second Book of Samuel, The First Book of Kings, The Second Book of Kings, The First Book of Chronicles, The Second Book of Chronicles, The Book of Ezra, The Book of Nehemiah, The Book of Esther, The Book of Job, The Psalms, The Proverbs, Ecclesiastes or the Preacher, Cantica or Songs of Solomon, Four Prophets the Greater, Twelve Prophets the Less. All the books of the New Testament, as they are commonly received, we do receive and account canonical.

## **Article VI - Of the Old Testament**

The Old Testament is not contrary to the New; for both in the Old and New Testaments everlasting life is offered to mankind by Christ, who is the only Mediator between God and man, being both God and Man. Wherefore they are not to be heard who feign that the old fathers did look only for transitory promises. Although the law given from God by Moses as touching ceremonies and rites doth not bind Christians, nor ought the civil precepts thereof of necessity be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian whatsoever is free from the obedience of the commandments which are called moral.

## **Article VII - Of Original or Birth Sin**

Original sin standeth not in the following of Adam (as the Pelagians do vainly talk), but it is the corruption of the nature of every man, that naturally is engendered of the offspring of Adam,

whereby man is very far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, and that continually.

#### **Article VIII - Of Free Will**

The condition of man after the fall of Adam is such that he cannot turn and prepare himself, by his own natural strength and works, to faith, and calling upon God; wherefore we have no power to do good works, pleasant and acceptable to God, without the grace of God by Christ preventing us, that we may have a good will, and working with us, when we have that good will.

#### **Article IX - Of the Justification of Man**

We are accounted righteous before God only for the merit of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, by faith, and not for our own works or deservings. Wherefore, that we are justified by faith, only, is a most wholesome doctrine, and very full of comfort.

#### **Article X - Of Good Works**

Although good works, which are the fruits of faith, and follow after justification, cannot put away our sins, and endure the severity of God's judgment; yet are they pleasing and acceptable to God in Christ, and spring out of a true and lively faith, insomuch that by them a lively faith may be as evidently known as a tree is discerned by its fruit.

#### **Article XI - Of Works of Supererogation**

Voluntary works – besides, over and above God's commandments – which they call works of supererogation, cannot be taught without arrogancy and impiety. For by them men do declare that they do not only render unto God as much as they are bound to do, but that they do more for his sake than of bounden duty is required; whereas Christ saith plainly: When you have done all that is commanded you, say, We are unprofitable servants.

#### **Article XII - Of Sin After Justification**

Not every sin willingly committed after justification is the sin against the Holy Ghost, and unpardonable. Wherefore, the grant of repentance is not to be denied to such as fall into sin after justification. After we have received the Holy Ghost, we may depart from grace given, and fall into sin, and, by the grace of God, rise again and amend our lives. And therefore they are to be condemned who say they can no more sin as long as they live here; or deny the place of forgiveness to such as truly repent.

#### **Article XIII - Of the Church**

The visible church of Christ is a congregation of faithful men in which the pure Word of God is preached, and the Sacraments duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same.

#### **Article XIV - Of Purgatory**

The Romish doctrine concerning purgatory, pardon, worshiping, and adoration, as well of images as of relics, and also invocation of saints, is a fond thing, vainly invented, and grounded upon no warrant of Scripture, but repugnant to the Word of God.

#### **Article XV - Of Speaking in the Congregation in Such a Tongue as the People Understand**

It is a thing plainly repugnant to the Word of God, and the custom of the primitive church, to have public prayer in the church, or to minister the Sacraments, in a tongue not understood by the people.

#### **Article XVI - Of the Sacraments**

Sacraments ordained of Christ are not only badges or tokens of Christian men's profession, but rather they are certain signs of grace, and God's good will toward us, by which he doth work invisibly in us, and doth not only quicken, but also strengthen and confirm, our faith in him. There are two Sacraments ordained of Christ our Lord in the Gospel; that is to say, Baptism and the Supper of the Lord. Those five commonly called sacraments, that is to say, confirmation, penance, orders, matrimony, and extreme unction, are not to be counted for Sacraments of the Gospel; being such as have partly grown out of the corrupt following of the apostles, and partly are states of life allowed in the Scriptures, but yet have not the like nature of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, because they have not any visible sign or ceremony ordained of God. The Sacraments were not ordained of Christ to be gazed upon, or to be carried about; but that we should duly use them. And in such only as worthily receive the same, they have a wholesome effect or operation; but they that receive them unworthily, purchase to themselves condemnation, as St. Paul saith.

#### **Article XVII - Of Baptism**

Baptism is not only a sign of profession and mark of difference whereby Christians are distinguished from others that are not baptized; but it is also a sign of regeneration or the new birth. The Baptism of young children is to be retained in the Church.

#### **Article XVIII - Of the Lord's Supper**

The Supper of the Lord is not only a sign of the love that Christians ought to have among themselves one to another, but rather is a sacrament of our redemption by Christ's death; insomuch that, to such as rightly, worthily, and with faith receive the same, the bread which we break is a partaking of the body of Christ; and likewise the cup of blessing is a partaking of the blood of Christ. Transubstantiation, or the change of the substance of bread and wine in the Supper of our Lord, cannot be proved by Holy Writ, but is repugnant to the plain words of Scripture, overthroweth the nature of a sacrament, and hath given occasion to many superstitions. The body of Christ is given, taken, and eaten in the Supper, only after a heavenly and spiritual manner. And the mean whereby the body of Christ is received and eaten in the Supper is faith. The Sacrament of the Lord's Supper was not by Christ's ordinance reserved, carried about, lifted up, or worshiped.

### **Article XIX - Of Both Kinds**

The cup of the Lord is not to be denied to the lay people; for both the parts of the Lord's Supper, by Christ's ordinance and commandment, ought to be administered to all Christians alike.

### **Article XX - Of the One Oblation of Christ, Finished upon the Cross**

The offering of Christ, once made, is that perfect redemption, propitiation, and satisfaction for all the sins of the whole world, both original and actual; and there is none other satisfaction for sin but that alone. Wherefore the sacrifice of masses, in the which it is commonly said that the priest doth offer Christ for the quick and the dead, to have remission of pain or guilt, is a blasphemous fable and dangerous deceit.

### **Article XXI - Of the Marriage of Ministers**

The ministers of Christ are not commanded by God's law either to vow the estate of single life, or to abstain from marriage; therefore it is lawful for them, as for all other Christians, to marry at their own discretion, as they shall judge the same to serve best to godliness.

### **Article XXII - Of the Rites and Ceremonies of Churches**

It is not necessary that rites and ceremonies should in all places be the same, or exactly alike; for they have been always different, and may be changed according to the diversity of countries, times, and men's manners, so that nothing be ordained against God's Word. Whosoever, through his private judgment, willingly and purposely doth openly break the rites and ceremonies of the church to which he belongs, which are not repugnant to the Word of God, and are ordained and approved by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly, that others may fear to do the like, as one that offendeth against the common order of the church, and woundeth the consciences of weak brethren. Every particular church may ordain, change, or abolish rites and ceremonies, so that all things may be done to edification.

### **Article XXIII - Of the Rulers of the United States of America**

The President, the Congress, the general assemblies, the governors, and the councils of state, as the delegates of the people, are the rulers of the United States of America, according to the division of power made to them by the Constitution of the United States and by the constitutions of their respective states. And the said states are a sovereign and independent nation, and ought not to be subject to any foreign jurisdiction.

### **Article XXIV - Of Christian Men's Goods**

The riches and goods of Christians are not common as touching the right, title, and possession of the same, as some do falsely boast. Notwithstanding, every man ought, of such things as he possesseth, liberally to give alms to the poor, according to his ability.

### **Article XXV - Of a Christian Man's Oath**

As we confess that vain and rash swearing is forbidden Christian men by our Lord Jesus Christ and James his apostle, so we judge that the Christian religion doth not prohibit, but that a man may

swear when the magistrate requireth, in a cause of faith and charity, so it be done according to the prophet's teaching, in justice, judgment, and truth.

### **Of Sanctification (from the Methodist Protestant Discipline)**

Sanctification is that renewal of our fallen nature by the Holy Ghost, received through faith in Jesus Christ, whose blood of atonement cleanseth all from sin; whereby we are not only delivered from the guilt of sin, but are washed from its pollution, saved from its power, and enabled, through grace, to love God with all our hearts and to walk in His holy commandments blameless.

[The following provision was adopted by the Uniting Conference (1939).]

### **Of the Duty of Christians to the Civil Authority**

It is the duty of all Christians, and especially of all Christian ministers, to observe and obey the laws and commands of the governing or supreme authority of the country of which they are citizens or subjects or in which they reside, and to use all laudable means to encourage and enjoin obedience to the powers that be.

## **III. CREEDAL AFFIRMATIONS**

The following summaries of the apostolic witness disclosed in Scripture have been affirmed by many Christian communities, and they express orthodox Christian teaching.

### **The Apostles' Creed (GMC, MCC, UMC [hymnal])**

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth. I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord, who was conceived by the Holy Spirit, born of the Virgin Mary, suffered under Pontius Pilate, was crucified, died, and was buried; He descended to the dead. On the third day He rose again; He ascended into heaven, Is seated at the right hand of the Father, and will come again to judge the living and the dead. I believe in the Holy Spirit, the holy catholic\* church, the communion of saints, the forgiveness of sins, the resurrection of the body and the life everlasting. Amen.

\* universal

### **The Nicene Creed (A.D. 381) (GMC, MCC, UMC [hymnal])**

We believe in one God, the Father, the Almighty, maker of heaven and earth, of all that is, seen and unseen.

We believe in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the only Son of God, eternally begotten of the Father, God from God, Light from Light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one Being with the Father; through Him all things were made. For us and for our salvation He came down from heaven, was incarnate of the Holy Spirit and the Virgin Mary and became truly human.

For our sake He was crucified under Pontius Pilate;  
He suffered death and was buried.

On the third day He rose again in accordance with the Scriptures;  
He ascended into heaven and is seated at the right hand of the Father.  
He will come again in glory to judge the living and the dead, and His kingdom will have no end.

We believe in the Holy Spirit, the Lord, the giver of life, who proceeds from the Father and the Son, who with the Father and the Son is worshiped and glorified, who has spoken through the prophets.

We believe in one holy catholic\* and apostolic church. We acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. We look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come.

Amen.

\* universal

### **The Definition of Chalcedon (A.D. 451) (GMC, MCC)**

Following the holy fathers, we teach with one voice that the Son of God and our Lord Jesus Christ is to be confessed as one and the same Person,

That He is perfect in Godhead and perfect in manhood, truly God and truly man, of a reasonable soul and body consisting of one substance with the Father as regards His Godhead, and at the same time of one substance with us as regards His manhood, like us in all respects, apart from sin.

Begotten of His Father before the ages as regards His Godhead,

But in these last days born for us and for our salvation of the Virgin Mary, the God-bearer.

This one and the same Jesus Christ, the only-begotten Son of God, must be confessed to be in two natures, without confusion, without changes, without division, not as parted or separated into two persons, but one and the same Son and only-begotten God the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ.

Even as the prophets from earliest times spoke of Him,

And our Lord Jesus Christ Himself taught us,

And the creed of the fathers has handed down to us.

#### IV. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

In our church, Jesus Christ is proclaimed and professed as Lord and Savior. All people may attend our worship services, participate in our programs, receive the sacraments, and become members. In the case of persons whose disabilities prevent them from reciting the membership vows, a representative who is a professing member of our church may recite the appropriate vows on their behalf.

**A. Definition of Membership.** The membership of our church shall include all people who have been baptized and all people who have professed their faith in Jesus Christ.

- 1) The **baptized membership** of our Methodist church includes all baptized people who have received Christian baptism in our church or elsewhere, or whose membership has been transferred to our Methodist church subsequent to baptism in another church. In valid Christian baptism water is administered in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit by an authorized person.
- 2) The **professing membership** of our Methodist church includes all baptized people who have come into membership by profession of faith through appropriate services of the baptismal covenant or by transfer from other churches.

All current baptized members and professing members of the First United Methodist Church of Johnson City, Texas, shall automatically become baptized members and professing members of our church at the time of its formation, unless such members request that their membership be terminated.

**B. Membership vows.** When persons unite as professing members with our church, they profess their faith in God, the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth; in Jesus Christ his only Son; and in the Holy Spirit. Thus, they make known their desire to live their daily lives as disciples of Jesus Christ. They covenant together with God and with the members of our church to keep the vows which are a part of the order of confirmation and reception into the Church:

- 1) To renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness, reject the evil powers of the world, and repent of their sin;
- 2) To accept the freedom and power God gives them to resist evil, injustice, and oppression;
- 3) To confess Jesus Christ as Savior, put their whole trust in his grace, and promise to serve him as their Lord;
- 4) To remain faithful members of Christ's holy church and serve as Christ's representatives in the world;
- 5) To be loyal to Christ through our church and do all in their power to strengthen its ministries;
- 6) To faithfully participate in its ministries by their prayers, their presence, their gifts, their service, and their witness;
- 7) To receive and profess the Christian faith as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.



**C. Transfer from other churches and denominations.** A member in good standing in any Christian denomination who has been baptized and who desires to unite with our church shall be received as either a baptized or a professing member. Such a person may be received as a baptized member by notification of transfer from that person's former church or some certification of Christian baptism, and as a professing member upon taking membership vows declaring the Christian faith as described above. The pastor will report to the sending church the date of reception of such a member. Persons received from churches that do not issue letters of transfer or recommendation shall be listed as "Received from Other Denominations."

#### **D. Membership records.**

1. Our church shall accurately maintain a permanent membership record for each baptized or professing member including:

- a) the person's name, date of birth, address, place of birth, date of baptism, officiating pastor, and sponsors;
- b) date of confirmation or profession of faith, officiating pastor, and sponsors;
- c) if transferred from another church, date of reception, sending church, and receiving pastor;
- d) if transferred to another church, date of transfer, receiving church, and address of receiving church;
- e) date of removal or withdrawal and reason;
- f) date of restoration of professing membership and officiating pastor;
- g) date of death, date and place of funeral/memorial, place of burial, and officiating pastor.

2. All baptism, membership, marriage and funeral records are the property of our church and shall not be sold to any person or entity.

### **V. THE SACRAMENTS**

#### **A. The Sacrament of Holy Baptism**

Through Holy Baptism we are united in Christ's death in repentance of our sins; raised to new life in Him through the power of the resurrection; incorporated into the Body of Christ; and empowered through the work of the Holy Spirit to serve Christ. Holy Baptism is God's gracious gift to us, flowing from the once-for-all work of Christ Jesus and our pledge to follow as His disciples.

Holy Baptism may be performed by sprinkling, pouring, or immersion. The outward and visible sign of Holy Baptism is water. Candidates are baptized "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (Matthew 28:19). The inward and spiritual grace is death to sin and new birth to righteousness by faith through union with Christ in His death and resurrection.

Holy Baptism is administered among a gathered congregation. Those present vow on behalf of Christ's Holy Church to receive the baptized into the Church universal, to grow together in grace, and to remember the profession made and benefits received in Holy Baptism. Candidates for Holy Baptism, and those presenting candidates unable to answer for themselves, shall be instructed in the Christian faith and the meaning of Holy Baptism.

Holy Baptism, as initiation into Christ's Holy Church, occurs once in a person's life. Holy Communion serves as the regular and continual affirmation of baptismal vows within the church. Through a service of baptismal remembrance and reaffirmation of baptismal vows people can renew the covenant declared at their baptism.

We adopt by reference the Baptismal Covenants contained in the United Methodist Hymnal (1989), or such other consistent covenants as determined by the presiding pastor.

### **B. The Sacrament of Holy Communion**

In Holy Communion also known as the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist (from the Greek word for "thanksgiving"), we are invited into fellowship (koinonia in the Greek) with Christ Jesus who is spiritually present in the whole of the Sacrament. We participate in the communion of saints with the Church universal and we are given a foretaste of God's eternal banquet, the marriage supper of the Lamb. The Sacrament may be offered to all who repent of sin and desire to draw near to God and lead a life of obedience to Christ.

Holy Communion is normally celebrated in the midst of the congregation, physically gathered to remember and respond to God's mighty acts of salvation revealed in Holy Scripture. To the extent possible, we celebrate Holy Communion on the first Sunday of each month and on other occasions as appropriate. The Lord's Table is open to Christians of all denominations who love Christ, turn away from sin, and seek to live in peace with all. All who intend to lead a Christian life, together with their children, are invited to receive the bread and cup. We serve all who present themselves desiring to receive.

The elements of Holy Communion may be taken to those whose condition prevents them from being physically present. We use non-alcoholic wine or juice for Holy Communion. When feasible, gluten-free bread should also be available.

We adopt by reference the Services of Word and Table contained in the United Methodist Hymnal (1989), or such other consistent services as determined by the presiding pastor.

## **VI. OUR SOCIAL WITNESS**

**Marriage:** We believe Christian marriage is a permanent covenant relationship between one man and one woman, entered into before God and witnessed by the church. Only such marriage ceremonies shall be performed in our church facilities and by our pastor. We adopt by reference the Service of Christian Marriage contained in the United Methodist Hymnal (1989) or such other consistent services as determined by the presiding pastor.

We recognize that many enter marriage outside of our church through similar or different religious traditions, both Christian and non-Christian, or through non-religious civil ceremonies. All are welcome to participate in our activities and to become members of our church.

**Human Sexuality:** Issues of human sexuality and gender have caused great conflict and unrest within society and within many Christian faiths, including Methodists. Nevertheless, we believe human sexuality is a gift of God that is to be affirmed as it is exercised within the legal and spiritual covenant of a loving and monogamous marriage between one man and one woman; and we believe

gender is a person's immutable biological traits identified at birth. While affirming a scriptural view of sexuality and gender, we welcome all to our church to experience the redemptive grace of Jesus, and we are committed to being a safe place of refuge, hospitality, and spiritual fulfillment for all.

## **VII. CHURCH GOVERNANCE AND ADMINISTRATION**

### **A. The Church Conference**

#### **1. Meetings.**

1. A church conference shall meet at least annually, usually in November or December.
2. The church conference shall include all professing members of the church.
3. The senior pastor shall fix the time and place of the annual church conference. The chairperson of the Administrative Council, or his or her designee, shall preside at the meetings of the church conference.
4. The professing members present and voting at any duly announced church conference meeting shall constitute a quorum.
5. Special sessions of the church conference may be called by the senior pastor or the chairperson of the Administrative Council. The purpose of such special session shall be stated in the call, and only such business shall be transacted as is consistent with the purposes stated in the call.
6. Notice of time and place of a regular or special session of the church conference shall be given at least ten days in advance by three or more of the following: from the pulpit of the church, in the weekly worship service bulletin, in the church newsletter, by email, or by mail.

#### **2. Powers and Duties:**

1. The primary responsibilities of the church conference in the annual meeting shall be to review and evaluate the total mission and ministry of the church, receive reports, elect leaders, and adopt objectives and goals recommended by the church Administrative Council.
2. The church conference recording secretary shall keep an accurate record of the proceedings and shall be the custodian of all records and reports and, with the presiding officer, shall sign the minutes. A permanent copy of the minutes shall be retained for church files.
3. The church conference may establish a limit to the consecutive terms of office for any or all of the elected or appointed officers of the church.
4. The church conference shall set the compensation of the pastors.
5. The church conference shall receive and act on the annual report from the pastor concerning the church's membership.

### **3. Election of Leaders:**

The church conference shall elect by simple majority vote leaders as needed to fulfill the mission of the church.

### **4. Removal of Officers and Filling of Vacancies:**

If a leader or officer who has been elected by the church conference is unable or unwilling to perform the duties reasonably expected of such a leader or officer, the senior pastor or chairperson of the Administrative Council may call a special session of the church conference. The purpose of the special session shall be stated as “Consideration for the removal of person from office and the election of person to fill vacancy.” The Nominations and Leadership Development Committee or another group charged with that responsibility shall meet as soon as possible after the special session of the church conference has been announced and shall propose a person who may be elected if a vacancy occurs at the church conference. If the church conference votes to remove a person or persons from office, the vacancy shall be filled in the manner prescribed for elections.

### **5. Purchase, sale, lease, construction, and mortgage of property**

Prior to the purchase, sale, lease, or mortgage by the church of any real estate, or the construction or renovation of a building, a resolution authorizing such action shall be passed by the church conference by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting at any regular or special meeting called for that purpose; provided, however, that not less than ten days’ notice of such meeting and the proposed action shall have been given from the pulpit and in the weekly worship bulletin, and newsletter, and by email or mail; and provided further, that written consent to such action shall be given by the senior pastor. The resolution authorizing such proposed action shall direct and authorize the Board of Trustees to take all necessary steps to carry out the action and to cause to be executed any necessary contract, deed, bill of sale, mortgage, or other written instrument. Any required contract, deed, lease, bill of sale, mortgage, or other written instrument necessary to carry out the action so authorized shall be executed in the name of the church by members of the Board of Trustees, and any written instrument so executed shall be binding and effective as the action of the church.

**B. Administrative Council:** An Administrative Council (Council) shall govern and oversee management of the church. The Council must include the Council Chairperson, senior Pastor, Lay Leader, Staff Parish Relations Chair, Finance Chair, and Trustees Chair. Other persons may be added and included as part of the Council, as determined by the Council. Members of the Council other than the senior pastor shall be confirmed or removed by a majority vote of professing church members present and voting at the annual Church Conference.

At the time of the formation of our church, the Council consists of the following positions (some of which are vacant):

- Chairperson
- Pastor
- Lay Leader
- Staff Parish Relations Chair

- Finance Chair
- Trustees Chair
- Youth Director
- Youth Representative
- Education Director
- Missions Chair
- Adult Ministries Chair
- Church Secretary
- Wesley Nurse
- Historian
- Bereavement Care
- Church Shepherds Chair (Keep-in-Touch)
- Worship Committee

### **1. Administrative Council Meetings**

a) The Council shall meet monthly when feasible, but in all cases must meet at least quarterly. The chairperson or the pastor may call special meetings of the Council. Council members present and voting at any duly announced meeting shall constitute a quorum.

b) The Council should attempt to make decisions by achieving a consensus when possible, but when, in the opinion of the Chair, a consensus cannot be achieved, then the Council may make a decision by a simple majority vote of those present and voting.

### **2. Responsibilities**—The Council’s responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

a) Oversee the management and operation of the church.

b) Fill interim vacancies occurring among the lay officers of the church between sessions of the church conference (annual or special);

c) Establish an annual budget on recommendation of the Finance Committee and ensure adequate provision for the financial needs of the church;

d) Recommend to the church conference the salary and other remuneration of the pastor and staff members, after receiving recommendations from the Staff-Parish Relations Committee;

e) Review the recommendation of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee regarding provision of adequate housing (parsonage or housing allowance) for the pastor, and report the same to the church conference for approval.

**3. Church Staff:** At the time of the formation of our church, full-time paid church staff positions include the Pastor, Adult Ministries Coordinator (currently working part-time), and Youth Director (currently vacant). Part-time paid staff positions include the Church Secretary, Children’s Education Director, Treasurer, and Nursery Workers.

**4. Administrative Council Chairperson:** The Administrative Council chairperson shall be elected by the church conference annually and shall have the following responsibilities:

- a) leading the Administrative Council in fulfilling its responsibilities;
- b) preparing and communicating the agenda of the Administrative Council meetings in consultation with the pastor, Lay Leader, and other appropriate persons;
- c) reviewing and assigning responsibility for the implementation of actions taken by the Administrative Council;
- d) communicating with members of the Administrative Council and others as appropriate to permit informed action at council meetings;
- e) coordinating the various activities of the Administrative Council;
- f) providing initiative and leadership for the Administrative Council as it engages in planning, establishing of objectives and goals, and evaluating ministry;
- g) The Administrative Council chairperson shall be entitled to attend meetings of all boards and committees of the church

### **C. Staff-Parish Relations Committee.**

1. The annual church conference shall elect a Staff-Parish Relations Committee composed of at least five professing members of the church. People serving on this committee must be engaged in their Christian spiritual development to give proper leadership in the committee's responsibilities. In conducting its work, the committee shall identify the mission of the church, the primary task and ministries of the church, and the role and work of the pastors and staff as they carry out their responsibilities.

2. No staff member or immediate family member of a pastor or staff member may serve on the committee. Only one person from an immediate family residing in the same household shall serve on the committee. The church Lay Leader is automatically a member of the committee.

3. To secure experience and stability, the membership may be divided into three classes, one of which shall be elected each year for a three-year term. The Lay Leader is exempt from the three-year term on this committee. Members of the committee may succeed themselves for a second three-year term. When vacancies occur during the year, the church Administrative Council shall elect successors.

4. The committee should meet at least quarterly. It shall meet additionally at the request of the pastor, other persons accountable to the committee, or the chairperson of the committee. The committee shall meet only with the knowledge of the pastor. The pastor shall be present at each meeting of the committee, except when he or she voluntarily excuses himself or herself. The committee shall meet in closed session and information shared in the committee shall be confidential.

5. The duties of the committee shall include:

- a. Encourage, strengthen, nurture, support, and respect the pastors and staff and their families.

b. Promote unity in the church.

c. Confer with and counsel the pastors and staff on matters pertaining to their effectiveness in ministry; assessing their unique gifts and abilities; priorities in the use of gifts, skills, and time; relationships with the congregation; the person's health and self-care, including conditions that may impede their effectiveness of ministry; and to interpret the nature and function of the ministry to the congregation, while interpreting the congregation's needs, values, and traditions to the pastors and staff.

d. Provide performance evaluation at least annually for the use of the pastors and staff to enhance their effective ministry and to identify continuing educational needs and plans.

e. To develop and approve written job descriptions and titles for pastors and staff members in cooperation with the senior pastor.

f. To arrange with the church Administrative Council for the necessary time and financial assistance for the pastor and/or staff at such continuing education, self-care, and spiritual renewal events as may serve their professional and spiritual growth.

g. To confer with the pastor and the church Administrative Council if it should become evident that the best interests of the church or pastors will be served by a change of pastor.

h. The committee and the pastor shall recommend to the church Administrative Council a written statement of policies and procedures regarding the process for hiring, contracting, evaluating, promoting, retiring, and dismissing staff personnel who are not ordained clergy. Until such a policy has been adopted, the committee and the pastor shall have the authority to hire, contract, evaluate, promote, retire, and dismiss non-clergy personnel, with consent of the Administrative Council.

i. The committee shall recommend to the church Administrative Council employment and retirement benefits, if any, for pastors and staff.

j. Consult on matters pertaining to the church parsonage. The parsonage is to be mutually respected by the pastor's family as the property of the church and by the church as a place of privacy for the pastor's family. The committee will follow up to assure timely resolution of parsonage problems affecting the pastor or pastor's family. The chairperson of the Staff-Parish Relations Committee, the chairperson of the Board of Trustees, and the pastor shall make an annual review of the church-owned parsonage to assure proper maintenance and to give immediate resolution to parsonage issues.

#### **D. Board of Trustees.**

The church shall have a Board of Trustees, consisting of at least five professing members of the church. The senior pastor shall be a member with voice but without vote of the Board of Trustees and may not be counted for the purpose of achieving a quorum or calculating a majority.

1. Members of the Board of Trustees shall be elected by the annual church conference to a three-year term, equally divided into three classes, with one-third elected each year. A member of the Board of Trustees may be re-elected for no more than one additional consecutive term, and no member may serve longer than six consecutive years.

2. Should a trustee withdraw from membership of the church, trusteeship therein shall automatically cease from the date of withdrawal. Should a trustee be unable to carry out their responsibilities, or when he or she refuses to execute properly a legal instrument relating to any property of the church when directed to do so by the church conference, and when all legal requirements have been satisfied in reference to such execution, the church conference may by majority vote declare the trustee's membership on the Board of Trustees vacated. Vacancies occurring in the Board of Trustees shall be filled by the church Administrative Council until the next annual church conference. Other trustee vacancies that occur may be filled by the church Administrative Council until the next annual church conference.

3. Organization. The Board of Trustees may organize as follows:

a. Within sixty days after the beginning of the calendar year, the Board of Trustees shall convene at a time and place designated by the chairperson for the purpose of electing officers of the board for the ensuing year and transacting any other business properly brought before it.

b. The Board shall elect from its members, to hold office for a term of one year or until their successors shall be elected, a chairperson, vice chairperson, and secretary; provided, however, that the chairperson and vice chairperson shall not be members of the same class.

4. Meetings. The board shall meet at the call of the pastor or chairperson monthly when feasible, but in all cases must meet at least quarterly. The members of the Board of Trustees present at a meeting shall constitute a quorum.

5. Powers and Limitations. The board shall have the following powers and responsibilities:

a. Oversight, and care of all real property owned by the local church and of all property and equipment acquired directly by the church or by any group, board, class, commission, or similar organization connected with it. The Board shall not, however, prevent or interfere with the pastor in the use of any of the property for religious services or other proper meetings or purposes recognized by customs of the church. Reflecting the historic understanding of Methodism, pews in our church shall always be free.

b. The use of a local congregation's facilities or properties by an outside organization may be granted by the Board of Trustees after consideration of whether the purposes and programs of that organization are consistent with the values of the congregation.

c. The chairperson of the Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, the chairperson or designee of the Board of Trustees, and the pastor shall make an annual review of the church-owned parsonage to assure proper maintenance and to give immediate resolution to parsonage issues. The parsonage is to be mutually respected by the pastor's family as the property of the church and by the church as a place of privacy for the pastor's family. The Board of Trustees are responsible to ensure timely



resolution of parsonage problems and shall provide that the parsonage be maintained in good condition.

e. The board shall conduct an annual accessibility audit of their buildings, grounds, and facilities to discover and identify any existing physical, architectural, or communication barriers that impede the full participation of people with disabilities and shall make plans and determine priorities for the elimination of all such barriers.

f. In coordination with the pastor and finance committee, the board shall provide that adequate property and liability insurance are maintained on each parcel of real estate.

g. Designate the name of the custodian of all legal papers of the local church, and where they shall be kept.

### **E. Finance Committee**

1. The church conference shall elect annually a Finance Committee or its equivalent composed of the committee chairperson, the pastor, the Lay Leader, the treasurer, the financial secretary, and at least three other persons who are professing members of the church. The chairperson of the Finance Committee shall be a member of the church Administrative Council. The treasurer and financial secretary, if paid employees, shall be members without vote. The positions of treasurer and financial secretary may not be combined and held by one person, and the persons holding these two positions should not be immediate family members. No immediate family members of the pastor may serve as treasurer, Finance Committee chair, financial secretary, or serve in any paid or unpaid position under the responsibilities of the Finance Committee.

2. The Finance Committee shall oversee the stewardship of financial resources as their priority throughout the year.

3. All financial requests to be included in the annual budget of the local church shall be submitted to the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee shall compile annually a complete budget for the church and submit it to the church Administrative Council for review and adoption. The Finance Committee shall be charged with responsibility for developing and implementing plans that will raise sufficient income to meet the budget adopted by the church Administrative Council. It shall administer the funds received according to instructions from the church Administrative Council. The Finance Committee shall carry out the church Administrative Council's directions in guiding the treasurer and financial secretary.

4. The Finance Committee shall designate at least two persons not of one immediate family residing in the same household to count the offering. They shall work under the supervision of the financial secretary. A record of all funds received shall be given to the financial secretary and treasurer. Funds received shall be deposited promptly in accordance with the procedures established by the Finance Committee. The financial secretary shall keep records of the contributions and payments.

5. The church treasurer shall disburse all money contributed to causes represented in the church budget, and such other funds and contributions as the church Administrative Council may

determine. The church treasurer shall make regular and detailed reports on funds received and expended to the Finance Committee and the church Administrative Council. The treasurer shall be adequately bonded.

6. The Finance Committee shall establish written financial policies to document the internal controls of the local church. The written financial policies should be reviewed for adequacy and effectiveness annually by the Finance Committee and submitted as a report to the church conference annually.

7. The Finance Committee shall make provision for an annual audit of the financial statements of the local church and all its organizations and accounts. The committee shall make a full and complete report to the annual church conference. A church audit is defined as an independent evaluation of the financial reports and records and the internal controls of the local church by a qualified person or persons. The audit shall be conducted to reasonably verify the accuracy and reliability of financial reporting, determine whether assets are being safeguarded, and determine compliance with local law and local church policies and procedures. The audit may include:

1) a review of the cash and investment reconciliations;

2) interviews with the treasurer, financial secretary, pastor, Finance Committee chair, those who count offerings, church secretary, etc., with inquiries regarding compliance with existing written financial policies and procedures;

3) a review of journal entries and authorized check signers for each checking and investment account; and

4) other procedures requested by the Finance Committee. The audit shall be performed by an audit committee composed of persons unrelated to the persons listed in 2) above or by an independent certified public accountant (CPA), accounting firm, or equivalent.

8. The committee shall recommend to the church Administrative Council proper depositories for the church's funds. Funds received shall be deposited promptly in the name of the church.

9. Contributions designated for specific causes and objects shall be promptly forwarded according to the intent of the donor and shall not be retained or used for any other purpose.

10. After the budget of the church has been approved, additional appropriations or changes in the budget must be approved by the church Administrative Council.

11. The Finance Committee shall prepare at least annually a report to the church Administrative Council of all designated funds that are separate from the current expense budget.

#### **F. Other Administrative and Program Committees.**

The church Administrative Council may recommend such other committees it deems advisable, whose members are to be elected by the annual church conference, including, but not limited to: keep-in-touch church shepherds, worship committee, bereavement-care committee, records and history committee, and missions committee.

### **G. Nominations and Leadership Development Committee.**

The church conference shall elect annually a Nominations and Leadership Development Committee that is composed of at least five professing members of the local church. The responsibility of this committee is to identify, develop, deploy, evaluate, and monitor Christian spiritual leadership for the church. Members of the committee shall engage in and be attentive to developing and enhancing their own Christian spiritual life. The committee shall provide a means of identifying the spiritual gifts and abilities of the church's members. The committee shall work with the church Administrative Council to determine the diverse ministry tasks of the congregation and the skills needed for leadership.

- a) As its primary task, the committee shall recommend to the annual church conference the names of people to serve as non-employee officers and leaders of designated ministries of the church required for the mission and work of the church.
- b) The pastor shall be the chairperson. A layperson elected by the committee shall serve as the vice chairperson of the committee.
- c) To secure experience and stability, the membership may be divided into three classes, one of which would be elected each year for a three-year term. Retiring members of the committee shall not succeed themselves. Only one person from an immediate family residing in the same household shall serve on the committee. When vacancies occur during the year, successors shall be elected by the church Administrative Council.
- d) In the identification and selection process, care shall be given that the leadership of ministries reflects the diversity of our congregation.

### **VIII. PASTORS**

[Adapted from Medina Community Church (former UMC church now operating as an independent church)].

**A. Duties:** The Duties of the Senior Pastor shall be to exercise leadership and general oversight of the spiritual life of the Church under the authority of the Administrative Council. This includes, but is not limited to:

- a) Living an exemplary life and serving as a model of holiness, Christian love, and sacrificial service.
- b) Leading the corporate worship of the Church.
- c) Teaching and preaching the Word of God.
- d) Pastoral care of members.
- e) Leading the Church staff toward the fulfillment of the mission and vision of the Church.
- f) The Senior Pastor is a voting member of the Administrative Council.

The Duties of Other Pastors will be specified by the Administrative Council and will be under the supervision of the Senior Pastor, including but not limited to:

- a) Living an exemplary life and serving as a model of holiness, Christian love, and sacrificial service.

b) Faithfully fulfilling their assigned responsibilities.

**B. Selection of the Senior Pastor:** The calling of the Senior Pastor shall be initiated by the Administrative Council.

1. The Administrative Council shall appoint a committee from the membership of the Church to conduct a search for the Senior Pastor. The search committee shall contain at least seven members, including at least one but not more than two from the Staff Parish Relations Committee, and not more than three from the Administrative Council. Only persons who have consented to serve shall be appointed to the committee.

2. At the conclusion of its search, the committee shall recommend to the Administrative Council a single candidate to be called as the Senior Pastor.

3. Upon approval by the Administrative Council, the calling of the Senior Pastor shall be confirmed at a duly called church conference of the Professing Members. By secret ballot, a two-thirds majority of the votes cast by the Professing Members in attendance and voting at the church conference shall be required before a call can be issued.

4. With a confirming vote, a letter of call shall be issued to the Senior Pastor specifying all details pertinent to the office, as approved by the Administrative Council.

5. Only one candidate shall be presented to the Church at one time.

6. At the time of acceptance of the call, the Senior Pastor and the Pastor's spouse are considered to be members of the Church.

**C. Removal of a Pastor:** The dismissal of a pastor of the Church shall not be considered until that pastor has been approached concerning the reason for proposed dismissal, by a delegation of the Chair of the Administrative Council and the Chair of the Staff Parish Relations Committee and additional persons determined appropriate by the Administrative Council. The pastor under consideration shall be notified in writing of the reasons for the recommended dismissal and shall be given an opportunity to respond. If, after timely and appropriate consideration of the issues, the Administrative Council recommends dismissal by an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of the members of the Administrative Council present and voting (excluding the Pastor in question), then a duly called church conference will be held, and an affirmative vote of at least two-thirds of the professing members in attendance and voting is required for dismissal. Notwithstanding any other statements contained herein, all employees and self-employed contractors are employees at will or self-employed contractors at will under Texas law; they may voluntarily resign at anytime and their employment or contract may be terminated by the Church at any time, with or without cause.

## **IX. NONDISCRIMINATION**

**A. Nondiscrimination in membership, worship, programs, missions, and other activities.** We recognize that God made all creation and saw that it was good. As a diverse people of God who bring special gifts and evidences of God's grace, we are called to be faithful to the example of Jesus' ministry to all persons. Nondiscrimination means openness, acceptance, and support for all persons to membership and participation in the spiritual life of the Church and its service to the community and the world without regard to race, color, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, or gender. Our church worship services, programs, mission services, and other

activities are open to all persons, and all church activities wherever possible should take place in facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. [includes sexual orientation]

**B. Nondiscrimination in church leadership:** Nondiscrimination means opportunity for involvement of all persons to participate in the leadership of the Church without regard to race, color, national origin, age, disability, or gender. [does not include sexual orientation]

**C. Nondiscrimination in employment.** Our church is committed to open and fair processes in its hiring, retention, compensation, promotion, and retirement of staff. There shall be no discrimination on the basis of gender, race, color, national origin, age, disability, current or potential pregnancy, or chronic or potentially terminal illnesses, provided the individual is able to adequately perform the assigned duties. (Adapted from GMC) [does not include sexual orientation].

## **X. ADOPTION AND AMENDMENT**

**Adoption:** This Statement of Doctrines and Governance supersedes all previous such documents. The Statement of Doctrines and Governance may be initially adopted by a majority vote of all professing members of our church in attendance and voting at a duly called Church Conference.

**Amendment:** This Statement of Doctrines and Governance may be amended, repealed, or altered, in whole or in part, by a majority vote of all professing members of our church in attendance and voting at a duly called Church Conference.