

BYLAWS of Leesville Methodist Church, Inc.

PART ONE: PURPOSE AND DOCTRINE

NAME AND PURPOSE

A. Name: This congregation of believers shall be known as Leesville Methodist Church, Inc. The church is incorporated as a non-profit corporation under the laws of the state of South Carolina.

B. Purpose: This congregation is organized as a church exclusively for charitable, religious, and educational purposes within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code (IRC) of 1986, for such purposes including, but not limited to, proclaiming the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; establishing and maintaining religious worship; educating believers in a manner consistent with the requirements of Holy Scripture, and maintaining missionary activities in the United States and around the world.

DOCTRINE

101. OUR HERITAGE OF FAITH

1. As a Wesleyan expression of Christianity, the Leesville Methodist Church professes the Christian faith, established on the confession of Jesus as messiah, the Son of God, and resurrected Lord of heaven and earth. This confession, expressed by Simon Peter in Matthew 16:16-19 and Acts 2:32, is foundational. It declares Jesus is the unique incarnate Word of God, and He lives today, calling all to receive Him as savior, and as the one to whom all authority has been given.
2. This faith has been tested and proved since its proclamation by Mary Magdalene, the first witness to the resurrection. It was defended by the women and men of the early church, many of whom gave their lives as testimony. Their labor, enabled and inspired by the Holy Spirit, resulted in the canon of scripture as the sufficient rule both for faith and practice (the Greek word *kanon* means rule). It formulated creeds such as the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed and the Chalcedonian definition as accurate expressions of this faith.
3. In the sixteenth century, the Protestant reformers preserved this testimony, asserting the primacy of Scripture, the necessity of grace and faith, and the priesthood of all believers. Their doctrinal summations, the Augsburg Confession, the Schleithem Confession, the Anglican Articles of Religion, and the Heidelberg Catechism, bore witness to this faith.
4. In the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries, Pietists in all traditions sought to emphasize the experiential nature of this faith, as direct encounter with the risen Lord. They worked to develop the fruit of this faith, by the power of the Holy Spirit, in individual and communal life. These pietistic movements influenced many in the reformation traditions, including two Anglican brothers, John and Charles Wesley.

5. Through the organization and published works by these brothers, a distinctly Methodist articulation of Christian faith and life, of “practical divinity,” emerged. Methodism placed particular emphasis on the universal work of grace, the new birth, and the fullness of salvation, entire sanctification or perfection. Methodists created structures and communities alongside the established church to facilitate the mission “to reform the nation, especially the church, and spread scriptural holiness over the land.”
6. As Methodists moved to America, they brought this expression of faith with them. Although Methodism in England remained loyal to the established church until after John Wesley’s death, the American revolution dictated the formation of a new church, independent of the Church of England. Accordingly, in 1784, while gathered in Baltimore for the “Christmas Conference,” the Methodist Episcopal Church was formally constituted.
7. This new church adopted John Wesley’s revision of the Anglican Articles of Religion, the Methodist General Rules, a liturgy, and ordained the first Methodist clergy. Two other sources of authority were identified: the four volumes that included fifty-three of Wesley’s sermons and his Explanatory Notes on the New Testament. When a constitution was adopted in 1808, the Restrictive Rules protected the Articles and General Rules from revocation or change.
8. Other Methodist expressions of “primitive Christianity” and “the scripture way of salvation” emerged. German-speaking Americans from pietistic Reformed, Anabaptist, and Lutheran traditions, created organizations with doctrine and discipline nearly identical to the English-speaking Methodist Episcopal Church. The work of Phillip William Otterbein, Martin Boehm, and Jacob Albright established the United Brethren in Christ and the Evangelical Association. A number of African American Methodists, including Richard Allen, Jarena Lee, and James Varick, helped establish the African Methodist Episcopal Church and the African Methodist Episcopal Church, Zion to address racial discrimination and the injustices of slavery, while preserving doctrine and discipline.
9. Through separations and mergers, Methodist Christians have preserved testimony to the risen and reigning Christ by holding themselves accountable to standards of doctrine and discipline. Beginning with early Methodist work in the Caribbean, this Wesleyan understanding of doctrine has now spread across the globe, flourishing with the unique contributions of many cultures. When The United Methodist Church was formed in 1968, with the merger of The Methodist Church and the Evangelical United Brethren, both the Methodist Articles of Religion and the Evangelical United Brethren Confession of Faith were accepted as doctrinal standards and deemed “congruent” articulations of this faith. For fifty years, the growing voices of Methodists in Africa, the Philippines, and Europe have joined in the engagement to maintain our doctrinal heritage, promoting fidelity to the doctrinal principles that launched our movement. Leesville Methodist Church preserves this heritage.

102. THE WESLEYAN WAY OF SALVATION

1. The gift of grace is available to all persons. Our Father in Heaven is not willing that any should be lost (Matthew 18:14), but that all may come to “the knowledge of truth” (1 Timothy 2:4). With St. Paul, we affirm the proclamation found in Romans 10:9, “That if you confess with your mouth, ‘Jesus is Lord,’ and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.”
2. Grace is the manifestation of God’s love toward fallen creation, to be freely received and freely given. This undeserved gift works to liberate humanity from the guilt and power of sin. Grace lets us live as children of God, freed for joyful obedience. In the classic Wesleyan expression,

grace works in numerous ways throughout our lives, beginning with the general providence of God toward all.

3. God's prevenient or preventing grace refers to "the first dawning of grace in the soul," mitigating the effects of original sin, even before we are aware of our need for God. It prevents the full consequences of humanity's alienation from God and awakens conscience, giving an initial sense of God and the first inclinations toward life. Received prior to our ability to respond, preventing grace enables genuine response to the continuing work of God's grace.
4. God's convincing grace leads us to what the Bible terms "repentance," awakening in us a desire to "flee the wrath to come" and enabling us to begin to "fear God and work righteousness."
5. God's justifying grace works by faith to bring reconciliation to God through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, what God does for us. It is pardon for sin and ordinarily results in assurance, "God's Spirit witnessing with our spirit that we are children of God."
6. God's sanctifying grace begins with God's work of regeneration, sometimes referred to as "being born again." It is God's work in us as we continually turn to Him and seek to be perfected in His love. Sanctification is the process by which the Holy Spirit works to replace sin with the fruit of the Spirit. With John Wesley, we believe that a life of holiness and ultimately "entire sanctification" should be the goal of each individual's journey with God.
7. Our ultimate hope and promise in Christ is glorification, where our souls and bodies are perfectly restored through this grace.

103. PRINCIPLES OF OUR LIFE TOGETHER. Wesley said, "there is no holiness but social." By referring to "social holiness," Wesley meant that the road to holiness was one that we could not travel by ourselves, but rather involved the community of faith at every step along the way

Our longing and hope are that our church may:

1. Remain rooted and grounded in the scriptures and in the historic teachings of the Christian church as defined in our Articles of Religion and Confession of Faith, and understood through the Wesleyan lens of faith.
2. Aspire to introduce all people, without exception, to Jesus Christ, recognizing that the mission in which we are engaged has eternal consequences. We are committed to carry out the Great Commission of Jesus in Matthew 28 to go into all the world to make disciples of Christ, teaching and baptizing in His name.
3. Lead all those who experience new birth in Jesus to deepen and grow in their relationship with Him, inviting the Holy Spirit to produce spiritual fruit within their lives as they similarly manifest the gifts of that Spirit. We encourage all to participate in discipleship and accountability groups and to use all the other means of grace to achieve this end.
4. Model the love of God in order to respond to the summons to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, mind, soul, and strength, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. To this end we are committed to fulfill the commandment in John 21 of lovingly feeding and tending to the flock of God and others, worshiping God in spirit, and in truth and watching over one another in love. This the church does until, perfected in love, it experiences the fullness of God's restored Kingdom with Christ.

5. Recognize the laity as the people of God and a royal priesthood, chosen and empowered for the work of God in this world in full partnership with our clergy. We affirm the participation and leadership of those of all races, ethnicities, nationalities, sexes, and ages in the Body of Christ.
6. Encourage and affirm the call of God in the lives of clergy who are grounded in the authoritative witness of the Scriptures, set apart by the church, and recognized to possess the necessary gifts and graces for ministry in alignment and accountability with our settled doctrines and discipline.
7. Display a "catholic spirit" to the church universal, cherishing our place within the greater Body of Christ through mutual respect, cooperative relationships, and shared mission with others wherever possible. We envision a church in which all work together, resourcing and learning from one another, to fulfill the tasks of the church given to it by God.
8. Provide an organization and structure that is able to accomplish its primary functions of support, with a connexional polity that can empower and multiply the gifts of all for the sake of Christ's work in the world.

104. HOLY SCRIPTURE. The canonical books of the Old and New Testaments (as specified in the Articles of Religion) are the primary rule and authority for faith, morals, and service, against which all other authorities must be measured.

105. FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS FOR OUR DOCTRINAL STANDARDS. The following summaries of the apostolic witness disclosed in Scripture have been affirmed by many Christian communities, and express orthodox Christian teaching.

1. THE APOSTLES' CREED

I believe in God the Father Almighty, maker of heaven and earth.
 And 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, dead, and buried;
 the third day He rose from the dead;
 He ascended into heaven, and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father Almighty,
 from thence he shall come to judge the quick 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.

2. THE NICENE CREED (A.D. 381)

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.

3. THE DEFINITION OF CHALCEDON (A.D. 451)

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.

106. CONSTITUTIVE STANDARDS. As is the case in many Christian communities, we recognize additional statements of faith that are consistent with the creedal tradition of the church universal, but which also express our church's particular emphases and concerns, as well as our theological heritage of faith. These constitutive standards embody the "faith once for all entrusted to the saints" (Jude 3) and serve as a bulwark against false teaching, providing the framework for the praise of God in our teaching (orthodoxy), the development of our collective theology, and the launching point for our living and service (orthopraxis). Recognizing the complementary streams of the Methodist and the Evangelical United Brethren faith communities, both the Articles of Religion and the Confession of Faith define the doctrinal boundaries of our church.

107. THE ARTICLES OF RELIGION OF THE METHODIST CHURCH. 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, when the first Restrictive Rule was also implemented, and revised by the Uniting Conference of 1939 when three Methodist communions within America became one. 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.

The following Article from the Methodist Protestant Discipline was placed here by the Uniting Conference (1939). It was not one of the Articles of Religion voted upon by the three churches.] subjects or in which they reside, and to use all laudable means to encourage and enjoin obedience to the powers that be.

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.

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 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.

PART TWO: SOCIAL WITNESS

201. OUR SOCIAL HERITAGE

1. Following both the example and teachings of Jesus, we believe that God calls us to love and serve others around the world in His name. Since God first stirred the hearts of John and Charles Wesley to feed the hungry, visit those in prison, oppose slavery, and care for those less fortunate, Methodists have believed in meeting people at their point of need and offering them Jesus. We are convinced that faith if it is not accompanied by action is dead (James 2:17) and that, as Jesus reminded us, when we do not do what is needed to care for the least of our sisters and brothers, we likewise have not done so for Christ either (Matthew 25:45).

2. It was in that spirit that the Methodist Episcopal Church became the first denomination in the world to adopt a formal Social Creed in 1908, spurred by the Social Gospel in response to the deplorable working conditions of millions. Though reflective of its own time, the statement is still remarkably relevant even today, calling for, among other things, “equal rights and complete justice for all men in all stations of life, principles of conciliation and arbitration in industrial dissensions, abolition of child labor, the suppression of the ‘sweating system,’ a reduction of the hours of labor to the lowest practical point, a release from employment one day in seven, and for a living wage in every industry.” In turn, that prophetic witness was subsequently embraced by each of the other branches of Methodism and the Evangelical United Brethren Church and continues to this day within Leesville Methodist Church. Our Social Witness represents a consensus vision transcending cultures of what it means to be faithful disciples in a world that remains in rebellion against its Creator, wracked by violence and unfettered greed. It is a summons to prayerfully consider how to “do good” and “do no harm” to all as we put our faith into practice.

202. OUR WITNESS TO THE WORLD

1. We believe that all persons irrespective of their station or circumstances in life have been made in the image of God and must be treated with dignity, justice, and respect. We denounce racism, sexism, and other expressions that unjustly discriminate against any person (Genesis 1-2, Deuteronomy 16:19-20, Luke 11:42, 19:9, Colossians 3:11).

2. We believe that life is a holy gift of God whose beginnings and endings are set by God, and that it is the particular duty of believers to protect those who may be powerless to protect themselves, including the unborn, those with disabilities or serious illness, and the aged (Genesis 2:7, Leviticus 19:32, Jeremiah 1:5, Luke 1:41-44).

3. The sacredness of all life compels us to resist the practice of abortion except in the cases of conflicts of life against life when the wellbeing of the mother and the child are at stake. We do not accept abortion as a means of birth control or gender selection, and we call upon all Christians as disciples of the Lord of Life to prayerfully consider how we can support those women facing unintended pregnancies without adequate care, counsel, or resources (Exodus 22:23-23, Psalm 139:13-16, James 1:27).

4. We believe that all should have the right to work in safe conditions with fair compensation and free of grinding toil or exploitation by others. We pray that all should be allowed to freely follow their vocations. (Deuteronomy 5:12-14, Luke 10:7, 1 Corinthians 10:31, 1 Timothy 5:18).
5. We believe that God has called us to share His concern for the poor. We are called to improve the quality of life and opportunities for all God's people as we share the good news to the poor and freedom for the oppressed (Leviticus 19:9-10, Matthew 25:37-40, Luke 6:20-25, James 2:1-5).
6. We believe that all have been summoned to care for the earth as our common home, stewarding its resources, sharing in its bounty, and exercising responsible and sustainable consumption so that there is enough for all (Genesis 2:15, Leviticus 26:34-35, Psalm 24:1).
7. We believe that 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 (Exodus 20:14, Matthew 19:3-9, Ephesians 5:22-33).
8. All expressions of sexual behavior, including pornography, polygamy, and promiscuity, do not recognize the sacred worth of each individual. Actions that seek to exploit, abuse, objectify, or degrade others, or that represent less than God's intentional design for His children are abhorrent. While affirming a scriptural view of sexuality and gender, we welcome all to experience the redemptive grace of Jesus and are committed to being a safe place of refuge, hospitality, and healing for any who may have experienced brokenness in their sexual lives (Genesis 1:27, Genesis 2:24, 1 Corinthians 6:9-20).
9. We believe that children, whether through birth or adoption, are a sacred gift to us from God, and we accept our responsibility to both protect and nurture the youngest among us, particularly against such abuses as enforced child labor, involuntary conscription, human trafficking, and other such practices in the world (Deuteronomy 4:9-10, Psalm 127:3-5, 1 Timothy 5:4,8,16).
10. We believe that followers of God have been called to exercise self-control and holiness in their personal lives, generosity and kindness in their relations with others, and grace in all matters of life (Romans 12:9-21, Galatians 5:22-23).
11. We believe in the rule of justice and law in society, in the right of individuals to follow God's call and to lawfully immigrate to new places, and in the pursuit of peace both between nations and individuals. We offer ourselves to work in order to reduce the bitterness that has overflowed in God's world (Genesis 12:1, Isaiah 11:1-9, 2 Corinthians 13:11, Ephesians 2:19-10).
12. We believe the practice of the Golden Rule, treating others as we would wish to be treated, can effectively guide our social and business relationships. We seek to cultivate the mind of Christ and a heart for others (Matthew 7:12, Romans 12:1-2).
13. We believe that each person should have the right to exercise their religious beliefs without fear of persecution and that governments should respect freedom of religion and the important role of faith communities within the greater society. We further denounce discrimination or persecution which may target any because of their gender, economic status, ethnic or tribal identity, age, or political views (Isaiah 1:17, Matthew 5:44, Romans 8:35).

14. We believe in the final triumph of righteousness when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdom of Christ, and we accept our calling to work towards that end as Christ's light and the salt of the earth (Matthew 5:13-16, Revelation 11:15-17, Revelation 21-22).

PART THREE: THE COMMUNITY OF GOD'S PEOPLE

Section I. Foundational Principles

301. THE MISSION OF THE CHURCH. Leesville Methodist Church is:

A vibrant, caring congregation where our Faith, Beliefs, and Actions serve as our light and our witness to the power of God and His grace through His Son, Jesus Christ, the light of the world. We seek to be the light through prayer, praise, fellowship, and outreach to serve our church family, the Batesburg-Leesville Community, and the community worldwide to the glory of God.

Our vision is: *See the Light. Be the Light.*

Anchored in our belief in Jesus Christ, the Church is of God and will be preserved to the end of time to worship God in spirit and in truth, to faithfully preach God's Word and offer the holy sacraments, to edify all who believe and encourage them to grow in their lives of holiness and service to others, to minister to those who are in special need, and by the power of the Holy Spirit, to present the world with a clear and compelling invitation to accept Jesus Christ as Lord. All those of every age and station stand in need of the grace that God has promised to extend to others through His Body, the Church. While it is ultimately the work of the Holy Spirit to change the hearts of individuals, ours is the task of sharing the good news of God as we respond to the summons of Christ in Matthew 28: "As you are going, make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you," even as Christ has promised to remain with us always, "even to the end of the age."

Following the example of early Methodists, we believe God has raised us up in order to "spread scriptural holiness across the land," embodying that "grand depositum" of the faith that John Wesley believed had been entrusted to "the people called Methodists," the continued striving for entire sanctification in our lives. As individual believers in Christ, and as those gathered together in local congregations, our calling is to connect with the communities and the world around us, extending both grace and mercy. Growing in our personal faith, and effectively discipling others, are both life-long expressions of loving the Lord with all of our hearts, all of our being, and all of our minds, as well as loving our neighbor as ourselves.

302. OUR COVENANT IN CHRIST. We believe that God has called us to live together in a faithful covenant that expresses our commitments both to God and to each other. With John Wesley, we affirm that the scriptures know of no such thing as "solitary religion," but that we have been designed to grow in our discipleship in the company of others.

303. THE MINISTRY OF THE LAITY. God has entrusted His work in this world to the whole people of God. All Christians are called through their baptism to be in ministry to others, both as individuals and as a part of the church, using the gifts and graces with which they have been equipped by the Holy Spirit. Every layperson bears the responsibility for carrying out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20), but likewise each has been given the power by God to do so. For like the variety of spiritual gifts described in the scriptures, the diversity of our outreach efforts knows no limit either when we serve Christ with joy and thanksgiving. With other heirs of

the Protestant Reformation, we embrace the notion of “the priesthood of all believers” and we call upon both laity and clergy to work together in a partnership of servanthood. As suggested in Ephesians 4:12-13, Christ has not given to pastors the task of doing the ministry by themselves, but of equipping those in the church for such works of service, so that “the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

We believe that it is only as each individual, whether lay or clergy, bears witness to God’s grace that the world may come to know Christ and respond to His invitation to have life in abundance. Each member is therefore expected to be a witness for Christ in the world, a light and leaven in society, and a reconciler in a culture of conflict, identifying with the agony and suffering of the world and radiating and exemplifying the Christ of hope. As the people of God, we must either win the world to Christ, or it will be abandoned to those forces that oppose Him. Beyond the diverse forms of ministry is this ultimate concern: that all persons will be brought into a saving relationship with God through Jesus Christ and be renewed after the image of their creator (Colossians 3:10). This means that all Christians are called to minister wherever Christ would have them serve and witness in deeds and words that heal and free. Toward that end, the full participation of all who believe is vital and cannot be evaded if the gospel is to be heard and received.

304. TRANSFORMATIONAL DISCIPLESHIP In light of the mission of the Church and our covenant in Christ, Leesville Methodist Church engages the commandment to make disciples of Jesus through an intentional process grounded in Scripture and in our Wesleyan heritage.

Leesville Methodist Church defines a disciple as a person whose life reflects the character of Christ and extends the mission of Christ in holy love of God and neighbor. The disciple’s character and practice are informed by the Scriptures, nurtured by the community of faith, and empowered by the Holy Spirit. The disciple’s mission is to continue the mission and ministry of Jesus through works of teaching, service, multiplication, mercy, and justice making more obedient disciples who will reflect the character and mission of Christ and expanding the boundaries of Christ’s Kingdom further out into the world.

The goal of transformational discipleship ministry in Leesville Methodist Church is to make, develop, and nurture disciples of Jesus Christ through small groups where each person is invited, challenged, supported, and held accountable in living sanctified lives that reflect the practices, character, and mission of Christ.

305. CALLED TO INCLUSIVENESS. 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 to the unity of the Church and to society, we are called to be faithful to the example of Jesus’ ministry to all persons. Inclusiveness means openness, acceptance, and support that enables all persons to participate in the spiritual life of the Church and its service to the community and the world. Therefore, inclusiveness denies every semblance of discrimination on the basis of race, color, national origin, disability, or gender. The services of worship at Leesville Methodist Church shall be open to all persons and church activities wherever possible should take place in facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. Similarly, inclusiveness means the freedom for the total involvement of all persons who meet the requirements of our bylaws in the membership and leadership of the Church at any level and in every place.

Section II. The Church

306. LEGAL DEFINITION OF THE CHURCH. Affirming the spiritual dimensions of the ministry of all Christians, it is recognized that this ministry exists in the secular world and that civil authorities may seek legal definition predicated on the nature of Leesville Methodist Church in seeking fulfillment of this ministry. Accordingly, it is appropriate that the meaning of “Leesville Methodist Church,” “the general Church,” “the entire Church,” and “the Church” as used in our bylaws should be consonant with the traditional self-understanding of Methodists as to the meaning of these words.

1. The Board of Directors shall consist of the following Committee Chairs of the Church Council:
 - a. Chair of the Church Council
 - b. Chair of the Board of Trustees
 - c. Chair of Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations
 - d. Chair of Finance

The role of the Board of Directors shall be to investigate and execute any legal matters for Leesville Methodist Church

2. Conflict of Interest: Any member of the Church Council, Finance, Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations and Trustees who have a financial, personal, or official interest in, or conflict (or appearance of an impropriety or a conflict) with any matter pending before their committee of such nature that it prevents or may prevent that member from acting on the matter in an impartial manner, shall make known such appearance of an impropriety and shall offer to the committee to voluntarily recuse him/herself and will vacate his/her seat and refrain from discussion and voting on said item. The remainder of the committee will decide by two-thirds (2/3rds) majority whether such conflict or appearance of conflict should preclude the committee member from the decision-making process.
3. Indemnification of Board of Directors, Church Council, Finance, Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations and Trustees and employees: Leesville Methodist Church shall indemnify, hold harmless and defend its Church Council Members, Employees, and Officers against any liability or other expense arising in connection with their service to the corporation, to the extent afforded by the South Carolina Nonprofit Corporations Act (Section 33-31-202), as currently in effect and as hereafter amended.

307. THE ROLE OF THE LOCAL CHURCH. The church of Jesus Christ exists in and for the world. The local church is a strategic base from which Christians move out to the structures of society, providing the most significant arena through which disciple-making occurs. It is a community of true believers under the Lordship of Christ. It is the redemptive fellowship in which the Word of God is preached by persons divinely called and the sacraments are duly administered according to Christ’s own appointment. Under the discipline of the Holy Spirit, the church exists for the maintenance of worship, the edification of believers, and the redemption of the world. The function of the local church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is to help people to accept and confess Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and to live their daily lives in light of their relationship with God. Therefore, our church will minister to persons in the community to provide appropriate training and nurture to all, to cooperate in ministry with other local churches, to defend God’s creation and live as an ecologically responsible community, and to participate in the worldwide mission of the church, as minimal expectations of an authentic church. Our church shall have a definite evangelistic, nurture, and witness responsibility for its members and the surrounding area and a missional outreach responsibility to the local and worldwide community. It shall be responsible for ministering to all its members, and for persons who choose it as their church.

308. ELIGIBILITY. Leesville Methodist Church is a part of the holy catholic (universal) church, as we confess in the Apostles' and Nicene Creeds. In the church, Jesus Christ is proclaimed and professed as Lord and Savior. All people may attend its worship services, participate in its programs, receive the sacraments and, upon taking the vows of membership, become members of Leesville Methodist Church. In the case of persons whose disabilities prevent them from assuming the vows, their legal guardian[s], themselves members in full covenant relationship with God and the Church, the community of faith, may assume the appropriate vows on their behalf. Those seeking new membership must:

1. Through their actions, words, lifestyle, and affiliations, evidence a genuine experience of regeneration through faith in and acceptance of the Lord Jesus Christ as personal Savior.
2. Attend a pre-membership orientation led by a member of the pastoral staff or appointee in which they will review the church's statement of faith, bylaws, general practices and policies, and expectations of members.
3. Be interviewed by the pastor, pastoral staff and/or Church Council to ensure they fully subscribe to the statement of faith contained herein and agree to submit to the authority of the church and its leaders.
4. Membership will be granted upon the recommendation of the pastor and a majority vote of the Church Council, and upon compliance with any one of the following conditions:
 - a. By baptism at this or another church;
 - b. By letter of transfer from another Bible-believing church of like faith and practice, or other written statement of good standing from the prior church if the applicant has been baptized; or
 - c. By testimony of faith, having been baptized in another Bible-believing church of like faith and practice.

309. DEFINITION OF MEMBERSHIP The membership of Leesville Methodist Church shall include all people who have been baptized and all people who have professed their faith.

1. Members from the previous Leesville United Methodist Church membership will automatically be moved to Leesville Methodist Church membership unless notified otherwise.
2. The baptized membership of Leesville Methodist Church shall include all baptized people who have received Christian baptism in our congregation or elsewhere, or whose membership has been transferred to Leesville Methodist Church subsequent to baptism in some other congregation.
3. The professing membership of Leesville Methodist church shall include all baptized people who have come into membership by profession of faith through appropriate services of the baptismal covenant in the ritual or by transfer from other churches.

310. THE MEANING OF A SACRAMENT. A Sacrament is an outward and visible sign of an inward and spiritual grace. God gives us the sign as a means whereby we receive this grace and as a tangible assurance that we do in fact receive it. The two Sacraments ordained by Christ are Holy Baptism and Holy Communion (also called the Lord's Supper or the Eucharist). We receive the Sacraments by faith in Christ, with repentance and thanksgiving. Faith in Christ enables us to receive the grace of God through the Sacraments, and obedience to Christ is necessary for the benefits of the Sacraments to bear fruit in our lives.

311. SACRAMENTAL AUTHORITY. In keeping with the historic practice of the Christian church, Pastors are ordained to oversee the Sacramental life of the church and thus have full authority to preside at celebrations of Holy Baptism and Holy Communion.

312. THE MEANING OF 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 go on to perfection. 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.

313. THE MODE AND PRACTICE OF BAPTISM. 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 is an initiation into Christ's Holy Church. 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 baptism.

314. BAPTISMAL VOWS. See Appendix A. The church will use The Baptismal Covenant found in the UMC Hymnal changing the words "The United Methodist Church" to "Leesville Methodist Church" and adding "and your witness." *The United Methodist Hymnal : Book of United Methodist Worship. Nashville, Tenn. :United Methodist Pub. House, 1989, pp. 33-52.*

315. THE MEANING OF CONFIRMATION. Through the Rite of Confirmation, we personally renew the covenant declared at our baptism, witness to God's work in our lives, affirm our commitment to Christ and His Holy Church, and receive the outpouring of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands enabling our lifelong journey toward holiness. The Apostles prayed for and laid hands on those who had been baptized.

It is the duty of pastors to prepare confirmands, teaching them the basic tenets of the historic Christian faith, the history and theology of the Wesleyan revival movement, and the practical meaning of church membership in agreement with our bylaws and approved catechism. Through a service of baptismal remembrance and reaffirmation of baptismal vows people can renew the covenant declared at baptism.

316. PROFESSING MEMBERS. A Professing Member is a baptized person who has taken vows declaring the Christian faith. Professing members include all people who have come into membership by profession of faith or by transfer from other churches. Those wishing to become professing members of Leesville Methodist Church may present themselves to the pastor and, after any appropriate counsel, be baptized if they have not already done so, and join by professing their faith in Jesus Christ and agreeing to the vows of discipleship. Those wishing to transfer their membership may do so by indicating such to the receiving pastor who shall send a request for the transfer to their previous congregation. Persons may also be received by transfer from other denominations in which the Lordship of Christ is affirmed. The pastor has the

authority to determine the readiness of any person to assume the vows of membership. A person deferred by the pastor may appeal that decision to the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee.

317. VOWS OF MEMBERSHIP. See Appendix A. The church will use membership vows found in The Baptismal Covenant of the UMC Hymnal changing the words “The United Methodist Church” to “Leesville Methodist Church” and adding “and your witness.” *The United Methodist Hymnal : Book of United Methodist Worship. Nashville, Tenn. :United Methodist Pub. House, 1989, p. 38.*

318. GROWTH IN FAITHFUL DISCIPLESHIP. Faithful membership in Leesville Methodist Church is essential for personal growth and for developing a deeper commitment to the will and grace of God. As members involve themselves in private and public prayer, worship, the sacraments, study, Christian action, systematic giving, and holy discipline, they grow in their appreciation of Christ, understanding of God at work in history and the natural order, and an understanding of themselves. Faithful discipleship includes the obligation to participate in the corporate life of the congregation with fellow members of the body of Christ. A member is bound in sacred covenant to shoulder the burdens, share the risks, and celebrate the joys of fellow members. A Christian is called to speak the truth in love, always ready to confront conflict in the spirit of forgiveness and reconciliation.

319. THE MEANING 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) 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. The elements of Holy Communion may be taken to those whose condition prevents them from being physically present. When Holy Communion cannot be offered, the Love Feast provides an opportunity for significant fellowship in a wide array of settings. We encourage the use of nonalcoholic wine or juice for Holy Communion. Non-alcoholic juice must be offered as an option where wine is used.

Section IV. Care of Members

320. MEMBER INVOLVEMENT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

1. Each member is called to fulfill their vows of baptism and membership, being faithful by participating in the spiritual formation, worship, stewardship, and service opportunities each church provides. It is the responsibility of the church to establish and communicate clear expectations of their members who share in the partnership (koinonia) of the gospel (Philippians 1:5), and the responsibility of each member to strive to meet those expectations.
2. The pastor is responsible for ensuring that members are cared for by implementing a discipleship process focused on helping members to “go on to perfection” by loving God with all of their heart, mind, soul, and strength, and by loving their neighbor as themselves. Pastors are charged with equipping all the members to be in ministry by meeting people at their point of need and offering them Jesus (Ephesians 4:11-13).

3. All members of the church are called into a loving accountability with one another. If a member neglects the membership vows, however, the congregation shall use every means of encouraging that member to return to an active faith and to lovingly restore them to the fellowship of the church (Matthew 18:15-17). A negligent member is a professing member residing in the community who is remiss in carrying out the vows to the church or is regularly absent from the worship of the church without valid reason. The Church Council shall establish a grace-filled process to restore negligent members to full participation in the life of the church. Negligent members may be placed on an inactive roll by a two-thirds vote of the Church Council.

4. An inactive member does not attend the worship service, does not give tithes and/or offerings, comes to none of the church activities, and does not participate in the life of the church community. Members placed on the inactive roll may remain in that status for up to two years while every attempt is made to return them to active membership. Members on the inactive roll are suspended from serving on church committees or voting on church matters during that time. If an inactive member does not complete the restoration process or show evidence of desiring to return to a more active status after two years, then the Annual Church Conference, with the recommendation of the pastor and Church Council, may remove the member by a two-thirds vote.

321. TRANSFER FROM OTHER DENOMINATIONS. A member in good standing in any Christian denomination who has been baptized and who desires to unite with Leesville Methodist Church shall be received as either a baptized or a professing member upon taking vows declaring the Christian faith. The pastor will report to the sending church the date of reception of such a member. It is recommended that instruction in the faith, work, and polity of the Church be provided for all such persons.

322. ASSOCIATE MEMBERSHIP. A professing member of another church who resides for an extended period in a city or community at a distance from the member's home church, may on request be enrolled as an associate member of Leesville Methodist Church. Such membership shall entitle the person to the fellowship of Leesville Methodist Church, to its pastoral care and oversight, and to participation in its activities. The Annual Church Conference may decide whether associate members may serve on a committee but not as an officer of a committee. Associate members shall be counted and reported as a professing member of the home church only. This relationship may be terminated at the discretion of the Annual Church Conference.

323. CONSTITUENCY ROLL. A Constituency Roll shall be maintained comprising four categories of persons: (1) Unbaptized infants; (2) Individuals over the age of eighteen who have not indicated a desire to become professing members, including the spouses and adult children of professing members, but who are those for whom the church has a pastoral responsibility; (3) Persons who are potential members; (4) Persons who, though unlikely to join the church due to distance or other faith commitments, nevertheless come under the pastoral care of the congregation and are recognized as part of its wider community ("Friends of the Church"). The Constituency Roll shall be reviewed and audited annually.

324. OUTSIDE OF CONGREGATIONAL SETTINGS. Candidates for church membership who for good reason are unable to appear before the congregation may, at the discretion of the pastor, be received elsewhere in accordance with the rituals of our church. In any such case lay members should be present to represent the congregation. Names of such persons shall be

placed on the church roll, and announcement of their reception shall be made to the congregation.

Section V. Membership Records and Reports

325. MEMBERSHIP RECORDS

1. **Active Membership Roll.** The church shall accurately maintain a permanent membership record for each baptized or professing member including: a) the person's name, date of birth, address, date of baptism; b) date of confirmation or profession of faith; 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. Inactive Membership Roll ¶ 320.4
3. Constituency Roll ¶ 323
4. Associate Membership Roll ¶ 322
5. All baptism, membership, marriage and funeral records are the property of Leesville Methodist Church and cannot be sold.

326. ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP REPORT AND AUDIT. The pastor shall report to the Annual Church Conference the names of persons received into the membership of the church and the names of persons removed since the last Annual Church Conference, indicating how each was received or removed.

Section VI. Changes in Church Membership

327. MEMBERS WHO MOVE. If a member notifies Leesville Methodist Church that they have transferred their membership to another church, it shall be the duty and obligation of the pastor to present that person(s) name to the Annual Church Conference for removal from the Leesville Methodist Church membership list. The pastor will respond to requests for transfer to another church.

328. RESTORATION OF PROFESSING MEMBERSHIP

1. A person whose name has been removed from professing membership by withdrawal, or action by Annual Church Conference, may ask to be restored to membership of Leesville Methodist Church and be brought back to professing membership through reaffirmation of the membership vows.
2. A person whose membership was recorded as having been withdrawn after becoming a member of another church may be restored to professing membership by reaffirmation of the membership vows.
3. A person who has withdrawn at his or her own written request may return to the church and, upon reaffirmation of the membership vows, become a professing member.

Section VII. Organization and Administration

329. PRIMARY TASKS. Leesville Methodist Church shall be organized so that it can pursue its primary task and mission in the context of its own community—reaching out and receiving with joy all who will respond to the invitation to follow Jesus Christ as Lord of their lives, encouraging

people in developing their relationship with God, providing opportunities for them to strengthen and grow that relationship in spiritual formation, and supporting them to live lovingly and justly in the power of the Holy Spirit as faithful disciples.

In carrying out its mission, adequate provision should be made to evangelize and spread scriptural holiness by: (1) planning and implementing a program of nurture, outreach, and witness for persons and families within and without the congregation; (2) providing for effective pastoral and lay leadership; (3) providing for financial support, physical facilities, and the legal obligations of the church; (4) utilizing the appropriate relationships and resources of the district and annual conference; (5) providing for the proper creation, maintenance, and disposition of documentary record material of the local church; and (6) seeking inclusiveness in all aspects of its life.

330. ORGANIZATION.

1. The basic organizational plan for the church shall be designed in such a manner that it provides for a comprehensive program of nurture, outreach and witness to all. In addition to the Annual Church Conference, our congregation must have a Church Council, Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, Finance and a Board of Trustees. The Annual Church Conference shall determine how to allocate the other responsibilities outlined in these bylaws.
2. All committees within the church are allowed to hold meetings through any electronic means.
3. The chair for the following committees shall be elected by the Annual Church Conference (recommended by the Nominations Committee): Church Council,, Staff/Pastor-Parish, Finance. All committees are encouraged to elect, within their membership, a vice-chair for such a committee.
4. When any vote takes place within the Annual Church Conference or any church committees a secret ballot shall be executed if requested by a voting member.
5. All positions elected at the Annual Church Conference shall begin their service the following calendar year.
6. Summary reports from all committee meetings should be submitted at Church Council. Church Council minutes must be submitted to the office administrator.
7. Quorum—The members present and voting at any duly announced meeting shall constitute a quorum.
8. The pastor is a non-voting member of all committees and may not serve as chairperson.

331. THE ANNUAL CHURCH CONFERENCE.

1. The basic organizational unit for Leesville Methodist Church is the Annual Church Conference which shall meet in the fall of each year.
2. The membership of the Annual Church Conference shall be all professing and associate members of the church who are at least 18 years of age or a current member of church council and are physically present.,
3. The members present and voting at any duly announced meeting shall constitute a quorum.
4. Special Church Conferences may be called by the pastor, Chair of Church Council, or a written request by 10% of the professing members. The purpose of the Special Church Conference shall be stated in the call, and only such business shall be transacted as is in harmony with the purposes stated in the call.

5. Notice of time, place and purpose of a Church Conference shall be given at least ten days in advance by two or more of the following (except as local laws may otherwise provide): from the pulpit of the church, in its weekly bulletin, in a church publication, by email, or by mail.

332. POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE ANNUAL/SPECIAL CHURCH CONFERENCE

1. The Annual Church Conference or Special Church Conferences shall be organized and administered by the pastor and/or the Church Council Chair according to the Leesville Methodist bylaws.
2. The primary responsibilities of the Annual Church Conference, upon recommendations of the appropriate committees, shall be to a.) review and evaluate the mission and ministry of the church, b.) receive reports, c.) approve the annual budget, d.) elect leaders, e.) vote on pastoral continuance or changes, and f.) adopt objectives and goals.
3. The secretary of the church council shall be the secretary of the Church Conference and 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 copy of the minutes shall be retained for church files.
4. The Annual Church Conference may establish a limit to the consecutive terms of office for any or all of the elected or appointed officers of Leesville Methodist Church, unless the bylaws set a specific limit. It is recommended that no officer (e.g. "Chair") serve more than three consecutive years in the same office.
5. The Annual Church Conference shall affirm the ordination of a pastor or elder (who has been recommended by the Staff/Pastor-Parish Committee) by a simple majority vote.
6. The Annual Church Conference shall receive and act on the annual report from the pastor concerning the church's membership.
- 7 The Leesville Methodist Church Bylaws may be changed by a two-thirds vote of the Annual Church Conference. Recommendation of changes shall have been approved by the Church Council prior to the meeting. No proposed changes to the Bylaws shall be considered without prior approval of the Church Council.

333. ELECTION OF LEADERS. A slate of nominated leaders and committee members shall be presented to the Annual Church Conference. Nominations for changes may be made from the floor of the Annual Church Conference which must be approved by a simple majority. The Annual Church Conference shall elect, by simple majority vote, leaders and committee members (with approved changes) as needed to fulfill the mission of the church. In filling the offices of the church, special attention should be given to the inclusion of women, men, youth, young adults, persons over sixty-five years of age, persons with disabilities, and persons of various racial, ethnic, or tribal identities. Church offices may be shared between two persons. Elected leaders/committee members of the former Leesville UMC will be automatically moved to the same elected positions in the Leesville Methodist Church for the first six months.

334. REMOVAL OF OFFICERS AND FILLING OF VACANCIES. If a leader or officer of the laity who has been elected by the Annual Church Conference is unable or unwilling to perform the duties reasonably expected of such a leader or officer, the pastor and/or Church Council Chair may call a special session of the Church Council. The purpose of a special session shall be stated as "Consideration for the removal of person(s) from office and the election of person(s) to fill vacancy(ies)." The Nominations Committee shall be made aware of possible vacancy prior to the special session and be ready to propose person(s) who may be elected if vacancy(ies) occur. The Church Council shall elect, by a simple majority, persons to fill the vacancy(ies) of the leader(s) or officer(s) of the laity until the next Annual Church Conference.

Section VIII. Church Administrative Committees

Actions of Committees: Committees have no authority to act on behalf of the church beyond the responsibility of their committee or outside their budget. Their primary function is to research and recommend. Committees shall make available upon request all records and materials to the Church Council, who shall have the right to overrule any plans or decisions made by the committee. Each committee shall submit minutes/reports of each meeting to the Church Council to be filed with church records. If deemed appropriate by the Church Council, the committee will submit an annual report to the church of the decisions and plans of the committee.

335. THE CHURCH COUNCIL. The Church Council shall provide for planning and implementing a ministry of evangelizing and spreading scriptural holiness through nurture, outreach, witness, and resources in our church. It shall also provide for the administration of its organization and temporal life. It shall envision, plan, implement, and annually evaluate the mission and ministry of the church. The Church Council shall be amenable to and function as the administrative agency of the Annual Church Conference.

1. Mission and Ministry—Nurture, outreach, and witness ministries and their accompanying responsibilities include:
 - a) The nurturing ministries of the congregation shall give attention to but not be limited to education, worship, Christian formation, membership care, small groups, and stewardship. Attention must be given to the needs of individuals and families of all ages.
 - b) The outreach ministries of the church shall give attention to local and larger community ministries of compassion, justice, and advocacy.
 - c) The witness ministries of the church shall give attention to developing and strengthening evangelistic efforts of sharing personal and congregational stories of Christian experience, faith, and service; communications; and other means that give expressions of witness for Jesus Christ.
 - d) The leadership development and resourcing ministries shall give attention to the ongoing preparation and development of lay and clergy leaders for the ministry of the church.
2. Meetings.
 - a) The Church Council shall meet at least quarterly. The chairperson or the pastor may call special meetings.
 - b) It is recommended that the council make decisions by trying to achieve a consensus driven by the Holy Spirit. If, in the opinion of the chair, a consensus cannot be achieved, then the Council may make a decision by voting with a simple majority as the standard.
3. Other Responsibilities—It will also be the responsibility of the Church Council to:
 - a) Review the membership of the church.
 - b) Establish the budget on recommendation of the Finance Committee and ensure adequate provision for the financial needs of the church. Provide a proposed church budget for the Annual Church Conference.
 - c) Recommend to the Annual Church Conference the salary and other remuneration of the pastor(s) and staff members after receiving recommendations from the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee.

- d) Recommend to the Annual Church Conference provisions for adequate housing for the pastor(s) after receiving recommendations from the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee.
 - e) Recommend to the Annual (or Special) Church Conference changes in pastor(s) and/or pastoral compensation after receiving recommendations from the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee and Finance Committee.
 - f) Recommend to Annual (Special) Church Conference unbudgeted changes/additions to the staff after receiving Staff/Pastor-Parish Committee and Finance recommendations.
 - g) Recommend to the Annual Church Conference candidates for ordination after receiving recommendations from the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee.
 - h) Evaluate proposed changes to the Leesville Methodist Church Bylaws and recommend changes to the Annual Church Conference after approval of two-thirds vote by the Church Council.
4. The Church Council Chair shall be elected by the Annual Church Conference and shall have the following responsibilities:
- a) leading the council in fulfilling its responsibilities;
 - b) preparing and communicating the agenda of the council meetings in consultation with the pastor(s), lay leader, and other appropriate persons;
 - c) reviewing and assigning responsibility for the implementation of actions taken by the council;
 - d) communicating with members of the council and others as appropriate to permit informed action at council meetings;
 - e) coordinating the various activities of the council;
 - f) providing initiative and leadership for the council as it engages in planning, establishing of objectives and goals, and evaluating ministry;
 - g) participating in leadership training programs as offered.
 - h) The Church Council chairperson shall be entitled to attend meetings of all boards and committees of the church unless specifically limited by the church bylaws.
5. A Church Council Vice-Chair shall be elected by the Church Council and shall have the full responsibility and authority of the Chair in the absence of the Chair.
6. Membership—
- a.) All persons with vote must be professing or associate members of Leesville Methodist Church. The pastor shall be the administrative officer of the church and shall be an *ex officio* member of all Church Conferences, committees, and task forces.
 - b.) The membership of the council may consist of as few as eight persons or as many as the Annual Church Conference deems appropriate. The membership shall include but not be limited to the chairs of all ministry committees, the Lay Leader, and Pastor. To secure experience and stability, at-large members shall 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 as an at-large member on the committee.

336. LAY LEADER(S)

1. A Lay Leader shall be elected by the Annual Church Conference who shall function as the primary lay representative of the laity in our church. It is also acceptable to elect a co-lay leader if desired. The Lay Leader shall have the following responsibilities:
 - a) fostering awareness of the role of laity both within the congregation and through their ministries in the home, workplace, community, and world, and finding ways within the community of faith to recognize all these ministries;
 - b) meeting regularly with the pastor to discuss the state of the church and the needs for ministry;
 - c) serving as a voting member of the Church Council, the Finance Committee, the Nominations Committee, and the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee.
 - d) assisting in advising the Church Council of opportunities available and the needs expressed for a more effective ministry of the church through its laity in the community;
 - e) provide training opportunities for the laity regarding their leadership responsibilities. The pastor will be responsible for assisting the lay leader in this training.
 - f) be responsible for recruiting and assisting worship leaders and where possible attend training opportunities to strengthen his or her work.

337. NOMINATIONS. At the Annual Church Conference a Nominations Committee that is composed of professing members of the church shall be nominated and elected. The responsibility of this committee is to identify, develop, deploy, evaluate, and monitor Christian spiritual leadership in our church. Members of the committee shall engage in and be attentive to developing and enhancing their own Christian spiritual life in light of the mission of the Church. In conducting its work, the committee shall engage in biblical and theological reflection on the mission of the church, the primary task, and ministries of our church. It shall provide a means of identifying the spiritual gifts and abilities of the church's members. The committee shall work with the Church Council, to determine the diverse ministry tasks of the congregation and the skills needed for leadership.

1. The Nominations Committee along with the Lay Leader(s) shall serve throughout the year to guide the Church Council on matters regarding the leadership (other than employed staff) of the congregation, so as to focus on mission and ministry as the context for service; guide the development and training of spiritual leaders; recruit, nurture, and support spiritual leaders; and assist the Church Council in assessing changing leadership needs.
2. The committee shall recommend to the Annual Church Conference, the names of people to serve as Chairs and members of all church committees.
3. The past previous Church Council Chair shall serve as the chairperson.
4. 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. Only one person from an immediate family residing in the same household shall serve on the committee. When vacancies occur during the year, successors may be elected by the Church Council.
5. In the identification and selection process, care shall be given that the leadership of ministries reflects inclusivity and diversity.

338. STAFF/PASTOR-PARISH RELATIONS COMMITTEE. At the Annual Church Conference a Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee composed of professing members of our church, shall be elected. People serving on this committee must be engaged in and attentive to their

Christian spiritual development to give proper leadership in the committee's responsibilities. In conducting its work, the committee shall identify and clarify its values for ministry. It shall engage in biblical and theological reflection on the mission of the church, the primary task and ministries of our church, and on the role and work of the pastor(s) and staff as they carry out their leadership responsibilities.

1. 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 Lay Leader(s) is(are) automatically a member of the committee.
2. 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. When vacancies occur during the year, successors may be elected by the Church Council.
3. The committee shall meet at least quarterly. It shall meet additionally at the request of the pastor/staff 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 where the chairperson deems it necessary to meet without the pastor. However, the pastor shall be notified prior to such meeting and be brought into consultation immediately thereafter. The committee shall meet in closed session and information shared in the committee shall be confidential.
4. The duties of the committee shall include the following:
 - a. To encourage, strengthen, nurture, support, and respect the pastor(s) and staff and their families.
 - b. To promote unity in the church.
 - c. To confer with and counsel the pastor(s) 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 pastor(s) and staff.
 - d. To provide evaluation at least annually for the use of the pastor(s) 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. Committees are encouraged to develop specific titles that reflect the job descriptions and expectations.
 - f. To arrange for the necessary time and financial assistance for the attendance of the pastor and/or staff at such continuing education, self-care, and spiritual renewal events as may serve their professional and spiritual growth, and to encourage staff members to seek professional certification in their fields of specialization.
 - g. To confer with the pastor should it become evident that the best interests of the church will be served by a change of pastor(s). The committee will begin a search to replace the pastor.
 - h. To remove a pastor by a two-thirds vote of the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee. The committee will begin a search for a new pastor.

- i. To remove, add or change staff members after consultation with the pastor. The committee will begin a search for a new or replacement staff member.
- j. To consult with the pastor and recommend to the Church Council a written statement of policies and procedures regarding the process for hiring, contracting, evaluating, promoting, retiring, and dismissing staff personnel. Until such a policy has been adopted, the committee and in consultation with the pastor shall have the authority to hire, contract, evaluate, promote, retire, and dismiss personnel.
- k. To keep themselves informed of personnel matters related to professional standards, liability issues, and civil law. They are responsible for communicating and interpreting such matters to staff. Committee members should make themselves available for educational and training opportunities that will enable them to be effective in their work.
- l. To consult on pastor(s) compensation, travel expense, vacation, health and life insurance, pension, housing, (which may be a church-owned parsonage or housing allowance in lieu of parsonage) continuing education, and other practical matters affecting the work and families of the pastor, and to make recommendations regarding such matters to the Annual Church Conference, Church Council, and the Finance Committee. 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 health of the pastor or pastor's family. The chairperson of the Staff/Pastor-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 affecting the family's health and well-being.
- m. To examine and recommend to the Annual Church Conference, according to the bylaws, candidates for ordination, whose gifts, evidence of God's grace, and call to the ministry clearly establish them as worthy of ordination. It is out of the faith and witness of the congregation that men and women respond to God's call to ordained ministry. The pastor and/or Staff/Pastor-Parish Committee shall provide for a service of ordination.
- n. To consult with the pastor to provide for visiting pastors.

339. BOARD OF TRUSTEES. There shall be a Board of Trustees, consisting of at least five professing members of the church representing the gender, race, and age of the congregation, provided that all members shall be of legal age as determined by the relevant and controlling civil law. The pastor of the congregation 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. Election of Trustees. 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 term, and no member may serve longer than six consecutive years.
2. Vacancies and Removal of Trustees. Should a trustee withdraw or be removed from the membership of our church, trusteeship therein shall automatically cease from the date of such withdrawal or exclusion. Should a trustee of our church 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 Annual Church Conference, and when all legal requirements have been satisfied in reference to such execution, the Church Council 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 election by the Church Council for the unexpired term.

3. Organization. The Board of Trustees may organize as follows:
 - a. Within thirty days after the beginning of the calendar year, the Board of Trustees shall convene at a time and place designated by the chairperson or the vice 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 of Trustees shall elect from its members, to hold office for a term of one year or until their successors shall be elected, a chair, a vice chairperson, secretary, and, if need requires, a treasurer; provided, however, that the chairperson and vice chairperson shall not be members of the same class; and provided further, that the offices of secretary and treasurer may be held by the same person.
4. Meetings. The board shall meet at the call of the pastor or of its chairperson at least three times per year at such times and places as designated in the meeting notice at least one week prior to the appointed time of the meeting. Waiver of notice may be used as a means to validate meetings legally where the usual notice is impracticable.
5. Powers and Limitations. The board shall have the following powers and responsibilities:
 - a. Oversight, and care of all real property owned by our church and of all property and equipment acquired directly by our church or by any group, board, class, commission, or similar organization connected with our church, The board shall not prevent or interfere with the pastor in the use of any of the said property for religious services or other proper meetings or purposes recognized by the law, usages, and customs of the church.
 - b. The use of the church'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 Leesville Methodist Church.
 - c. The Board of Trustees (or a parsonage committee with approval from the Board of Trustees) shall be responsible to ensure timely resolution of parsonage problems affecting the health and well-being of the pastor or pastor's family and shall provide that the parsonage be maintained in good condition.
 - d. Subject to the direction of the Church Council, the Board of Trustees shall receive and administer all bequests made to our church, shall receive and administer all trusts, and shall invest all trust funds of our church in conformity with laws of the country, state, or political unit in which our church is located. Nevertheless, upon notice to the Board of Trustees, the Annual Church Conference may delegate the power, duty, and authority to receive, administer, and invest bequests, trusts, and trust funds to a permanent endowment committee.
 - 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.
6. Annual Report. The board shall annually make a written report to the Annual Church Conference, in which shall be included the following:
 - a. The legal description and the reasonable valuation of each parcel of real estate owned by the church;
 - b. The specific name of the grantor in each deed of conveyance of real estate to the church;

- c. An inventory and the reasonable valuation of all personal property owned by the church;
- d. The amount of income received from any income-producing property and a detailed list of expenditures in connection therewith;
- e. The amount received during the year for building, rebuilding, remodeling, and improving real estate, and an itemized statement of expenditures;
- f. Outstanding capital debts, payoff date, and how contracted;
- g. A detailed statement of the insurance carried on each parcel of real estate, indicating whether restricted by co-insurance or other limiting conditions and whether adequate insurance is carried;
- h. The name of the custodian of all legal papers of the church, and where they are kept;
- i. A detailed list of all trusts in which the church is the beneficiary, specifying where and how the funds are invested
- j. An evaluation of all church properties, including the chancel areas, to ensure accessibility to persons with disabilities, and when applicable, a plan and timeline for resolving barriers to accessibility.

340. FINANCE COMMITTEE. As the Annual Church Conference determines, there shall be elected a Finance Committee composed of the committee chairperson, the pastor(s), the chairperson of the Church Council, the chairperson or designee of the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, a representative of the Board of Trustees to be selected by that board, the Lay Leader, the financial secretary, and the treasurer. Additional members 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 Finance Committee may be re-elected for no more than one additional term, and no member may serve longer than six consecutive years.. The chairperson of the Finance Committee shall be a member of the Church Council. The financial secretary, treasurer, and church business administrator, 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, counter, or serve in any paid or unpaid position under the responsibilities of the Finance Committee. One associate member of the church may be elected to a three year term. The Finance Committee shall have the following responsibilities:

1. The Finance Committee shall oversee the stewardship of financial resources as their priority throughout the year, seeking as part of the ministry of discipleship to move members toward tithing and beyond, with an attitude of generosity.
2. All financial requests to be included in the annual budget of our church shall be submitted to the Finance Committee. The Finance Committee shall compile annually a complete budget and submit it to the Church Council for review and to the Annual Church Conference for 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 Annual Church Conference. It shall administer the funds received according to instructions from the Annual Church Conference.
3. The Finance Committee shall establish written financial policies to document the internal controls of the church. The written financial policies should be reviewed for adequacy and effectiveness annually by the Finance Committee and submitted as a report to the Annual Church Conference.

4. The committee shall make provision for an annual audit of the financial statements of the 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 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, church policies and procedures, and the Bylaws. The audit may include: 1) a review of the cash and investment reconciliations; 2) interviews with the treasurer, financial secretary, pastor(s), Finance Committee chair, business manager, 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 public accountant (CPA), accounting firm, or equivalent.
5. The committee shall recommend to the Church Council proper depositories for the church's funds. Funds received shall be deposited promptly in the name of Leesville Methodist Church.
6. After the budget of Leesville Methodist Church has been approved, limited additional appropriations or changes in the budget must be approved by the Church Council according to the approved limitations.
7. The committee shall prepare at least annually a report to the Annual Church Conference of all designated funds that are separate from the current expense budget.
8. The committee will ensure:
 - a. 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.
 - b. 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.
 - c. The church treasurer shall disburse all money contributed to causes represented in the church budget, and such other funds and contributions as the Annual Church Conference may determine. The church treasurer shall make regular and detailed reports on funds received and expended to the Finance Committee and the Church Council. The treasurer shall be adequately bonded.

341. ADVISORY COMMITTEES. The Annual Church Conference and/or the Church 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: communications committee, worship committee, membership committee, discipleship committee, records and history committee, missions committee, memorial gifts committee, and ministries that address the unique needs and interests of women, men, and youth.

PART 4: THE MINISTRY OF THE CALLED

401. BASIC QUALIFICATIONS OF THE PASTOR AND THOSE WISHING TO BE ORDAINED.

- A. Those to be ordained must meet the following qualifications:
1. Have a personal faith in Jesus Christ and be committed to Christ as Savior and Lord. Agrees to the following:
 - a. To subscribe without reservation to the Church's statement of faith, staff handbook, and code of conduct, and to abide by these doctrines and standards in all aspects of pastor's life, both at and away from Church functions.
 - b. To, at all times, act in a manner that exercises and expresses the religious character and mission of the Church.
 - c. To willingly perform ministerial functions, which are an integral part of the pastor's position with the Church. These ministerial functions include, but are not limited to, preaching and teaching the Bible in weekly worship services, leading and/or participation in staff devotions and/or prayer, sharing the Gospel with visitors or others when the opportunity arises during the workday, and writing or orally communicating biblical teachings to Church staff and participants. To perform these ministerial functions, the pastor must adhere to the Church's statement of faith and general beliefs.
 - d. To exemplify the highest Christian virtue and personal decorum, serving as a Christian role model in judgment, dignity, respect, and Christian living both at and away from the Church. The pastor acknowledges that such a lifestyle is a *bona fide* occupational qualification of employment with the Church.
 2. Nurture and cultivate spiritual disciplines and patterns of holiness consistent with the General Rules, including responsible self-control by exhibiting personal habits that are conducive to bodily health, mental and emotional maturity, integrity in all relationships, fidelity in a Christian marriage between one man and one woman, chastity in singleness, social responsibility, and the knowledge and love of God. Agrees to the following:
 - a. To carefully and accurately perform all the duties commonly required by the position of pastor and to perform any other duties subject to the instructions, directions, control, and discretion of the Church Council as may be required from time to time;
 - b. That duties and job titles may be changed in accordance with Church staffing, operational, location, and budgeting needs.
 - c. That the Church will designate the primary location for the pastor's employment; however, the pastor may be required to work at other locations if deemed by the Church as necessary to accomplish Church purposes and functions.
 - d. To work those hours necessary to accomplish work assignments.
 - e. That any intellectual property work created by the pastor during the course of, and used in employment of the Church will be and will remain the pastor's property (e.g. sermons, books, booklets, teachings, recordings, devotionals, training materials, forms, programs, articles, blog posts, podcasts, musical compositions, and other materials). Any transfer of the pastor's ownership in such intellectual property works will be on a case-by-case basis and only after discussions/negotiations between the Parties, in consultation of the Church's legal counsel if necessary, and evidenced in writing signed by both parties.
 - f. To not disparage the Church's leadership or programs either through words or actions, whether through electronic, print, or oral means or otherwise.
 - g. That during employment and for a four-year period after the pastor's employment, to refrain from engaging in, leading, or participating in any Church or business that is competitive with the Church's scope of work, including at another church or nonprofit church, within 20 miles of the Church, absent consent by a majority of the Church Council.

h. To hold in confidence, during and after employment, confidential information and to take all reasonable precautions to protect such information except where disclosure is required by law. Confidential information may include but is not limited to meeting minutes, property records, commercial information, membership information and records, financial records, employment records, business and marketing records, and confidential counseling client information

3. Have a call by God and the people of God to devote themselves to the work of ministry.
4. Be able to effectively communicate the Christian faith.
5. Give evidence of God's gifts for ordained ministry and promise of future usefulness in the mission of the church.
6. Accept the authority of Scripture; be competent in the disciplines of Scripture, theology, church history and polity; possess the skills essential for the practice of ministry, and lead in making disciples of Jesus Christ.
7. Be accountable to our church, accept its doctrinal standards, discipline, and authority and accept the supervision of those appointed to the ministry of oversight, and live in covenant with its ordained ministers.
8. They must complete a background check, credit check, and reference check satisfactorily.

B. Calling a Pastor. Upon the resignation, death, or dismissal of the pastor, the church shall seek a candidate who subscribes to the statement of faith and bylaw provisions of the church and whose life aligns with the qualifications of a pastor as described in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. The church shall abide by the following guidelines for calling a pastor:

1. The Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee shall interview potential candidates and will only consider those who completely subscribe to the statement of faith and who have read these bylaws.
2. The interview process for selecting a pastoral candidate shall include, at a minimum, the following: a background check, a credit check, a reference check, and the filling out of a detailed application that explains the potential candidate's philosophy of ministry as well as the candidate's positions on issues of doctrinal significance.
3. Upon a two-thirds vote of the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee will formally announce the candidate to the church, after which the candidate must preach at least one regularly scheduled church service and be available for a church-wide question/answer time prior to being voted upon by the church membership.
4. Notice from the pulpit must be given 2 consecutive Sundays prior to a formal candidate's preaching service(s), and 2 consecutive Sundays prior to the church conference vote.
5. The candidate must be elected as pastor by a majority vote of members present and qualified to vote. This vote shall be taken by written, secret ballot at a meeting at which the candidate is not present. The pulpit committee will only present for consideration to the membership one candidate at a time, and an up or down vote must be cast prior to consideration of other potential candidates.

402. LEAVES OF ABSENCE

1. **Sabbatical Leave.** Clergy who have been serving in a full-time appointment for six consecutive years may be granted sabbatical leave for a program of study, travel, or renewal. Sabbatical leaves of three months or less may be granted by the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, with the approval of the Annual Church Conference. Compensation for the clergy during a sabbatical of three months or less shall be continued by the church. Longer sabbaticals shall be the responsibility of the individuals involved, though the support of the congregation and others is encouraged.
2. **Maternity Leave.** Leesville Methodist Church provides 12 weeks of paid maternity leave benefits to female clergy. Maternity leave is a temporary period of absence from employment granted to expectant or new mothers during the months immediately before and after childbirth. This policy is aimed at supporting the mother's full recovery from childbirth and facilitating a stronger mother-child bond.
3. **Paternity Leave.** Leesville Methodist provides 3 weeks of paid paternity leave that can be used over the course of 12 weeks (can be broken up, for example as one week per month). Paternity leave is a temporary period of absence from employment granted to new fathers during the months immediately before and after childbirth. This policy is aimed at supporting the family and facilitating a stronger father-child bond. This leave should be coordinated with the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee to minimize impact to operations of Leesville Methodist Church, if feasible.
4. **Adoption Leave.** Leesville Methodist Church provides 3 weeks of paid parental leave following the adoption of a child under the age of 18. Bonding leave does NOT need to be taken as a continuous period of leave but must be taken (in 1-week increments) within the first 12 weeks immediately following the adoption. Parental leave cannot be used prior to the effective date of birth or adoption. Leave not used during the 12-week period will be forfeited. Upon termination of the Pastor's employment with Leesville Methodist Church, the Pastor will not be paid for any unused parental leave. This leave should be coordinated with the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee to minimize impact to operations of Leesville Methodist Church, if feasible.

403. CHURCH ELDER. A church elder is a professing member of Leesville Methodist Church that the membership believes will represent them at their best in service to Jesus Christ our Lord. An elder is someone that would assist the pastor as necessary in the work of the Body of Christ. In the absence of the pastor, the elder would have the authority of the church to offer training classes for prospective confirmands; to evaluate, baptize, and bring in new members; and offer the congregation Holy Communion.

In addition to having a personal faith in Jesus Christ and being committed to Christ as Savior and Lord, the biblical qualifications for elders are found in 1 Timothy 3:2-7 and Titus 1:6-8. According to these passages, an elder must be above reproach, have one spouse, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money, not fond of sordid gain, a good manager of his household, one who has his children under control with dignity, not a new convert, one who has a good reputation outside the church, self-controlled, sensible, able to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict, above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, loving what is good, just, and devout.

Since an elder represents the entire church, it is the responsibility of the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee and the pastor, if available, to recommend an elder for ordination. This person must have held membership at Leesville Methodist Church (or its predecessor) for at least one year and shall complete a background and credit check. Upon the recommendation by two-thirds secret ballot of the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, the Church Conference shall by simple majority vote whether to approve and certify this person for ordination. An elder will serve for one year and may be ordained for two additional one year terms upon the recommendation of the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee and approval of the Church Conference.

404. CANDIDATES FOR ENTRANCE INTO ORDAINED MINISTRY.

1. Persons who hear a call to ordained ministry should meet with their pastor and Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee to inquire about ordination. They must have held membership at Leesville Methodist Church (or its predecessor) for at least one year and shall complete a background and credit check. Upon the recommendation by two-thirds secret ballot of the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee, the Annual Church Conference shall by simple majority vote whether to approve and certify them for ordination.
2. Candidacy Discernment. After Annual Church Conference approval, a candidate shall spend a minimum of six months in discernment. During this time, the candidate shall:
 - a. Engage with discernment, mentoring.
 - b. Have a secondary school diploma or its equivalent.
 - c. Upon completion of the foregoing, the candidate shall write a statement detailing his or her call to ordained ministry and submit it to the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee.

405. HISTORIC QUESTIONS. In addition to whatever other questions may be asked, persons seeking ordination shall be evaluated by the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee based upon their answers related to the following historic questions first asked about those desiring to be "traveling preachers":

1. Do they know God as pardoning God? Have they the love of God abiding in them? Do they desire nothing but God? Are they holy in all manner of conversation?
2. Have they gifts, as well as evidence of God's grace, for the work? Have they a clear, sound understanding; a right judgment in the things of God; a just conception of salvation by faith? Do they speak justly, readily, clearly?
3. Have they fruit? Have any been truly convinced of sin and converted to God, and are believers edified by their service?

As long as these marks occur in them, we believe that they are called of God to serve. These we receive as sufficient proof that they are moved by the Holy Spirit." Prior to ordination, candidates shall provide the Staff/Pastor-Parish Relations Committee of ministry with written answers to the following questions historically asked since the time of John Wesley:

- (1) Have you faith in Christ?
- (2) Are you going on to perfection?
- (3) Do you expect to be made perfect in love in this life?
- (4) Are you earnestly striving after perfection in love?
- (5) Are you resolved to devote yourself wholly to God and to God's work?
- (6) Do you know the General Rules of our Church?
- (7) Will you keep the General Rules of our Church?
- (8) Have you studied the doctrines of Leesville Methodist Church?
- (9) After full consideration do you believe that our doctrines are in harmony with the Holy Scriptures?
- (10) Have you studied our form of church discipline and polity?
- (11) Do you approve our church government and polity?
- (12) Will you support and maintain them?
- (13) Will you exercise the ministry of compassion?
- (14) Will you diligently instruct the children in every place?
- (15) Will you visit from house to house?
- (16) Will you recommend fasting or abstinence, both by precept and example?
- (17) Are you determined to employ all your time in the work of God?
- (18) Are you in debt so as to embarrass you in your work?
- (19) Will you observe the following directions?
 - (a) Be diligent. Never be unemployed. Never be triflingly employed. Never trifle away time; neither spend any more time at any one place than is strictly necessary.
 - (b) Be punctual. Do everything exactly at the time. And do not mend our rules, but keep them; not for wrath, but for conscience' sake.

PART 5: EDUCATIONAL MINISTRIES

A. Purpose: The church believes that the home and church are responsible before God for providing a Christian education. To help fulfill this responsibility of imparting biblical truth and furthering the Great Commission, this church shall establish and maintain an educational program (either a Sunday School and/or a weekday educational program) for the purposes of winning souls to Christ and teaching Bible doctrine, godly worship, and biblical Christian living. To this end, the church shall engage in educational ministries.

B. Church Participation: All educational programs or courses of instruction formulated and offered by the church shall be primarily for the benefit of the members of the church; however, the pastor and Church Council, on behalf of the church, may permit non-church members to participate in church educational programs or courses of instruction if they deem it in the best interests of the church.

C. Agreement with Statement of Faith: All educational programs or courses of instruction shall be conducted as an integral and inseparable ministry of the church and shall be taught and presented in full agreement with the statement of faith of the church and the inerrant Word of God. The church shall not hire, appoint, or retain any employee or volunteer for its educational programs who fails to adhere to or who expresses disagreement with the statement of faith or who adopts or lives a lifestyle inconsistent with the beliefs and practices of the statement of the faith, whether in or out of the classroom.

D. Safe Sanctuary: God calls us to make our churches safe places, protecting children and other vulnerable persons from sexual and ritual abuse. God calls us to create communities of faith where children and adults grow safe and strong. To that end:

1. Leesville Methodist Church hereby pledges to conduct the ministry of Jesus Christ in ways that assure the physical and emotional safety and spiritual growth of all of our children, youth and vulnerable adults as well as all of our workers with children, youth and vulnerable adults. We will follow reasonable safety measures when selecting and recruiting workers; we will implement appropriate operational procedures in all areas of programming and care; we will train our workers with children and youth on our procedures and policies; and we will have a clearly defined procedure for reporting a suspected incident of abuse consistent with South Carolina state law.
2. Leesville Methodist Church will not use anyone as a worker for children/youth or vulnerable adults in the church unless they have completed Safe Sanctuary training, been found to have a satisfactory background check, have been an active participant at the church for at least six(6) months, and are approved by the pastor or the Church Council or the designated Safe Sanctuary Program administrator. In the case of paid staff workers, the applicant may have been a member of Leesville Methodist Church or another Christian Church at least six (6) months prior to employment.

PART 6: DESIGNATED CONTRIBUTIONS

The church, in the exercise of its religious, educational, and charitable purposes, may establish various funds to accomplish specific goals. If the church receives a designated contribution for these funds or for any other designated purpose, the church will attempt to honor the designation; however, all designated contributions shall be deemed advisory rather than legally mandatory in nature and shall remain subject to the exclusive control and discretion of the Church Council. No fiduciary obligation shall be created by any designated contribution made to the church other than to use the contribution for the general furtherance of any of the purposes stated in PART 1.

PART 7: CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

A. Purpose: The purpose of this conflict-of-interest policy is to protect the church's interest when it is contemplating entering into a transaction or arrangement that might benefit the private interest of an officer or director of the church or might result in a possible excess benefit transaction. This policy is intended to supplement but not replace any applicable state or federal laws governing conflicts of interest applicable to nonprofit and charitable organizations.

Definitions:

1. Interested Person: Any director, officer, or member of a committee with governing church council-delegated powers who has a direct or indirect financial interest.
2. Financial interest: A person has a financial interest if the person has, directly or indirectly, through business, investment, or family:

- a. An ownership or investment interest in any entity with which the church has a transaction or arrangement;
- b. A compensation arrangement with the church or with any individual or entity with which the church has a transaction or arrangement; or
- c. A potential ownership or investment interest in, or compensation arrangement with, any entity or individual with which the church is negotiating a transaction or arrangement.
- d. A financial interest is not necessarily a conflict of interest. A person who has a financial interest may have a conflict of interest only if the church council of directors decides that a conflict of interest exists.

3. Compensation: Direct and indirect remuneration as well as gifts or favors that are not insubstantial.

4. Church council: The church council of directors of the church. The pastor and church council will determine procedures for determining a possible conflict of interest.

B. Procedures

1. Duty to Disclose. In connection with any actual or possible conflict of interest, an interested person must disclose the existence of the financial interest and be given the opportunity to disclose all material facts to the church council and, if applicable, members of committees with governing church council-delegated powers considering the proposed transaction or arrangement.
2. Determining whether a Conflict of Interest Exists. After disclosure of the financial interest and all material facts, including any presentations by and discussion with the interested person, he or she shall leave the church council or committee meeting while the determination of a conflict of interest involving the transaction or arrangement is discussed and voted upon. The remaining church council or committee members (as applicable) shall decide, by a majority vote, if a conflict of interest exists.
3. Procedures for Addressing the Conflict of Interest
 - a. The chair of the church council shall, if appropriate, appoint a disinterested person or committee to investigate alternatives to the proposed transaction or arrangement.
 - b. After exercising due diligence, the church council or committee shall determine whether the church can obtain, with reasonable efforts, a more advantageous transaction or arrangement from a person or entity that would not give rise to a conflict of interest.
 - c. If a more advantageous transaction or arrangement is not reasonably possible under circumstances not producing a conflict of interest, the church council shall determine by a majority vote of the disinterested directors whether the transaction or arrangement is in the best interests of the church, for its own benefit, and whether it is fair and reasonable. In conformity with the above determination, it shall make its decision as to whether to enter into the transaction or arrangement.
4. Violations of the Conflict-of-Interest Policy
 - a. If the church council or committee has reasonable cause to believe a member has failed to disclose actual or possible conflicts of interest, it shall inform the member of the basis for such belief and afford the member an opportunity to explain the alleged failure to disclose.
 - b. If, after hearing the member's response and after making further investigation as warranted by the circumstances, the church council determines the member has failed to disclose an actual or possible conflict of interest, it shall take appropriate disciplinary and corrective action.

5. Records of Proceedings

a. The minutes of the church council shall contain the names of the persons who disclosed or otherwise were found to have a financial interest in connection with an actual or possible conflict of interest, the nature of the financial interest, any action taken to determine whether a conflict of interest was present, and the church council or committee's decision as to whether a conflict of interest in fact existed.

b. The minutes of the church council also shall contain the names of the persons who were present for discussions and votes relating to the transaction or arrangement, the content of the discussion, including any alternatives to the proposed transaction or arrangement, and a record of any votes taken in connection with the proceedings.

6. Compensation

a. A voting member of the church council or any committee who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from the church for services rendered may not vote on matters pertaining to that member's compensation.

b. A voting member of the church council or any committee whose jurisdiction includes compensation matters and who receives compensation, directly or indirectly, from the church, either individually or collectively, are not prohibited from providing information to any committee regarding compensation.

7. Annual Statements: Each director, officer, and member of a committee with governing church council-delegated powers shall annually sign a statement which affirms such person has received a copy of the conflict of interest policy; has read and understands the policy; has agreed to comply with the policy; and understands the organization is charitable and in order to maintain its federal tax exemption, it must engage primarily in activities which accomplish one or more of its tax-exempt purposes.

8. Periodic Reviews: To ensure the organization operates in a manner consistent with charitable purposes and does not engage in activities that could jeopardize its tax-exempt status, periodic reviews shall be conducted. The periodic reviews shall, at a minimum, include the following subjects:

a. Whether compensation arrangements and benefits are reasonable, based on competent survey information, and the result of arm's-length bargaining.

b. Whether partnerships, joint ventures, and arrangements with management organizations conform to the church's written policies, are properly recorded, reflect reasonable investment or payments for goods and services, further charitable purposes, and do not result in inurement, impermissible private benefit, or an excess benefit transaction.

9. Use of Outside Experts: When conducting the periodic reviews as provided for above, the organization may, but need not, use outside advisors. If outside experts are used, their use shall not relieve the church council of its responsibility for ensuring periodic reviews are conducted.

PART 8: BINDING CHRISTIAN ARBITRATION

A. Submission To Arbitration: Members of the church must agree to submit to binding Christian arbitration any legal matters within the church that cannot otherwise be resolved, and expressly waive any and all rights in law and equity to bring any civil disagreement before a court of law, except that judgment upon the award rendered by the arbitrator may be entered in any court having jurisdiction thereof.

B. Arbitration Procedures: The procedures for arbitration shall be as adopted by the church council. If the church council has not adopted procedures, the church will use arbitration

procedures provided by the National Center for Life and Liberty. This arbitration provision is ecclesiastical and faith-based in nature and is intended to operate under the rules and guidelines of this local church. It is not intended to operate under any state or federal guidelines for arbitration.

PART 9: TAX-EXEMPTION PROVISIONS

- A. Private Inurement: No part of the net earnings of the church shall inure to the benefit of or be distributable to its members, trustees, officers, or other private persons, except that the church shall be authorized and empowered to pay reasonable compensation for services rendered and to make payments and distributions in furtherance of the purposes set forth in PART ONE hereof.
- B. Political involvement: No substantial part of the activities of the church shall be the carrying on of propaganda or otherwise attempting to influence legislation. To the extent prohibited by law, the church shall not participate in, or intervene in (including the publishing or distribution of statements) any political campaign on behalf of (or in opposition to) any candidate for public office.
- C. Dissolution: Upon the dissolution of the church, no part of the organization's earnings or assets may inure to the benefit of any of its members; and the church council shall, after paying or making provision for payment of all the liabilities of the church, dispose of all assets of the church to such organization or organizations formed and operated exclusively for religious purposes as shall at the time qualify as an exempt organization or organizations under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986, as the church council shall determine. Assets may be distributed only to tax-exempt organizations that agree with the church's statement of faith.
- D. Nondiscrimination Policy: The church shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, nationality, or ethnic origin; however, as a religious institution it reserves the right to deny or terminate employment or to deny or terminate any other status of persons whose lifestyle, words, actions or otherwise do not align with the church's statement of faith, standard of conduct or other policies of the church. This policy statement is not intended to waive the ministerial exception or any other exception or exemption to federal, state, or local antidiscrimination laws or regulations.
- E. Limitation of Activities: Notwithstanding any other provision of these bylaws, the church shall not, except to an insubstantial degree, engage in any activities or exercise any powers that are not in furtherance of the purposes stated in PART ONE.

PART 10: AMENDMENTS

These bylaws may be revised or amended by a majority vote of the eligible members present and voting at any regular Church Conference, provided that said revision or amendment is announced at least 10 days before the vote is taken. Proposed amendments or changes must be made available to voting members for review at least one week prior to the meeting at which the vote to amend the bylaws will be taken. Amendments become effective immediately upon a two-thirds vote approving same.

Date

Church Secretary

The initial bylaws were adopted by a majority vote of the council members present and voting at a duly called meeting of the church council.

Appendix A

THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT I

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERVICE

As persons come forward, an appropriate baptismal or confirmation hymn may be sung.

1 *An elder or pastor addresses the congregation:*

Brothers and sisters in Christ:

Through the Sacrament of Baptism

we are initiated into Christ's holy Church.

We are incorporated into God's mighty acts of salvation

and given new birth through water and the Spirit.

All this is God's gift, offered to us without price.

2 *If there are confirmations or reaffirmations, the pastor continues:*

Through confirmation,

and through the reaffirmation of our faith,

we renew the covenant declared at our baptism,

acknowledge what God is doing for us,

and affirm our commitment to Christ's holy Church.

PRESENTATION OF CANDIDATES

3 *A representative of the congregation presents the candidates with the appropriate statements:*

I present Name(s) for baptism.

I present Name(s) for confirmation.

I present Name(s) to reaffirm their faith.

I present (Name(s) who come(s) seeking baptized membership from the _____
Church.

I present Name(s) who come(s) seeking professing membership from the _____
Church.

If desired, Thanksgiving over the Water (section 10) may precede the Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith.

At this or some later point in the service, persons may add to their vows a personal witness to their Christian faith and experience.

RENUNCIATION OF SIN AND PROFESSION OF FAITH

4 *Since the earliest times, the vows of Christian baptism have consisted first of the renunciation of all that is evil and then the profession of faith and loyalty to Christ.*

Parents or other sponsors reaffirm these vows for themselves while taking the responsibilities of sponsorship. Candidates for confirmation profess for themselves the solemn vows that were made at their baptism.

The pastor addresses parents or other sponsors and those candidates who can answer for themselves:

On behalf of the whole Church, I ask you:

Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness,
reject the evil powers of this world,
and repent of your sin?

I do.

Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you
to resist evil, injustice, and oppression
in whatever forms they present themselves?

I do.

Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior,
put your whole trust in his grace,
and promise to serve him as your Lord,
in union with the Church which Christ has opened
to people of all ages, nations, and races?

I do.

5 *The pastor addresses parents or other sponsors of candidates not able to answer for themselves:*

Will you nurture these children (persons)
in Christ's holy Church,
that by your teaching and example they may be guided
to accept God's grace for themselves,
to profess their faith openly,
and to lead a Christian life?

I will.

6 *The pastor addresses candidates who can answer for themselves:*

According to the grace given to you,
will you remain faithful members of Christ's holy Church
and serve as Christ's representatives in the world?

I will.

7 *The pastor addresses the sponsors:*

Will you who sponsor these candidates
support and encourage them in their Christian life?

I will.

8 *The pastor addresses the congregation, and the congregation responds:*

Do you, as Christ's body, the Church,
reaffirm both your rejection of sin
and your commitment to Christ?

We do.

Will you nurture one another in the Christian faith and life and include these persons now before you in your care?

With God's help we will proclaim the good news and live according to the example of Christ.

We will surround these persons with a community of love and forgiveness, that they may grow in their trust of God, and be found faithful in their service to others.

We will pray for them, that they may be true disciples who walk in the way that leads to life.

9 *The Apostles' Creed in threefold question-and-answer form appeared at least as early as the third century as a statement of faith used in baptisms and has been widely used in baptisms ever since. The candidate(s), sponsor(s), and local congregation join with the universal Church across the ages in this historic affirmation of the Christian faith.*

An elder or pastor addresses all, and the congregation joins the candidates and their parents and sponsors in responding:

Let us join together in professing the Christian faith as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

Do you believe in God the Father?

I believe in God, the Father Almighty, creator of heaven and earth.

Do you believe in Jesus Christ?

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.]

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?

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.]

THANKSGIVING OVER THE WATER

10 *An elder or lay leader may pour water for baptism and reaffirmation into the font at this time in such a way that the congregation can see and hear the water.*

This prayer is led by the pastor and joined by the people. It recalls scriptural images and meanings of Holy Baptism and is comparable to the Great Thanksgiving at Holy Communion. All may stand.

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Let us pray.

The pastor may raise hands in the ancient Christian posture of prayer, and invite the congregation to do likewise.

Eternal Father:

When nothing existed but chaos,
 you swept across the dark waters
 and brought forth light.

In the days of Noah
 you saved those on the ark through water.

After the flood you set in the clouds a rainbow.
When you saw your people as slaves in Egypt,
 you led them to freedom through the sea.

Their children you brought through the Jordan
 to the land which you promised.

****Sing to the Lord, all the earth.
 Tell of God's mercy each day.**

In the fullness of time you sent Jesus,
 nurtured in the water of a womb.
He was baptized by John and anointed by your Spirit.
He called his disciples
 to share in the baptism of his death and resurrection
 and to make disciples of all nations.

****Declare Christ's works to the nations,
his glory among all the people.**

*The pastor may place hands in or over the water, stir the water, or lift the water.
Pour out your Holy Spirit,
to bless this gift of water and those who receive it,
to wash away their sin*

and clothe them in righteousness
throughout their lives,
that, dying and being raised with Christ,
they may share in his final victory.

****All praise to you, Eternal Father,
through your Son Jesus Christ,
who with you and the Holy Spirit
lives and reigns for ever. Amen.**

BAPTISM WITH LAYING ON OF HANDS

11 In all services of the baptismal covenant, water should be used generously as a living sign of the abundance of God's grace, cleansing, and life-giving power.

Each candidate is baptized and receives the laying on of hands individually. The pastor uses the first (Christian) name(s), but not the family name:

*Christian Name(s), I baptize you in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Immediately after the administration of the water, the pastor places hands on the candidate's head and invokes the work of the Holy Spirit. Persons nearby, including baptized members of the candidate's family, may join the pastor in this action. Others present may join by extending their hands toward the candidate. All say the Amen.

Pastor, laying hand on the newly baptized:

*The Holy Spirit work within you,
that being born through water and the Spirit,
you may be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. Amen.*

One or more of the following acts may be added at this time:

a) The pastor may trace on the forehead of each newly baptized person the sign of the cross in silence or with the words: "Name, child of God, you are sealed by the Holy Spirit in baptism and marked as Christ's own forever." Olive oil may be used in this action, following the biblical custom anointing prophets (1 Kings 19:16), priests (Exodus 29:7), and kings (1 Kings 1:39). Jesus' titles Christ and Messiah both mean "Anointed One," and the New Testament repeatedly calls Christ our High Priest and King. Christians in baptism become members of the body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13), which is a "royal priesthood" (1 Peter 2:9). Anointing at baptism is a reminder that all Christians are anointed into this royal priesthood.

b) New clothing is sometimes presented to those just baptized, particularly in the case of infants, as a symbol that we "have put on Christ" (Galatians 3:27) as one would put on new clothing. Such clothing is traditionally white, suggesting the "white robes" in

Revelation 7:9 –14. Words such as these may be used: "Receive these new clothes as a token of the new life that is given in Christ Jesus."

c) A lighted baptismal candle may be presented to the newly baptized, with such words as: "Let your light so shine that others, seeing your good works, may glorify your Father in heaven." The candle may be presented to the parents or sponsors of baptized children, in which case "others" may be changed to "this child" or "these children." It is appropriate to light the baptismal candle in the home each year on the anniversary of baptism as a reminder of the grace of God offered through baptism. A baptismal candle bears either a Christian symbol or no decoration at all; it should not be confused with ornate birthday candles sold commercially to mark a child's birthdays. The candle may be lighted from the paschal candle or from one of the candles on or near the Lord's table.

d) A certificate of baptism may be presented to the newly baptized. A certificate of baptized membership may also be presented to those transferring as baptized members of the congregation. If certificates are not given at this time, the pastor should ensure the candidate, family or baptized member receive them promptly.

When all candidates for baptism have been baptized, the pastor invites the congregation to welcome them together with those who are transferring as baptized members:

Now it is our joy to welcome
our new sisters and brothers in Christ.

Through baptism

**you are incorporated by the Holy Spirit
into God's new creation
and made to share in Christ's royal priesthood.
We are all one in Christ Jesus.
With joy and thanksgiving we welcome you
as members of the family of Christ.**

CONFIRMATION OR REAFFIRMATION OF FAITH

12 *Acts of confirmation or reaffirmation of faith are not acts of rebaptism. Here water may be used by the candidates as the pastor says:*

Remember your baptism and be thankful. **Amen.**

In services of the baptismal covenant, water should be used generously as a sign of the abundance of God's grace, cleansing, life-giving and life-renewing power. Appropriate

ways persons being confirmed or reaffirming their faith may use the water include the following:

- a) They may touch the water and make the sign of the cross on their own foreheads.*
- b) They may scoop up the water and let it fall back into the font.*
- c) They may use it on their heads, or hands, or to refresh their faces.*

As the pastor, and others if desired, place hands on the head of each person being confirmed or reaffirming faith, the pastor says to each:

Name, the Holy Spirit work within you,
that having been born through water and the Spirit,
you may live as a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

13 *Acts of reaffirmation are not acts of rebaptism. When there is a congregational reaffirmation of the Baptismal Covenant, the congregation may be invited to use or receive the water as or after the pastor says:*

Remember your baptism and be thankful. **Amen.**

Appropriate ways persons may use the water include:

- a) Touching the water and making the sign of the cross on their own foreheads;*
- b) Scooping up the water and letting it fall back into the font;*
- c) Scooping it over their heads, or hands, or to refresh their faces.*
- d) Or, An elder, the pastor, or other assistants may use an asperges, evergreen branch or other means to sprinkle small amounts of water toward the congregation. This parallels sprinkling with hyssop for purification (Exodus 12:22 ; Psalm 51:7) and sprinkling as a sign of renewal (Ezekiel 36:25 –26).*

RECEPTION INTO LEESVILLE METHODIST CHURCH

15 *If there are persons joining this congregation as professing members from other congregations who have not yet been presented, they may be presented at this time.*

The pastor addresses all those transferring professing membership into the congregation, together with those who, through baptism or confirmation, have just professed their own faith:

As members of this congregation,
will you faithfully participate in its ministries
by your prayers, your presence,
your gifts, your service
and your witness?

I will.

COMMENDATION AND WELCOME

16 *The pastor addresses the congregation:*

Members of the household of God,
I commend these persons to your love and care.
Do all in your power to increase their faith,
confirm their hope, and perfect them in love.

The congregation responds:

**We give thanks for all that God has already given you
and we welcome you in Christian love.**

**As members together with you
in the body of Christ
and in this congregation
of Leesville Methodist Church,
we renew our covenant
faithfully to participate
in the ministries of the Church
by our prayers, our presence,
our gifts, our service, and our witness
that in everything God may be glorified
through Jesus Christ.**

The pastor addresses those baptized, confirmed, or received, using an appropriate gesture of blessing:

The God of all grace,
who has called us to eternal glory in Christ,
establish you and strengthen you
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
that you may live in grace and peace.

One or more laypersons, including children, may join the pastor in acts of welcome and peace. Baptized children may be welcomed by a kiss of peace or other acts or words immediately following Baptism with Laying on of Hands.

An appropriate hymn, stanza, or response may be sung.

The service continues with prayers including appropriate thanksgivings and intercessions for those who have participated in these acts.

Services of the baptismal covenant most appropriately lead into the celebration of Holy Communion, in which the union of the new members with the body of Christ is most fully expressed. The new members, including children, may bring the bread and wine to the Lord's table, receive first, and assist in serving.

THE BAPTISMAL COVENANT II
HOLY BAPTISM
FOR CHILDREN AND OTHERS UNABLE TO
ANSWER FOR THEMSELVES

This service is designed for use when the only persons being baptized are (1) infants or children who cannot take their own vows or (2) youth or adults who have not reached the developmental stage of making such commitments themselves. It is not designed for the baptism of persons who take their own vows, or for confirmation or reaffirmation of faith.

INTRODUCTION TO THE SERVICE

As persons come forward, an appropriate baptismal hymn may be sung.

An elder or pastor addresses the congregation:

Brothers and sisters in Christ:

Through the Sacrament of Baptism

we are initiated into Christ's holy Church.

We are incorporated into God's mighty acts of salvation

and given new birth through water and the Spirit.

All this is God's gift, offered to us without price.

PRESENTATION OF CANDIDATES

A representative of the congregation presents the candidates:

I present Name(s) for baptism.

If desired, Thanksgiving over the Water (section 10) may precede the Renunciation of Sin and Profession of Faith.

RENUNCIATION OF SIN AND PROFESSION OF FAITH

Since the earliest times, the vows of Christian baptism have consisted first of the renunciation of all that is evil and then the profession of faith and loyalty to Christ.

Parents and other sponsors reaffirm these vows for themselves and take on the responsibilities of sponsorship.

The pastor addresses parents and other sponsors:

On behalf of the whole Church, I ask you:

Do you renounce the spiritual forces of wickedness,

reject the evil powers of this world,

and repent of your sin?

I do.

Do you accept the freedom and power God gives you

to resist evil, injustice, and oppression
in whatever forms they present themselves?

I do.

Do you confess Jesus Christ as your Savior,
put your whole trust in his grace,
and promise to serve him as your Lord,
in union with the Church which Christ has opened
to people of all ages, nations, and races?

I do.

Will you nurture these children (persons)
in Christ's holy Church,
that by your teaching and example they may be guided
to accept God's grace for themselves,
to profess their faith openly,
and to lead a Christian life?

I will.

An elder or the pastor addresses the congregation, and the congregation responds:

Do you, as Christ's body, the Church,
reaffirm both your rejection of sin
and your commitment to Christ?

We do.

Will you nurture one another in the Christian faith and life
and include these persons now before you in your care?

**With God's help we will proclaim the good news
and live according to the example of Christ.**

**We will surround these persons
with a community of love and forgiveness,
that they may grow in their service to others.**

**We will pray for them,
that they may be true disciples
who walk in the way that leads to life.**

The Apostles' Creed in threefold question-and-answer form appeared at least as early as the third century as a statement of faith used in baptisms and has been widely used in baptisms ever since. The candidate(s), sponsor(s), and local congregation join with the universal Church across the ages in this historic affirmation of the Christian faith.

The pastor addresses all, and the congregation joins the parents and sponsors in responding:

Let us join together in professing the Christian faith
as contained in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments.

Do you believe in God the Father?
**I believe in God, the Father Almighty,
creator of heaven and earth.**

Do you believe in Jesus Christ?
**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.]**

Do you believe in the Holy Spirit?
**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.]**

THANKSGIVING OVER THE WATER

An elder or lay leader may pour water for baptism and reaffirmation into the font at this time in such a way that the congregation can see and hear the water.

This prayer is led by the pastor and joined by the people. It recalls scriptural images and meanings of Holy Baptism and is comparable to the Great Thanksgiving at Holy Communion. All may stand.

The Lord be with you.
And also with you.

Let us pray.

The pastor may raise hands in the ancient Christian posture of prayer, and invite the congregation to do likewise.

Eternal Father:

When nothing existed but chaos,
you swept across the dark waters
and brought forth light.

In the days of Noah
you saved those on the ark through water.

After the flood you set in the clouds a rainbow.
When you saw your people as slaves in Egypt,
you led them to freedom through the sea.

Their children you brought through the Jordan
to the land which you promised.

****Sing to the Lord, all the earth.
Tell of God's mercy each day.**

In the fullness of time you sent Jesus,
nurtured in the water of a womb.
He was baptized by John and anointed by your Spirit.
He called his disciples
to share in the baptism of his death and resurrection
and to make disciples of all nations.

****Declare Christ's works to the nations,
his glory among all the people.**

The pastor may place hands in or over the water, stir the water, or lift the water.

Pour out your Holy Spirit,
to bless this gift of water and those who receive it,
to wash away their sin
and clothe them in righteousness
throughout their lives,
that, dying and being raised with Christ,
they may share in his final victory.

****All praise to you, Eternal Father,
through your Son Jesus Christ,
who with you and the Holy Spirit
lives and reigns for ever.
Amen.**

BAPTISM WITH LAYING ON OF HANDS

In all services of the baptismal covenant, water should be used generously as a living sign of the abundance of God's grace, cleansing, and life-giving power.

Each candidate is baptized and receives the laying on of hands individually. The pastor uses the first (Christian) name(s), but not the family name:

Christian Name(s), I baptize you in the name of the Father,
and of the Son,
and of the Holy Spirit. **Amen.**

Immediately after the administration of the water, the pastor places hands on the candidate's head and invokes the work of the Holy Spirit. Persons nearby, including baptized members of the candidate's family, may join the pastor in this action. Others present may join by extending their hands toward the candidate. All say the Amen.

Pastor, laying hand on the newly baptized:

The Holy Spirit work within you,
that being born through water and the Spirit,
you may be a faithful disciple of Jesus Christ. **Amen.**

If desired, one or more of the following acts may be added: anointing, presentation of new clothing, presentation of a baptismal candle, or presentation of a certificate of baptism. (See Baptismal Covenant I for more detail about each of these acts).

When all candidates have been baptized and have received the laying on of hands and/or other signs, the pastor invites the congregation to welcome them:

Now it is our joy to welcome
our new sisters and brothers in Christ.

**Through baptism
you are incorporated by the Holy Spirit
into God's new creation
and made to share in Christ's royal priesthood.
We are all one in Christ Jesus.
With joy and thanksgiving we welcome you
as members of the family of Christ.**

COMMENDATION AND WELCOME

Those who have been baptized into Christ's holy Church are now welcomed into this congregation of Leesville Methodist Church.

The pastor addresses the congregation:

Members of the household of God,
I commend these persons to your love and care.
Do all in your power to increase their faith,
confirm their hope, and perfect them in love.

The congregation responds:

**We give thanks for all that God has already given you
and we welcome you in Christian love.**

**As members together with you
in the body of Christ
and in this congregation
of Leesville Methodist Church,
we renew our covenant
faithfully to participate
in the ministries of the Church
by our prayers, our presence,
our gifts, our service and our witness,
that in everything God may be glorified
through Jesus Christ.**

The pastor addresses those baptized and their parents and sponsors using an appropriate gesture of blessing:

The God of all grace,
who has called us to eternal glory in Christ,
establish you and strengthen you
by the power of the Holy Spirit,
that you may live in grace and peace.

One or more laypersons, including children, may join the pastor in acts of welcome and peace. Baptized children may be welcomed by a kiss of peace or other acts or words immediately following Baptism with Laying on of Hands.

An appropriate hymn, stanza, or response may be sung.

The service continues with prayers including thanksgivings and intercessions for those who have participated in these acts.

Services of the baptismal covenant most appropriately lead into the celebration of Holy Communion, in which the union of the new members with the body of Christ is most fully expressed. The new members, including children, may bring the bread and wine to the Lord's table, receive first, and assist in serving.