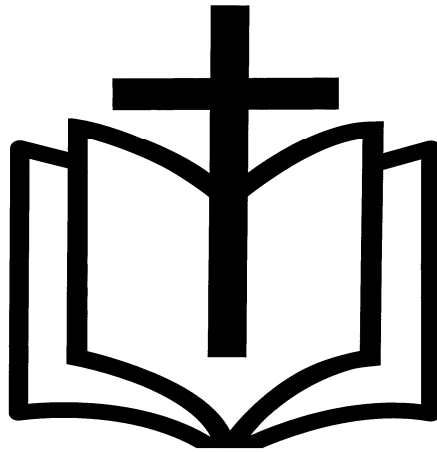


Sugar Land Bible Church



CONSTITUTION & POSITION STATEMENTS

**Current Approved Version
09-17-2018**

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CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I – NAME

The name of this church shall be Sugar Land Bible Church, incorporated under the laws of the State of Texas.

ARTICLE II – PHILOSOPHY

This church is an independent Bible teaching church. As such, we derive both our existence and our purpose from God as He has revealed Himself to us in the Bible.

EXISTENCE: We exist as a local assembly of Christians under the spiritual authority and direction of Jesus Christ. By the term “Christian” we refer to a person who has:

1. recognized that he/she is by nature a sinner and, as such, lacks the necessary righteousness to enter heaven (Rom. 3:23),
2. recognized that he/she is completely incapable of either meriting or earning his/her salvation through good intentions, good works, or religious rituals (Eph. 2:8,9),
3. recognized that Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God, died on the cross to pay for mankind’s sin (Rom. 5:8),
4. personally trusted or relied upon Jesus Christ and His death and resurrection alone for his/her salvation (John 6:47, 1 Cor. 15:1-4).

Anyone who has trusted in Christ as his/her Savior is welcome to fellowship with us.

PURPOSE: Our ultimate purpose for existence is to bring glory to God. To accomplish this, our objectives are two-fold: first, our ministry to one another and second, our ministry to non-Christians.

1. Our ministry to one another:
Our goal as a Bible church is to provide opportunities for Christians to unite together for corporate worship, instruction from the Word of God, and fellowship with and service to one another. Our purpose for the above is to provide an opportunity for, and to facilitate, spiritual growth.
2. Our ministry to non-Christians:
We are committed to a goal of evangelism toward non-Christians. This takes place primarily outside of the regular church meetings and, as such, it is our intention to continually and regularly exhort and encourage each other toward a loving ministry of personal evangelism and missionary support.

ARTICLE III - STATEMENT OF FAITH

The twelve (12) points listed below represent the specific beliefs of this local church. These twelve (12) statements are perceived by us to be clearly taught by the Scriptures and are essential beliefs for anyone desiring membership in this local church.

1. There is one God, creator of all things. He is perfect, infinite, and eternal in all His ways. He exists in three separate, but equal, Persons: the Father, the Son, and

- the Holy Spirit. (Deut. 6:4; Gen. 1:1; John 6:27; Heb. 1:8; Acts 5:3, 4; 2 Cor. 13:14).
2. Jesus Christ is true God and true Man. He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the Virgin Mary. He lived a sinless life, died on the cross, was buried, and arose on the third day. He later ascended into Heaven where He is presently seated at the right hand of God the Father as our High Priest and Advocate. (John 1:1; Phil. 2:5-8; Luke 1:30-35; 2 Cor. 5:21; 1 Cor. 15:3,4; Heb. 7:25; 1 John 2:1).
 3. The Holy Spirit is the third Person of the Trinity whose ministry is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ. He accomplishes this ministry by convicting individuals of their sin, by regenerating, sealing, baptizing and indwelling the believing sinner at the moment of conversion, and by empowering the Christian for godly living and service. (John 16:7-15; Tit. 3:5; 1 Cor. 6:19; Eph. 1:13; Rom. 8:2, 4, 12, 13, 1 Cor. 12:13).
 4. The Scriptures, both the Old and New Testaments, are the verbally inspired and inerrant Word of God. Divine inspiration extends equally and fully to all parts and words of the Bible, so that the whole Bible, in the original manuscripts, is without error. The Bible is God's revelation to man and is therefore the final authority for all Christian faith and practice. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17).
 5. God created man in His image for His glory. However, Adam disobeyed God and as a consequence died spiritually. This spiritual death, or total depravity, has been transmitted to the entire human race. Thus, every person comes into this world with a nature which has neither the desire nor the ability to please God, and

- is therefore in need of divine grace. (Genesis 1:26; 2:17; 3:1-7; Romans 3:10-18; 5:12; Ephesians 2:1-7).
6. God has provided the remedy for our disobedience by sending His Son, Jesus Christ, to be the sacrifice for our sins. God has determined that we do not receive forgiveness as a result of our religious deeds or other good works, no matter how well intended, but only by personal faith in Jesus Christ. Those who receive Jesus Christ as their Savior are at that point born of the Spirit and are assured of an eternity in Heaven. (Romans 5:6-9; Romans 4:5; Ephesians 2:8,9; John 3:5-18).
 7. The “true Church”, which began at Pentecost, is composed of all individuals who through faith in Jesus Christ have been united together in one body, of which Jesus Christ is the head. (Matt. 16:18; Acts 1:5; 2:41, 42; 1 Cor. 12:13; Eph. 4:15).
 8. Each “local church”, such as Sugar Land Bible Church, is a physical body of believers by which the “true Church” of Christ is shown to the world. God stresses the importance of the local church by giving it officers and ordinances. We believe that each local church is autonomous, having the right and responsibility to decide and govern its own affairs under the authority of Jesus Christ, through the guidance of Scripture. (1 Corinthians 1:2; Acts 14:23; 20:28; Heb. 13:7, 17).
 9. Water baptism and the Lord’s Supper are the only two ordinances given in the life of every believer. Baptism follows his/her conversion as a public declaration of his/her identification with Christ. The Lord’s Supper is to be taken regularly during the believer’s life as a memorial of Christ’s sacrificial death. Each of these is to be practiced as a testimony to the world, but neither

of them is to be construed as a means of, or an additional requirement for salvation. (Acts 10:47, 48; 1 Cor. 11:26).

10. Believers live with the constant hope and expectation of the imminent return of Jesus Christ. He will come first for His Saints and then return with His Saints. (John 14:1-3; Tit. 2:11-14; 1 Thess. 4:13-18).
11. Everyone, after death, will be resurrected, believers to everlasting life in Heaven, unbelievers to judgment and everlasting, conscious punishment in Hell. (John 5:28, 29; Rev. 20:11-15).
12. As believers in Jesus Christ, it is God's command that we love Him, love one another, and love those who are not believers. We can know that we love God if we are living according to His Word. We can know that we love one another if we are serving fellow believers. We can know that we love unbelievers if we are befriending them and sharing the good news of the gospel of Christ with them, both personally and through missionaries. (Mark 12:28-31; John 14:15; Phil. 2:1-5; Luke 19:10; Matt. 28:19-20).

ARTICLE IV - POSITION STATEMENTS

The intent of the **POSITION STATEMENTS** is to provide a format at Sugar Land Bible Church for addressing theological and/or ethical issues in addition to those addressed in Article II (Philosophy) and Article III (Statement of Faith) of the **CONSTITUTION OF SUGAR LAND**

BIBLE CHURCH. Although agreement with the **POSITION STATEMENTS** is not required for membership, they are taught in this church.

The **POSITION STATEMENTS** are not meant to prohibit honest and healthy discussions concerning what the Bible teaches about these issues; however, we believe that such discussions must be conducted under the guiding principle that believers are to strive to maintain unity.

These **POSITION STATEMENTS** are subject to modification, deletion, or addition at the sole discretion of the Board of Elders. However, the Elders must issue a draft copy of each revision in order to receive comments from the members. Thirty days will be allowed for comments before a final version is published.

ARTICLE V - GOVERNMENT

Sub-article A - MEMBERSHIP

Section 1: PURPOSE OF MEMBERSHIP

- a. The New Testament indicates that it is God's desire for believers to unite together to form the local Body of Christ, which includes privileges and responsibilities (Eph. 4:11-16). Membership provides a means whereby a believer may formally unite and identify with Sugar Land Bible Church. This is, in effect, making a public statement of commitment to the people and purpose of our church, as well as indicating agreement to the philosophy and practices of Sugar Land Bible Church.

- b. Membership is a relationship of mutual accountability and mutual communication. On the part of the church, there is the provision of Biblical oversight, of encouragement and correction, prayer, concern for needs and support where indicated. Members of Sugar Land Bible Church are expected to support their church by participation in worship and instruction, and by giving of their time, talents and treasures to accomplish Christ's aims through the church. They should take seriously Christ's Great Commission and His admonition to "love one another" (Matt. 28:19-20; 2 Cor. 9:7; Heb. 10:24-25; John 13:34-35). Voting is also a privilege for those who have committed themselves to this church by membership.

Section 2: QUALIFICATIONS OF MEMBERSHIP

- a. All individuals desiring to unite with this church by confession of a personal faith in Christ as Savior shall be interviewed by at least two Elders as to their Christian experience and basis of salvation, and shall be required to assent to the foregoing Articles II and III.
- b. Since water baptism is a public declaration of a person's identification with Christ, any candidate for membership who has not been baptized at the time of his or her application for membership shall agree to be baptized at the earliest opportunity. The baptism required must be a baptism subsequent to salvation. This church will practice baptism by immersion.
- c. The interviewing Elders shall review the doctrinal statement and the obligations of members with the candidates.

- d. Voting Membership is granted to each individual who has fulfilled the qualifications for membership, as stated in Article V, Sub-article A, Section 2 and has attained the age of eighteen (18).

Section 3: RECEIVING MEMBERS

- a. As many as have been duly interviewed by the Elders and fully meet the qualifications for membership stated under Article V, Sub-article A, Section 2, shall be received into active membership at that time by unanimous vote of Elders.
- b. The new members shall be welcomed publicly into the fellowship of the church at the first appropriate service following their reception by the Elders, or they may simply be announced in the Service as new members.

Section 4: OBLIGATION OF THE MEMBERS

The obligations of the members of Sugar Land Bible Church are as follows:

- a. To protect the unity of Sugar Land Bible Church by acting in love towards others and following church leadership
- b. To share in the responsibility of building up Sugar Land Bible Church by praying for it and its leaders, by faithful giving, by seeking personal maturity and by reaching out to others.

- c. To serve the ministry of Sugar Land Bible Church by determining their gifts and talents and then using them in service and ministry
- d. To support the testimony of Sugar Land Bible Church by attending faithfully and by living a Christ-like life-style.

Section 5: DISPOSITION OF MEMBERS

- a. Any members may voluntarily resign by writing the Elders and asking to be dropped from membership. Return to member status requires full reapplication and reexamination.
- b. Any member, who shall be regularly absent from the services of the church for a period of three (3) months without giving satisfactory reason for such absence to the Elders, shall be transferred from active to inactive membership status by the Elders.

Any inactive member placed on the inactive list loses his/her right to voice or vote at a congregational meeting. A member, once inactive, may become active by making application to the Elders who must vote on the application.

After one year as an inactive member, he/she shall be dropped from membership. Return to member status requires full reapplication and reexamination.

- c. Discipline is commanded by Scripture and may be administered to members (and regular attendees) in cases of overt unrepentant sin which affects the congregation or of propagation of theological heresy.

The purpose of discipline is to seek reconciliation with Christ and the local body. The Elders will examine each case and determine whether it fits the Biblical prerequisites of church discipline.

The process of discipline shall be conducted by the Elders in a spirit of genuine love in the most considerate manner and be in accordance with Matt. 18:15-20 and 1 Cor. 6:1-13. The final stage of discipline will result in a loss of membership and fellowship with the congregation, and may include providing requested information to any church where the individual may seek fellowship in the future. If the erring individual repents of his/her sin, forgiveness, comfort, and love are to be offered by the congregation (Luke 17:3, 4).

Sub-article B – ORGANIZATION

Section 1: THE TRUE HEAD OF THE LOCAL CHURCH

The Head of Sugar Land Bible Church is Jesus Christ (Eph. 1:22-23; Col. 1:18-19).

Section 2: ELDER RULE

- a. For the purposes of carrying out God's will in the life of this church, the church as a body has the responsibility to recognize qualified men in the church as Elders and to recognize certain Elders as members of the Elder Board. Those members of the congregation who have served on the Elder Board, but who are not currently serving on the Elder Board, shall be Elders-At-Large. The Senior Pastor, by virtue of his position, shall be a permanent member of the Elder Board. The

government of this church, under the leadership of the Holy Spirit, is vested in the Elder Board whose decisions shall be final (Acts 14:23, Acts 20:28).

- b. The Elder Board shall have a Chairman who shall be elected from and by those Elders who are the current members of the Elder Board. He shall serve for a period of one year and shall not serve for more than two consecutive terms. The Chairman shall be other than one of the paid staff.
- c. Regular meetings of the Elder Board shall be held at least monthly at a date and time to be established by the Elder Board. The Senior Pastor, the Chairman of the Elders or a majority of the Elder Board may call a special meeting of the Elder Board.
- d. In the transaction of business in all Elder Board meetings Robert's Rules of Order shall be the guide, with the exception that decisions are to be reached according to the principle of unselfish unity (Eph. 4:3, 11-13; Phil. 2:3-5). An Elder may not vote on matters in which he has a vested interest. These include his re-nomination, compensation (or termination) as one of the paid staff, or a matter of discipline. A quorum for the Elder Board meetings shall be a majority of the members.
- e. The Elder Board will select its own officers and establish any other offices of the church as required; however the church shall have a Senior Pastor.
- f. The Elder Board shall have the responsibility to determine and regularly review the salary of all paid church staff. This shall be done in compliance with the compensation policy approved by the Elder Board.

- g. The Elder Board may establish standards and policies for ministry functions within the church. In addition, the Elder Board is responsible to establish policies and procedures for the overall administration of church programs and facilities.

Section 3: TRUSTEES

- a. The Elder Board shall be the Trustees of the church.
- b. It shall be the duty of the Trustees to oversee the receipt of offerings to the church and to see that such funds are properly banked.
- c. The Trustees shall authorize and make provision for payment of salaries and all other church expenses.
- d. The Trustees shall hold the title to the church property. They shall supervise necessary repairs to the church buildings. They shall supervise the use of the buildings for the benefit of the church.
- e. In matters of special importance affecting fixed property and/or an assumption of debt of the church, the Trustees cannot take action without approval of seventy-five percent (75%) of the members present in a congregational meeting as per Article V, Sub-article B, Section 4, paragraph b.

Section 4: CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

- a. A regular congregational meeting shall be held during May and during September, the exact dates of which shall be set by the Elder Board. The May meeting shall be held primarily to approve necessary Elders and Deacons who shall take office at the next meeting of the Elder Board following their approval. The meeting in September shall be held to consider all other business including a review of the current financial status of the church. These meetings shall be announced to the congregation from the pulpit for a period of two (2) consecutive Sundays immediately preceding the meetings.
- b. Each candidate (or issue to be voted upon) shall be approved by a seventy-five percent (75%) "yes" vote of those votes cast for that candidate (issue) by the voting members present in good standing at the time of the meeting. Abstention from voting for a specific candidate (issue) is not considered as a vote cast for the purpose of calculating whether or not seventy-five percent (75%) of the votes cast for a specific candidate (issue) were "yes" votes. Written ballots shall be used in all votes.
- c. Special meetings of the congregation for the transaction of any legitimate business may be called at any time by the Senior Pastor, the Elder Board or two thirds (2/3) of the voting members. The nature of the meeting, with date, must be announced from the pulpit two (2) consecutive Sundays prior to the meeting.

- d. Robert's Rules of Order shall be the guide in all congregational meetings. The Chairman of the congregational meeting shall be the Chairman of the Elder Board.
- e. A quorum for regular or special congregational meetings shall be a majority of the active voting members. If less than a majority, but more than thirty percent (30%) of the active voting members are in attendance, the Elder Board may, at its discretion, declare a quorum. In the event a quorum is not present, the meeting shall be rescheduled for a date not less than one (1) week later, and be properly announced the following Sunday. At the rescheduled meeting those present shall constitute a quorum.

Sub-article C - LEADERSHIP AND ADMINISTRATION

Section 1: ELDERS

- a. The Elders shall provide leadership for the church and the Elder Board shall have the responsibility and authority to attend to any incidental or current business. These duties may be delegated to the Elders-At-Large, the Deacons, ministry leaders, staff or other members appointed to specific tasks.
- b. The Elders shall consist of male church members who shall meet the requirements as set forth in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.
- c. Annually, the voting members will be given the opportunity to approve recommended additions to the Elder Board. To accomplish this, the members of the congregation shall be given the opportunity to nominate for

the Elder Board any male member of the church that they consider qualified for the position of Elder. A Prospective Elder Screening Committee, consisting of members of the Elder Board and, as desired, Elders selected from the Elders-At-Large, will be designated by the Chairman of the Elder Board. The Committee shall consider all nominees and review their qualifications. The Committee shall then recommend candidates to the Elder Board who shall review the recommendations of the Committee and personally interview each nominee who is to be recommended to the congregation. Unanimous approval of each nominee by the Elder Board is required before an individual can be recommended to the congregation.

- d. If a position on the Elder Board becomes vacant the Elder Board may select an Elder from the Elders-At-Large to fill the vacant position; may call for nominations and process nominations in accordance with Article V, Sub-article C, Section 1, paragraph c with confirmation through a special Congregational Meeting as provided for in Article V, Sub-article B, Section 4, paragraph c; or, select to leave the position vacant until the next scheduled approval of Elders. If the position is to be filled through the selection of an Elder from the Elders-At-Large, a written announcement of this selection will be mailed to the members of the congregation who will have three (3) weeks from the post mark date of the mailing to state their written disapproval of the selection. If disapproval is received from more than twenty-five percent (25) of the voting members of the congregation, the selection will be considered null and an alternate selection will be made and processed as above.

- e. The term of office for an Elder on the Board shall begin at the first meeting of the Board of Elders following his approval by the congregation and shall end at the first meeting of the Board of Elders following the regular congregational meeting in May three (3) years later. A rotation shall be established so that each year approximately one third of the Elder Board will complete its term. An Elder Board member shall not succeed himself unless no other qualified men are available to serve and then must be confirmed by the congregation for a one-year term. Once an Elder has completed a full term on the Elder Board, he may not return to the Elder Board for a period of one year. For an Elder who was appointed or approved to the Elder Board to fill a vacancy as provided in Sub-article C, Section 1, paragraph d, his term will be the same as the elder whom he is replacing.

- f. An Elder who no longer meets the qualification for being an Elder as set forth in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 will be removed from the Elder Board and will not be considered as an Elder-At-Large. Such removal will be through voluntary resignation or, if necessary, by a unanimous vote of the Elder Board. In the case of discipline of an Elder, he shall not have a vote in his own case but shall be allowed ample defense before the Elder Board. In addition, if the nature of the situation is such, he will be subject to the discipline process as set forth in Article V, Sub-article A, Section 5, paragraph c for members of the congregation.

- g. An Elder or Elder-At-Large who meets the qualifications, but finds he can no longer serve, may voluntarily resign by presenting notice to the Elder Board.

- h. Members of the congregation shall have the right to address a regularly scheduled meeting of the Elder Board with one-week prior notice.

Section 2: ELDERS-AT-LARGE

The Elders-At-Large shall be the body of men in the church who have served as Elders but who are not currently serving on the Elder Board. This group of men are authorized to function as requested by the Elder Board in fulfilling the specific administrative and shepherding roles assigned to the Elders of the church. Such roles are to be defined by the Elder Board on a need-by-need basis but would normally include areas such as membership interviews, elder visitations, etc. An Elder-At-Large shall not be authorized to exercise those responsibilities assigned specifically to the Trustees of the church (Article V, Sub-article B, Section 3).

Section 3: SENIOR PASTOR

- a. It shall be the duty of the Senior Pastor to preach the Word, administer the ordinances, and take charge of the worship services of the church. These duties are also borne by the Elder Board who watches over the spiritual interests of the church.
- b. The Senior Pastor shall meet the requirements for Elder in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9 and is to be a member of the church. In addition, the Senior Pastor shall be a permanent member of the Elder Board.
- c. A committee appointed by the Elder Board shall select candidates for Senior Pastor. The Elder Board shall select the Senior Pastor.

- d. The term of office for the Senior Pastor shall be an indefinite time period, but subject to review by the Elder Board.

Section 4: DEACONS

- a. The Elder Board shall determine the number, functions and responsibilities of Deacons.
- b. The Deacons are to be members of the church and are to meet the requirements of 1 Tim. 3:8-13.
- c. The Deacons are selected in the same manner as Elders in Article V, Sub-article C, Section 1, paragraph c. Likewise, the Elder Board through the process as established in Article V, Sub-article C, Section 1, paragraph f, may remove a Deacon from office.
- d. In the event a Deacon position were to become vacant, the Elder Board shall consider members of the congregation who previously served in this local church as Deacons for appointment to the vacant position in accordance with the procedure of Article V, Sub-article C, Section 1, paragraph d. The Elder Board has the option to leave the position vacant, to fill the vacancy through appointment or to call a congregational meeting for approval in accordance with Article V, Sub-article B, Section 4, paragraph c.
- e. The Deacons term of office is two years, beginning at the first meeting of the Board of Elders following their approval by the congregation and ending at the first meeting of the Board of Elders following the regular congregation meeting in May two years later. For those Deacons added by a special congregational meeting or appointment as in Article V, Sub-Article C,

Section 4, paragraph d, their term of office shall be the same as the deacon they are replacing.

Section 5: TREASURER

- a. It shall be the duty of the church Treasurer to oversee banking and disbursing of all congregational funds and preparation of all applicable documents, as authorized by the Elders
- b. The Treasurer shall develop Elder approved control and other policies in accordance with accepted principles of accounting.
- c. The Treasurer shall submit the books at any time for auditing. The Treasurer shall also turn over to the Elders, as directed by them, or to the successor all monies, documents, and papers belonging to the church.
- e. The Treasurer should be a member of the church.
- f. The Treasurer shall be selected by the Elders.
- g. The term of office shall nominally be three years, subject to review by the Elder Board and thereafter renewable for periods of one year at a time until a suitable replacement is found.

Section 6: SECRETARY OF THE ELDER BOARD

- a. It shall be the duty of the Secretary of the Elder Board to keep a proper record of all Elder and Congregational meetings.

- b. The Secretary of the Elder Board shall be an Elder.
- c. The Secretary of the Elder Board shall be selected by the Elders.
- d. The term of office is one year, renewable.

Section 7: OTHER PASTORS

- a. Their duties shall be determined by the Board of Elders.
- b. Their qualifications will be determined by the Board of Elders, but as a minimum they must meet the qualifications of membership.
- c. Other Pastors are selected by the same method as described in Article V, Sub-article C, Section 3, paragraph c.
- d. Other Pastors' terms of office are the same as described in Article V, Sub-article C, Section 3, paragraph d.
- e. Other Pastors are eligible to serve on the Elder Board or as Deacons when nominated and approved in accordance with the procedures as stated in the appropriate Sections of Article V, Sub-article B.

Section 8: OTHER OFFICERS AND/OR MINISTRY LEADERS

- a. Their duties shall be determined by the Board of Elders.

- b. Their qualifications will be determined by the Board of Elders, but as a minimum they must meet the qualifications of membership.
- c. They will be selected by the Board of Elders.
- d. The term of office shall be an indefinite time period, but subject to regular review by the Elder Board.

ARTICLE VI – ORDINANCES

Section 1: THE LORD’S SUPPER

- a. The Lord’s Supper shall ordinarily be commemorated at least every six (6) to eight (8) weeks or at such other times as determined by the Elders.
- b. The Table shall be open to all in the Assembly who have exercised a saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.
- c. The observance of the Lord’s Supper shall be based on the Bible.

Section 2: BAPTISM

- a. It shall be required of every candidate seeking membership in this church that he shall have been baptized or agrees to be baptized at the earliest opportunity (see Article V, Sub-article A, Section 2, paragraph b).
- b. Baptism shall be administered upon the recommendation of the Pastor or Elders, and after due examination.

- c. The Pastor or any one of the Elders will normally administer baptism.

ARTICLE VII – AMENDMENTS

Articles II, III and VII may be amended by a ninety (90) percent favorable vote at a congregational meeting. All other articles of the church may be amended by a three-fourths (3/4) favorable vote at a congregational meeting.

Proposed amendments must be approved by the Elders and published in the church bulletin and announced from the pulpit for a period of two (2) consecutive Sundays immediately preceding said meeting. All other requirements for the congregational meeting are as defined in Article V, Sub-article B, Section 4.

POSITION STATEMENTS

The intent of the **POSITION STATEMENTS** is to provide a format at Sugar Land Bible Church for addressing theological and/or ethical issues in addition to those addressed in Article II (Philosophy) and Article III (Statement of Faith) of the **CONSTITUTION OF SUGAR LAND BIBLE CHURCH**. Although agreement with the **POSITION STATEMENTS** is not required for membership, they are taught in this church.

The **POSITION STATEMENTS** are not meant to prohibit honest and healthy discussions concerning what the Bible teaches about these issues; however, we believe that such discussions must be conducted under the guiding principle that believers are to strive to maintain unity.

These **POSITION STATEMENTS** are subject to modification, deletion, or addition at the sole discretion of the Board of Elders. However, the Elders must issue a draft copy of each Position Statement in order to receive comments from the members. Thirty days will be allowed for comments before a final version is published.

1. **SANCTITY OF LIFE** - We believe that the fetus, from the moment of conception, is a person (Psalm 139:13-18). We also believe that all persons are created in the image of God regardless of age, health, function and/or condition of dependency.
2. **MARRIAGE/DIVORCE/REMARRIAGE** - We believe that the Bible teaches a very high view of marriage. It was designed by God to be an honorable, holy and permanent union. Unfortunately sin has affected this relationship and, as a result, divorce has become an option to some people. We believe that in a marriage

composed of two believers, divorce is definitely discouraged but is allowed only in the case of adultery. In this situation the innocent spouse has the option to remarry. A Christian who acquires a divorce for reasons other than adultery is not free to remarry. In the case of a mixed marriage (a believer married to a non-believer), the Christian partner is not to seek a divorce but is to grant it should the unbelieving spouse desire it. In such a case the person would have the option to remarry. Above all, it should be noted that we strongly discourage divorce for it is our desire that couples make every effort to stay together. However, we also believe that it is incumbent upon all believers to show mercy and compassion to those who have been divorced. (February 1985. Reinstated October 2013).

3. **HERMENEUTICS** - Hermeneutics is the art and science of interpretation. The goal of the Biblical interpreter is to discover what the text (the Bible) meant in the mind of its original author for his intended audience. The means of accomplishing this is by applying a literal, grammatical, historical approach to interpretation. By literal, grammatical, historical we mean the customary, socially acknowledged meaning of a word or phrase within its context. The Bible uses figurative and poetic language and these portions should be interpreted accordingly. However, we reject any attempt to allegorize or spiritualize scripture which is not so intended.
4. **DISPENSATIONS** - A Dispensation is a specific manner in which God governs during a particular period of time. We are a dispensational church. That is, we believe that God has chosen to administer or govern

His purpose on earth through man under varying dispensations. These changes in government are a result of God's choice, and do not indicate that His character ever changes. At least three of these dispensations are mentioned in the Bible and are the subject of extended revelation, viz.: the Dispensation of the Mosaic Law, the present Dispensation of Grace, and the future Dispensation of the Millennial Kingdom. In interpreting the Bible, we believe that these are distinct and should not be intermingled or confused.

5. **ESCHATOLOGY** - Eschatology is the doctrine of future things. As a framework for interpreting and teaching prophecy, we hold to a pre-tribulational, pre-millennial position. That is, we teach that a literal thousand-year period of time (the millennium) lies ahead in the future (Rev. 20:1-8). At the conclusion of this time period, there will be a final judgment of non-Christians and then the eternal state will begin (Rev. 20:11-15). Immediately preceding this millennial period, a period of tribulation, lasting seven years, will dominate the earth (Dan. 9:27; Rev. 6:1-19:21). However, just prior to this, all believers will be removed from the earth (the rapture) and thus escape this period of tribulation (1 Thess. 4:13-18).
6. **REPENTANCE** - The New Testament word for repent (*metanoao*) means to "change one's mind." It does not mean to "turn from sin", a current day definition. We believe that salvation is based upon the one condition of faith of which repentance is a vital part. In the New Testament when a person heard the gospel and agreed with it, he was changing his mind, thus in the process of repenting. He was going from doubt, confusion, or unbelief to belief in Christ as Savior. It is in this way that repentance is related to salvation. It

should be made clear that it is possible for a person to understand the gospel and yet refuse to accept Christ as Savior. However, one cannot truly believe in Christ without having first repented. Additionally, turning from sinful acts may and should result from repentance and faith in Christ, but is neither a requirement for nor a part of salvation. In the same way, a sorrow for sin is neither a requirement for nor a part of salvation. Were this the case, then our salvation would rest, at least in part, on our own works and merit, something that is quite foreign to the Scriptures. (For more information, see J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things Which Become Sound Doctrine*, pp. 61-72.) (February 1985. Reinstated October 2013).

7. **TEMPORARY SPIRITUAL GIFTS** - This church teaches that the miraculous sign gifts, including the gift of tongues, (always the ability to speak in a previously unlearned, known language) along with the gift of healings were temporal gifts, given by the Holy Spirit solely to authenticate both the apostles and their message before the close of the canon of Scripture (1 Cor. 13:8-10). We do not believe that these are active as gifts today. However, we affirm that God is sovereign and may heal today. We believe that the majority of what is termed “miraculous” within the contemporary charismatic movement is something other than the Biblical gifts of tongues or healing.
8. **THE DEFINITION OF MARRIAGE** - Sugar Land Bible Church values God's gift of marriage between one man and one woman, which God created in His own image. As a church committed to providing its members and regular attendees with biblical truth, the Elders at Sugar Land Bible Church believe the biblical teaching about marriage and operate according to that faith

commitment. We abide by Jesus's teaching on marriage when He said, "Have you not read that He who created them from the beginning made them male and female, and said, 'for this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'? So they are no longer two, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined together let no man separate" (Matthew 19:4–6). This definition of marriage provided by Jesus includes several important truths that will comprise one of the position statements of Sugar Land Bible Church as follows: Marriage is a covenant designed by God. This biblical definition of marriage is not conditioned by culture or personal perspective but ordained by God from the beginning and expected to continue until eternity. Marriage is intended to be between one man and one woman as God biologically created them male and female from conception. Hence, any other proposals for marriage are outside of God's intended design (Leviticus 18:22; 20:13; Romans 1:26–27; 1 Corinthians 6:9–11; 1 Timothy 1:9–10). The marriage covenant is sealed through sexual intercourse reserved for one husband and one wife after they have entered into the holy covenant of marriage. God's design is for marriage to last until the death of one of the spouses. Therefore, Sugar Land Bible Church defines marriage as a divinely designed biblical covenant between one man and one woman with the marriage bond representing the lasting relationship of Christ and the church. This view of marriage is affirmed in the Old Testament as well as the New Testament (Genesis 1:27, 2:23–24; Malachi 2:14; Song of Solomon 2:7, 16; 1 Corinthians 7: 1–16; Ephesians 5:22–33; Hebrews 13:4). Pursuant to Position Statement Number Two, Sugar Land Bible Church acknowledges valid grounds by which a marriage can

be dissolved. However, we continue to maintain that these exceptions, while Biblically valid, do not constitute God's originally intended design and pattern for marriage, which we have expressed in this Position Statement. (Instated May 2015).

ELDER BOARD POLICY REGARDING POSITION STATEMENTS

TEACHING POLICY - The teachings at Sugar Land Bible Church shall be in accord with the Position Statements. To teach contrary to a Position Statement will require the approval of the Board of Elders. If approved, the Elders will set the conditions by which the position is to be taught. Teaching situations include: Pastoral sermons, Sunday School time, Fellowship Group Meetings and other gatherings where the people in that group are being taught by an Elder approved teacher.

ELDER BOARD MEMBERSHIP REQUIREMENTS - The Elder must agree with and support all Position Statements as the teaching position of the church. He will also support the rest of the Board to make sure that the teaching policies are adhered to.