

# HANDBOOK OF PRACTICES OF ETERNAL CHURCH

November 2025

This Handbook of Practices (Handbook) is adopted by Eternal Church and intended to help us faithfully and humbly work together in the mission God has called Eternal. This handbook may be amended from time to time by the Session. In the event of any conflict between the Handbook and the Bylaws, and Articles of Incorporation, the Bylaws and Articles of Incorporation control.



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# Shared Commitment

## I. Vision

We want to see every man, woman, and child living lives of witness at home, at work, and at play.

## II. Mission

We pursue this Vision by treasuring the truth of the gospel, worshiping Jesus Christ in word and deed, and growing in communities of faith.

### A. Four Coordinates More Fully Define our Mission

At Eternal Church, we believe that the gospel of Jesus Christ is not merely something we believe—it is the power that shapes every part of life. In response to God’s grace, we are becoming a people who live lives of witness: bearing the truth of the gospel in our homes, our work, and our play. This is our desire. We do not claim to live this way perfectly, but we strive—by the power of the Holy Spirit and the sustaining grace of God—to be formed by this vision and to walk in it faithfully, together. Our witness is not a task we perform, but a life we inhabit. It is lived out as we are continually shaped by **truth**, offered to God in **worship**, joined in **community**, and sent on **witness**.

#### 1. Truth

We begin with **truth**, because it is the foundation upon which everything else is built. Truth is not a construct of human wisdom or emotion—it is revealed by God and rooted in His Word. Scripture, breathed out by the Spirit, is inspired, inerrant, authoritative, sufficient, and clear. It reveals to us the truth of who God is, who we are, and what the world was made to be (2 Timothy 3:16-17; Psalm 19:7-11). The Living Word, Jesus Christ, stands at the center of all Scripture, and the Spirit leads us into all truth (John 1:1-14; John 16:13). Even creation joins the testimony, proclaiming the glory of the Creator (Psalm 19:1-4; Romans 1:20).

When the Word takes root in the heart, a new life enters and becomes our life. Our thoughts, desires, and capacities are not discarded but redirected—channeled through the life from above for holy purposes. The Word cleanses us (Ephesians 5:26), renews our minds (Romans 12:2), and gives us the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). As we are shaped by the Word, we become people who live not according to the world’s patterns but according to God’s kingdom. This formation enables us to bear witness—not simply by what we say, but by the kind of people we are becoming: those who show the world how to live under the loving reign of God.

Because of this, our preaching always proclaims the gospel. Our sermons aim to keep the life, death, and resurrection of Jesus Christ at the center. The gospel is not just how we begin our life with God—it is how we grow, endure, and are transformed.

Our children and youth are deeply included in this life of truth. They are not the Church of tomorrow but a vital part of the Church today. From the youngest to the oldest, we are all being shaped by the same truth, formed into the same body, and called to the same life of witness.



## 2. Worship

Out of this truth flows **worship**. Worship is the response of the whole person—mind, body, and spirit—to the majesty and mercy of God. It is not merely an expression of belief, but a reorientation of our desires and affections toward the One who is worthy. We are shaped by what we love (Matthew 22:37), and worship trains our hearts to love rightly—to love God above all.

At Eternal, worship is not confined to a time or a place. It is a life offered in surrender, gratitude, generosity, and joy (Romans 12:1–2). Our Sunday gatherings are not performances or religious routines, but sacred rhythms where we remember who God is and who we are in Him. In worship, we are drawn into God’s story—the story of creation, fall, redemption, and renewal—and we are invited to take our place within it.

When we gather, we come to remember, receive, and respond. We read Scripture not just to gain knowledge, but to be formed by Jesus, the living Word (Hebrews 4:12). We sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs filled with truth, letting the Word of Christ dwell in us richly (Colossians 3:16). We pray with expectancy, confident that our God listens and responds (Philippians 4:6; 1 Thessalonians 5:16–18). We come to the Lord’s Table to proclaim His life, death and resurrection, to receive grace, and to be nourished in our union with Him - until He comes again (1 Corinthians 11:26).

We worship with reverence and with delight, knowing that we are joining the song of heaven: *“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come”* (Revelation 4:8–11). In worship, we are lifted into the presence of God, even as His kingdom is being made real among us.

And yet worship does not end when the service concludes. It continues as we step into the ordinary places of life. Our relationships, our work, our rest, our service—all become offerings of praise when lived with awareness of God’s presence and purpose (Colossians 3:17; 1 Corinthians 10:31).

This rhythm of worship—gathered and scattered, Word and Table, adoration and action—shapes us to see the sacred in the everyday. It teaches us to live as those continually offering ourselves to God (Romans 6:13), surrendering all that we are to the One who is worthy of all glory.

## 3. Community

Worship draws us into **community**, because the life God calls us into is not meant to be lived alone. At Eternal Church, community is not simply a benefit of belonging—it is the essential context where faith becomes life. We are not isolated believers on individual journeys; we are a covenant family, joined together in Jesus, growing in grace and truth as one body. Our desire is that every member is truly seen, known, and loved as an indispensable part of this body.

Community begins with vulnerability. We come not with perfection, but with need—need for God and need for one another. In this space of shared life, we learn how to receive and how to give—to speak the truth in love, to carry one another’s burdens, to confess and forgive, to encourage and serve. These daily, often unseen practices are the heartbeat of a faithful and grace-shaped community.

It is in relationship that our true identity is formed. We do not become whole apart from others, but as we live in communion with one another. Our lives are shaped by presence, by patience, by participation in each other’s formation (Proverbs 27:17). Hospitality, repentance, generosity, and accountability are not events—they are the everyday rhythms of the Body of Christ.

Community is the place where the gospel becomes embodied—where love is not merely taught but practiced. It is here that we encounter the presence of Jesus in each other. Through our shared life, we become a living sign of the Kingdom of God in the way we honor, protect, listen to, and walk alongside one another.

Our children and youth are not spectators in this life—they are full participants. The formation of faith is inherently multigenerational. Each age contributes to our shared discipleship, and each generation is shaped by the other. We grow deeper in Jesus as we grow deeper together.

Community is not background noise to the Christian life—it is the sacred environment where God’s truth takes root, where His love is made tangible, and where His people reflect His glory through ordinary, everyday faithfulness. In this sacred space, every person has a place, every voice matters, and no one walks alone.

#### 4. Witness

As we are formed by truth, surrendered in Worship, and rooted in Community, we are sent into the world on **witness**. The mission of God is not a program we join; it is the very reason the church exists. We are not the starting point—God is. The story of Scripture reveals a sending God: the Father sends the Son (John 3:16), the Son sends the Spirit (John 15:26), and now the Triune God sends the Church (John 20:21). *God does not have a mission for the Church—He has a Church for His mission.*

This mission is not abstract or optional, it is embodied and essential. It is not simply about transferring information or defending doctrine, though it certainly includes faithful proclamation. It is about reconciliation: people to God, communities to one another, and all creation to its Creator (2 Corinthians 5:17–20; Colossians 1:19–20). The gospel is good news not only for souls, but for systems and structures, for cities and cultures. In a world shaped by polarization, consumerism, sexual confusion, and political idolatry, we seek to embody a better story. As a church rooted in Scripture, we hold a historic Christian view of marriage and sexuality and aim to live out these convictions with grace and hospitality, offering a faithful presence in a rapidly changing culture.

We have received mercy—so we extend mercy. We have heard good news—so we tell it. But this witness is not just verbal; it is visible. Every member of Eternal is called to participate in God’s redeeming work—in word and deed, in the ordinary and the extraordinary (Matthew 28:18–20; Acts 1:8). The Spirit equips everyday people to be faithful in all areas of life: around the dinner table, in classrooms, on job sites, through the arts, and in city halls.

We witness not only through preaching, but through presence. Not only through arguments, but through compassion. We bear the gospel not just as a message, but as a way of being. We seek justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8), and we remember that true justice begins with humility and repentance. Before justice can roll down like waters, it must flow from hearts cleansed and made new by grace (Isaiah 1:16–17; James 1:27).

We stand with the vulnerable, advocate for the voiceless, and shine light into dark places—not because we are the solution, but because we know the One who is the Light of the world (John 8:12). We do not bring hope as outsiders—we embody hope as those being continually transformed by the grace we proclaim (Titus 3:4–7). Our witness is not a strategy for self-fulfillment or social credibility. It is the overflow of God’s love poured into our hearts (Romans 5:5).

Witness is not a requirement to earn God's favor—it is the evidence that we already have it. Our lives become signs—imperfect but real—that Jesus is Lord and His kingdom is near. We witness not only by telling a story, but by being a story: a people transformed by grace and alive in the world.

We are not waiting for people to come to church—we are becoming the Church in the world. In every vocation and every conversation, we carry the presence of Jesus. We seek to live as salt and light, ambassadors of the King, ministers of reconciliation, agents of renewal (Matthew 5:13–16; 2 Corinthians 5:20).

This is our calling. This is our joy. And this is our witness: that in Jesus, the world is being made new—and we are living proof.

### **The Way of Eternal Church**

At Eternal Church, we seek to live of witness, shaped by truth, surrendered in worship, rooted in community, and sent with purpose, for God's glory and the good of every man, woman, and child in our reach.

## **III. Values**

### **A. Centrality of Jesus**

The gospel is the good news that God, in steadfast love and faithfulness, has not abandoned a world marked by sin, suffering, and estrangement (John 3:16–17; Romans 5:8). Instead, He has made a way to reconcile and renew all things through the incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension, and ongoing reign of His beloved Son, Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:15–20; Philippians 2:6–11).

This gospel is not just a set of ideas or truths to be believed; it is the living announcement that the crucified and risen Lord is making all things new (Revelation 21:5; 2 Corinthians 5:17–19). Jesus is not merely the centerpiece of Christian faith—He is the interpretive key to all of Scripture, the fulfillment of God's covenantal promises, and the embodiment of what it means to be fully human (Matthew 5:17; Hebrews 1:1–3; Romans 5:12–21). As He Himself taught, all of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings find their coherence in Him (Luke 24:27, 44–45).

He is the true Word (John 1:1–14), and the only faithful lens through which we can rightly see God (John 14:9), rightly understand ourselves (Colossians 3:3–4), and rightly engage the world (John 17:18; Matthew 28:18–20).

To confess Jesus as Lord is to center our lives around His way, His wisdom, His cross-shaped love (Luke 9:23–24; 1 Corinthians 1:18). It is to reorient every part of our existence—personal and communal, spiritual and material, private and public—toward His kingdom (Matthew 6:10, 33; Colossians 3:17). His life is the pattern (1 Peter 2:21), His teaching the truth (John 8:31–32), His Spirit the power (Acts 1:8; Romans 8:11), and His presence the promise (Matthew 28:20). Everything we hope for, everything we become, flows from abiding in Him (John 15:1–5).

This Christ-centered gospel is not merely an announcement of forgiveness, but a summons to transformation (Romans 12:1–2; Ephesians 4:20–24). It disrupts and dismantles the dominion of sin, not only in the soul, but in systems and structures (Colossians 2:15; Luke 4:18–19). It does not call us to escape the world, but to enter it with cruciform love, as agents of reconciliation and renewal (John 20:21; 2 Corinthians 5:18–20). It touches everything—our identities (Galatians 2:20), our desires (Romans 6:12–14), our economies (Luke 12:15–21), our politics (Philippians 3:20), our art

(Exodus 35:30–35), our families (Ephesians 5:1–2, 21–33), our neighborhoods (Jeremiah 29:7), our imaginations (Romans 12:2).

He is central because He alone is faithful (Revelation 19:11). His kingdom cannot be shaken (Hebrews 12:28). All that is hidden will be brought into the light (Luke 8:17), and all that is rooted in Him will endure (1 Peter 1:3–5; 1 John 2:17). In a world obsessed with spectacle, power, and self-preservation, His way seems weak and foolish (1 Corinthians 1:25–29). Yet this is the mystery and power of the gospel: what appears fragile is indestructible; what the world discards, He redeems (Isaiah 53:2–5; Acts 4:11). The cross, once a symbol of shame, is now the shape of hope (Hebrews 12:2; Galatians 6:14).

To live with Jesus at the center is to live in hope, even when the world is trembling (Romans 5:1–5). It is to listen for His voice in the silence (John 10:27), to see His hand in the broken places (Psalm 34:18; Matthew 5:3–10), and to believe that even now, He is holding all things together—and leading us forward into the light of the new creation (Colossians 1:17; Revelation 22:1–5).

## **B. Transformed Lives**

The gospel is not merely the entrance to the Christian life—it is the path, the nourishment, the horizon, and the air we breathe. It is both the diving board and the pool in which we swim as the people of God. Far from being a message only for the unbelieving world, the gospel remains the primary way believers grow in Christlikeness, day by day, breath by breath (Colossians 2:6–7; Romans 1:16–17).

At Eternal, we hold fast to the truth that transformation is not a separate project from salvation—it is its outworking. We grow by going deeper into the grace that first saved us (Titus 2:11–12). In a culture that often reduces spiritual growth to behavior modification or religious performance, we affirm that the Christian life is formed through continual encounter with Jesus and His good news. Believing, rejoicing, remembering, understanding, and practicing the gospel is not remedial—it is the core curriculum for every disciple (2 Peter 1:3–9).

Every sin that distances us from God is rooted in a misdirected hope—a trust placed in something other than Jesus to give us identity, purpose, or peace (Jeremiah 2:13; Romans 1:25). These *functional saviors* may not be carved from wood or stone, but they are no less idols of the heart. Mere discipline, routines, or church involvement—even good things—cannot uproot them. Only the gospel, through the power of the Spirit, can displace the lies with truth and liberate the heart (John 8:36; Galatians 5:1).

This inner renewal begins with a once-for-all act of grace (Ephesians 2:8–9), but it unfolds as a lifelong pattern of repentance and trust (Romans 12:1–2; 2 Corinthians 3:18). We are not called to bootstrap our way to godliness, but to surrender, daily and deeply, to the transforming love of Jesus. This transformation is not cosmetic or compartmentalized—it penetrates our wounds, reshapes our desires, and trains us to live in step with the Spirit (Galatians 5:22–25).

The Christian life, then, is not about earning anything from God, but learning to live in the fullness of what we have received in Jesus. Grace is not only pardon—it is power. It enables us to confront our sin without fear, knowing we are already beloved; and to walk in obedience, not to earn God's favor, but because we already have it (Philippians 2:12–13; Romans 6:11–14).

At Eternal, this gospel-centered transformation is the foundation of all we do—in preaching, elder and pastoral care, counseling, and formation. We seek to bring the gospel to bear on life as it actually is, not as we pretend it to be. This means making space for struggle, for slowness, for failure, and for grace to do its mysterious work. It means speaking honestly about our need, and boldly about the sufficiency of Christ (2 Corinthians 12:9–10).

We do not enter the kingdom to *get to work* earning our place. We are called to co-labor with the Spirit in the application of the gospel to the hidden, hurting places of our lives (Philippians 1:6; Hebrews 10:14). This is how transformation happens—not from the outside in, but from the inside out. Transformation doesn't come through pressure or fear, but through the presence and love of Christ. (1 John 4:18–19).

### **C. Covenant Community**

The gospel doesn't just reconcile us to God—it binds us to one another in love. It re-forms our hearts, re-orders our desires, and reshapes our identity in such a way that we are freed to live in deep, honest, enduring relationships. In Jesus, we are not simply individuals who happen to believe the same things—we are members of one another, joined together as a new creation community (Romans 12:4–5; 2 Corinthians 5:17–18).

The gospel births a people—not just persons—and it forms a community that is intentionally countercultural. In an age shaped by radical individualism and consumerism, where relationships are often transactional and commitment is provisional, the church is called to embody a different way of life: one of self-giving love, mutual responsibility, and covenantal belonging (Philippians 2:1–4; Acts 2:42–47).

Western values are not inherently evil—but when autonomy and self-fulfillment take precedence over faithfulness to the kingdom of God, they become idols. They insulate us from vulnerability, inhibit sacrificial love, and resist the call of the cross. But Jesus calls us not to guard our lives, but to pour them out—as He did (Luke 9:23–24; Philippians 2:5–8). To follow Him is to live in the pattern of the gospel: giving, serving, dying, and rising again in community.

In this light, we enter into covenants—not because they are convenient or easy, but because they are faithful and right. God's covenant with us through Jesus was not abstract or theoretical—it was embodied, costly, sealed in blood (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 9:15). Whether in marriage, singleness, friendship, or the life of the church, we are called into covenant relationships that reflect God's faithful love. We say with our lives: *He has bound Himself to us, and so we bind ourselves to one another* (1 John 4:11–12).

This family includes people in every life stage and season, married and single, young and old, each contributing uniquely to the body of Christ. Like Jesus and Paul, those who live single lives are full participants in God's mission and reflect His kingdom in meaningful ways. Singleness is not a waiting room or a detour, but a calling that can beautifully embody devotion, hospitality, friendship, and service for the sake of the gospel.

These covenant relationships are the workshop of spiritual maturity. They are where we learn humility and boldness, truth and grace, confession and forgiveness (Colossians 3:12–14; James 5:16). Here, we submit to authority with trust—so long as it reflects God's heart—and those in authority lead as servants, with reverence and love (Ephesians 5:21; Matthew 20:25–28). In the church, we

practice reconciliation not as a last resort, but as a defining mark of our shared life (2 Corinthians 5:18–20; Matthew 18:15–17).

In covenant community, the gospel is not only preached—it is practiced. It takes on flesh. We bear with one another in love, striving for unity not by enforcing uniformity, but by honoring a diversity of nonessential beliefs, personalities, gifts, and perspectives (Ephesians 4:1–6; Romans 14:1–4). We are not united because we are the same, but because we belong to the same Lord and are held together by His Spirit.

Jesus' work of salvation was not given so that we might have isolated spiritual experiences or private fulfillment. He came to create a people who would reflect His love to the world (Titus 2:14; 1 Peter 2:9–10). "By this all people will know that you are my disciples," Jesus said, "if you have love for one another" (John 13:34–35). Our covenant love is our witness. Our faithfulness to one another is the visible sign of His faithfulness to us.

Therefore, we commit to walk together in gospel-formed community—not as consumers of spiritual goods, but as brothers and sisters in Christ. We commit not only to belong, but to love; not only to attend, but to invest; not only to receive, but to give. In this, we trust that the world will see something not only different—but divine.

#### **D. Biblical Prayer**

Prayer is not simply a spiritual discipline—it is the lifeblood of our relationship with God. It is the first language of the kingdom, the posture of the heart that confesses both our need and God's nearness. At Eternal, we believe that a faithful church is a praying church—not occasionally, but consistently; not formally alone, but fervently, corporately, and privately. As in the early church, we long to be a people of whom it can truly be said: *they devoted themselves to prayer* (Acts 2:42).

In prayer, we draw near to the One who has already drawn near to us (James 4:8). We adore Him for His majesty and mercy (Psalm 145:1–3), we confess our sin and receive His forgiveness (1 John 1:9), we give thanks for His provision and presence (Philippians 4:6), and we intercede on behalf of others (1 Timothy 2:1). We pray to be brought more fully into His will—to seek His kingdom, His agenda, His initiatives above our own (Matthew 6:9–10).

Prayer is how we learn to walk not by sight, but by faith (2 Corinthians 5:7). It is how we remember that our work is ultimately not ours at all—it is God's. Every sermon preached, every decision made, every conflict navigated, every act of care or counsel must be undergirded in prayer, or it will amount to nothing more than human effort dressed in religious clothing (John 15:5; Psalm 127:1–2).

When we pray for what only God can do, we position ourselves to witness what only God can accomplish. We begin to expect answers that bear the fingerprints of heaven—outcomes that cannot be traced back to our strategies, strengths, or systems, but only to the Spirit of God (Ephesians 3:20–21). These answers don't always look like what we imagined, but they always bring God glory and deepen our dependence.

To be prayerful is to be vulnerable—to admit we do not have what it takes. But it is also to be confident—to believe that God loves to give wisdom to those who ask (James 1:5), strength to those who wait (Isaiah 40:31), and peace to those who trust (Isaiah 26:3; Philippians 4:7). It is to live with open hands and a quiet heart, even in the midst of chaos, because we know our Father sees, hears, and is already at work (Matthew 6:6–8).

We see prayer as the atmosphere in which the life of the church breathes. We pray for our enemies and our elders, for healing and for holiness, for clarity and for courage (Romans 12:12; Colossians 4:2). We pray when we know what to say, and we pray when all we can do is groan (Romans 8:26–27).

At Eternal, we strive to remain rooted in prayer so that we do not lose our way. In a noisy world full of self-reliance and speed, we choose the quiet place again and again, trusting that what is born in prayer will be sustained by the Spirit and bear fruit that lasts (John 15:16).

Let it be said of us, as it was of those first followers: *They devoted themselves to prayer.*

### **E. Preeminent Worship**

Worship reflects the heartbeat of heaven, and for the people of God, it must also be the heartbeat of the church.

In worship, we draw near to the throne of grace—not merely symbolically, but spiritually and truly. We join a song that has been resounding since before time began, echoing the eternal praise that surrounds the triune God: *“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come!”* (Revelation 4:8). When we worship, we are never more aligned with the deep structure of reality, for we are joining the rhythm of heaven.

Worship is not a preference or a stylistic expression—it is the fitting and necessary response of all creation to the sheer glory and goodness of its Creator. We worship because God is infinitely worthy. His beauty captivates, His holiness humbles, and His faithfulness compels (Psalm 96:7–9; Romans 11:33–36). But even more than that, we worship because in worship, we are made more fully human. We become what we were created to be: those who reflect His glory, receive His love, and return it in joyful surrender (Isaiah 43:21; 1 Peter 2:9).

At Eternal, worship is not an event we attend but a life we live. Yet within that life, corporate worship holds a central place. We gather not to be entertained or distracted from the world, but to be rooted in the presence of God and reoriented toward His kingdom. We gather to sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, to pray and fast, to confess our sins and proclaim our forgiveness, to hear the Word and be shaped by it, to commune at the Lord’s Table, and to be sent out in mission and mercy (Colossians 3:14–17; Acts 2:42–47).

This rhythm of gathering and scattering is not peripheral—it is the engine of renewal. In worship, we are transformed. As we behold the glory of the Lord, we are changed from one degree of glory to another (2 Corinthians 3:18). We bring our whole selves—our joy and our sorrow, our celebration and our lament—into the presence of the living God, and there we are formed into a people who can bear His image in the world.

Worship, then, is both upward and outward. We lift our hearts to heaven, and we lift our eyes to the world. Our worship proclaims to every nation and people that the Lord reigns, that He is good, and that His mercy endures forever (Psalm 100:1–5; Revelation 7:9–12). Our gathered worship becomes a witness: that there is another way, another King, another kingdom. A church that worships with reverence and delight becomes a prophetic sign to the world—a taste of the age to come breaking into the present.

At Eternal, we refuse to shape our worship around the preferences of a dying culture. We believe that worship must first and foremost glorify God and edify His people. It must be saturated with Scripture, centered on Jesus, empowered by the Spirit, and directed toward the Father. Our songs teach; our prayers shape; our sacraments nourish; our preaching convicts and comforts. Every element is intentional, not as a performance for the audience, but as a participation in the divine life to which we've been graciously invited (John 4:23–24; Hebrews 12:28–29).

Worship is not a means to an end. It is the end for which we were made. And when we worship rightly, we are renewed in hope, rooted in truth, and reminded of our eternal destiny—to worship forever the One who is worthy.

## **F. Cultural Renewal and Discord**

Jesus has not called His people to retreat from the world, nor to blend in indistinguishably with it. Rather, He names us salt and light (Matthew 5:13–16)—agents of preservation, flavor, visibility, and hope. The gospel does not only transform our inner lives; it equips us to live publicly and purposefully in a world that is both beautiful and broken. In Jesus, we become a people who participate in God's grand mission of renewal—the restoration of all creation under the reign of King Jesus (Romans 8:18–23).

We believe that vocation—our daily work and callings in the world—is sacred. There is no divide between the *spiritual* and the *secular*, for “whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men... you are serving the Lord Christ” (Colossians 3:23–24). Whether in business, at play, the arts, education, medicine, homemaking, or civic leadership, every arena of life can become a place of worship and witness. We labor not merely for provision, but to reflect the creativity, justice, and beauty of the One in whose image we were made.

To live faithfully in this cultural moment requires both discernment and hope. We are called to seek the welfare of the places where we live (Jeremiah 29:7), to do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God (Micah 6:8). We affirm and celebrate the good wherever it is found, for all truth is God's truth. Yet we also resist the distortions and idolatries that seek to twist what is good into what is harmful. This resistance is not fueled by fear or anger, but by holy love—love that tells the truth, even when it costs us.

We expect, and even embrace, the tension of this witness. The gospel brings both renewal and resistance. We will sometimes be praised and other times persecuted. But our posture remains the same: humble courage, grounded in the Word, empowered by the Spirit, and modeled after our crucified and risen Lord.

This is what it means to be a faithful presence in the world: to inhabit our culture with the integrity of heaven, to speak with both boldness and gentleness (1 Peter 3:15–16), and to embody a hope that does not disappoint. We are not here to escape the world, but to love it toward redemption—not by our own strength, but by the presence of Jesus alive within us.

## **G. Mission Focus**

The Bible is not merely a guide for personal morality or religious insight—it is the sweeping, Spirit-breathed record of God's unfolding mission to redeem, reconcile, and renew all things through Jesus. From Genesis to Revelation, we see not a distant deity, but a missional God—a Father who seeks, a



Son who saves, and a Spirit who sends. To become a follower of Jesus, then, is not only to be rescued by His grace but to be swept up into His purpose.

Being part of God's family means being part of God's work.

At Eternal, we believe the world is not a place to escape, but a field to cultivate. It is not a sinking ship to abandon, but a beloved creation to steward and serve until the day all things are made new (Romans 8:18–23; Revelation 21:1–5). We do not wait for heaven in fear or apathy—we live as citizens of heaven now, bringing its values, hope, and healing into our neighborhoods, our workplaces, our city, and to the ends of the earth (Matthew 5:14–16; Philippians 3:20).

The local church is not peripheral to God's plan—it *is* God's plan (Ephesians 3:10–11). The church is not a passive recipient of grace, but the living, breathing body of Christ, commissioned to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18–20). We are ambassadors of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:17–20), carriers of the kingdom, and heralds of good news for the poor, the broken, and the bound (Luke 4:18–19). This is not the calling of a few; it is the calling of all.

Mission is not something others do "out there"—it is the shape of the Christian life everywhere. Every member of Christ's body has a role to play: some will go across oceans, others across the street. Some will give sacrificially to support the work; others will equip, host, disciple, pray, or advocate. All are sent ones. All are participants. All are necessary.

At Eternal, we nurture a posture of openness to the Spirit's sending. We expect God to call members of our church to go—to plant churches, serve among unreached peoples, support global partners, and live incarnationally in contexts where Jesus is not yet known. We also affirm that this same Spirit is calling us to live missionally in our homes, schools, offices, and third spaces. There is no divide between sacred and secular—all of life is mission when it is surrendered to Jesus (Romans 12:1–2; Colossians 3:17).

And so, we are a church that prays fervently for the nations, that gives generously to the work of global and local missions, that equips our people to live as salt and light, and that commissions them with joy whenever and wherever the Spirit leads. Whether for a week, a year, or a lifetime, we bless those who go, and we support those who stay and send.

We do this because we know where history is headed. The story will end—and begin anew—around the throne, where a multitude no one can number from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation will worship the Lamb who was slain (Revelation 7:9–10). This is the mission for which Jesus died, and therefore it is the mission of every church that bears His name.

We go, we give, we pray, we proclaim—until the earth is filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord as the waters cover the sea (Habakkuk 2:14).

## **H. Acting Justly**

The gospel of Jesus Christ not only reconciles individuals to God, but also exposes the brokenness of a world estranged from its Creator. It humbles the powerful and dignifies the powerless. It levels every false hierarchy by reminding us that we are all dust—each one a sinner in need of mercy, and each one made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26–27; Romans 3:23). Therefore, the church, as the covenant community of the redeemed, must not only preach the gospel, but embody its implications through a life of justice and mercy.

God's justice is not an abstract ideal. It is His character in action—His holy, loving, righteous engagement with a world marred by sin. From the earliest covenants, God called His people to reflect His justice through practical acts of generosity, fairness, protection of the vulnerable, and opposition to oppression (Micah 6:8; Deuteronomy 10:18–19). Israel was to live as a light to the nations, not only in worship but in the way they treated the orphan, the widow, the foreigner, and the poor. That calling has not changed for the church.

At Eternal, we do not see justice as a partisan issue or a social agenda, but as a kingdom imperative. We believe justice is what love looks like in public. It is the church's Spirit-empowered response to the reality that the world is filled with systems, powers, and patterns of thinking that elevate some and marginalize others—systems that reflect human brokenness, not divine design (Isaiah 10:1–2; Ephesians 2; James 2:1–9).

We therefore reject both naïve idealism and fatalistic apathy. We do not wait for perfection to act. We recognize that institutions can be unjust because individuals are unjust, and we confess that these patterns can persist even in the church when left unchallenged. So, while our central mission is always to proclaim the saving grace of Jesus Christ, we understand that the power of that gospel must also be demonstrated in real, tangible acts of justice, compassion, and advocacy.

Justice, as we live it, begins with generosity. It looks like feeding the hungry, welcoming the refugee, adopting the unwanted, and honoring the aged. It means creating space for those with less privilege and voice, and it means allowing the shape of our life together—our governance, our giving, our rhythms—to reflect the just heart of God who shows no favoritism (Romans 2:11; Proverbs 31:8–9). Justice is neither a trend nor a slogan; it is a testimony to a different kind of kingdom—one where the last are first, where the humble are lifted, and where mercy triumphs over judgment (Luke 1:52–53; Matthew 23:23; James 2:13).

And we do this not because those we serve are always virtuous or deserving, but because we are the undeserving ones who have been served by Jesus. He is our model—the One who stooped, who bore injustice, who took the punishment of our sin upon Himself, and who now reigns in righteousness. In His name, we advocate for the voiceless, speak truth to power, and strive to make the church a community where justice flows like a river and righteousness like a never-failing stream (Amos 5:24).

## **I. Loving Mercy**

At the heart of our life together is mercy—not a vague sentiment, but the fierce, covenantal love of God known as *hesed*. It is the love that does not let go. The Lord describes Himself as “a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness” (Exodus 34:6). It is this merciful character of God that holds us fast, renews us each morning (Lamentations 3:22–23), and anchors our hope when we falter.

At Eternal, we hold fast to this truth: *justice without mercy becomes self-righteousness; mercy without justice becomes sentimentality*. We are not the faithful ones in this covenant—He is. And it is because God demonstrated His mercy toward us, “while we were still sinners” (Romans 5:8), that we now extend that same mercy to others. This is not optional. It is a calling birthed in grace.

Mercy compels us toward compassion, especially when it is not easy. It slows our judgments, opens our hearts, and reminds us that every person we encounter is a story in process, loved by God. It

draws us toward patience with those who try us, forgiveness for those who wound us, and kindness even to those we do not yet understand (Luke 6:36). In doing so, we resist the tribalism and polarization of our time and offer a different way—the way of the cross.

When Peter asked how many times he should forgive—thinking seven was generous—Jesus shattered his expectations with “seventy-seven times” (Matthew 18:21–22). This mercy is not mathematical. It is boundless, flowing not from our own capacity, but from God’s. Because we are the recipients of undeserved mercy, we become conduits of it. We love mercy because mercy has first loved us.

At Eternal, loving mercy is not a soft virtue—it is a radical practice. It changes the tone of our conversations, the posture of our hearts, and the shape of our community. And as we walk this road together, we find ourselves becoming more like our Savior—gentle and lowly, yet full of truth and grace.

## **J. Walking Humbly**

*“God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble”* (James 4:6). This stark contrast echoes throughout the story of Scripture. From the fall of Adam to the exaltation of Jesus, the dividing line has always been drawn not between the strong and the weak, or the wise and the foolish, but between the proud and the humble. At Eternal, we believe that humility is not optional for the Christian life—it is the very soil in which the gospel takes root and grows.

To walk humbly before God (Micah 6:8) is to walk in truth. It is to see reality rightly—not inflated by ego, nor diminished by shame. Humility is not self-hatred or weakness, but the steady orientation of the heart toward God’s greatness and our dependence. It is the dawning awareness that “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30), and the awe-filled confession of the psalmist: “What is man that You are mindful of him?” (Psalm 8:4).

Pride, on the other hand, deceives us. It blinds us to grace, justifies our prejudices, and shields us from correction. It can even mask itself as spiritual strength. That is why pride is perhaps the most dangerous sin—it resists repentance, chokes transformation, and isolates us from God and one another. Humility, by contrast, opens us. It softens us to the Word, to correction, to community, to change. Without humility, we cannot receive Jesus. And without humility, we cannot follow Him.

Humility is also the ground of healthy community. It enables us to challenge injustice with courage and conviction, while refusing to demonize our enemies. It reminds us that we too were once alienated and rebellious—and still are, apart from grace (Titus 3:3–5). It grants us the strength to forgive and the courage to ask for forgiveness. It allows us to admit we’re wrong without crumbling, because our worth is not based on being right but being loved. It grants both leaders and followers the freedom to serve, to listen, to yield, and to grow.

Humility is what allows covenants to hold. It makes peace possible in a world addicted to self-preservation. It’s what sustains long obedience in the same direction. It is what allows a church to be corrected by Scripture, guided by the Spirit, and preserved in unity.

Ultimately, humility is not something we generate; it is something God cultivates in us as we keep our eyes on Jesus. He is the One who, though being in very nature God, made Himself nothing (Philippians 2:5–8). The Son of God took on flesh, stooped to serve, washed dirty feet, bore our sin,

and laid down His life in love. This is the shape of divine greatness, and we are called to follow Him in it. The cross is not just where we find forgiveness; it is where we learn the way to live.

At Eternal, we pray that humility would not be rare or occasional, but the fragrance of our shared life. We hope to be a people who walk humbly with God and receive His grace.. If we are to become what He desires for us to be, then we must descend. We must go low, so He can be lifted high.

*“Humble yourselves before the Lord, and He will exalt you” (James 4:10).*

## **K. Our Peace with God and Other Christian Believers**

Through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we are reconciled to God. This peace is not merely the absence of hostility; it is the restoration of relationship—a deep, covenantal harmony where we are welcomed not as strangers but as beloved children. “Since we have been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ” (Romans 5:1). This peace is a gift. It is not earned, deserved, or manufactured. It flows freely from the wounds of Jesus and is secured forever in His resurrected life.

But the gospel does not stop at vertical reconciliation. The peace we receive from God is meant to extend horizontally—to our brothers and sisters in Christ. Just as Jesus broke down the dividing wall of hostility between Jew and Gentile, so also His cross continues to dismantle every wall that separates human hearts (Ephesians 2:14–18). We are not only saved into a personal relationship with God—we are saved into a community of peace, a body knit together by the Spirit in love.

Still, we confess: this kind of peace does not come naturally. Our sin doesn’t just alienate us from God—it fractures our relationships with others. Pride, fear, insecurity, self-protection, envy, and bitterness sabotage the unity we are called to maintain. That’s why the journey toward peace begins with humility. It begins with owning our sin, naming the ways we have harmed others, and seeking forgiveness. It means forgiving as we have been forgiven, releasing our grip on resentment and entrusting justice to the Lord (Ephesians 4:32; Matthew 6:12). And it means walking—sometimes limping—toward reconciliation, even when it’s hard or costly.

Peacemaking, then, is not a passive posture but a courageous calling. It requires truth-telling, confession, repentance, forgiveness, and perseverance. It requires listening well, speaking gently, bearing with one another in love (Colossians 3:12–15). Peace is not pretending all is well; peace is laboring together to bring what is broken into the light of Christ’s healing.

This is why, at Eternal, we take seriously the ministry of reconciliation—not only with God, but with one another. We do not expect perfection in the church, but we do expect pursuit: pursuit of peace, pursuit of reconciliation, pursuit of relational wholeness modeled on the life of our Savior. We are called to “live peaceably with all” so far as it depends on us (Romans 12:18), and in doing so, to show the world the new reality Jesus is bringing into being.

The church is meant to be a sign and foretaste of that coming kingdom—a kingdom where swords are turned to plowshares, where tears are wiped away, and where all who were once far off are brought near by the blood of Jesus. This is the peace that passes understanding (Philippians 4:7), and this is the peace we long to cultivate among ourselves, for His glory and our joy.

*“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9).*

## **IV. Statement of Beliefs**

We recognize and embrace the rich diversity of theological backgrounds represented in our community. While we do not all hold the same convictions on every doctrinal point and may differ on the levels of emphasis, we are united by a shared commitment to the gospel of Jesus Christ and to life together as His Body.

Core Principles:

- Unity in essential beliefs. These include the triune nature of God, the incarnation, crucifixion, and resurrection of Jesus, salvation by grace through faith, and the authority of Scripture. (Ephesians 4:4-6)
- Liberty in nonessential beliefs. In such areas, we welcome dialogue, not to dilute truth, but to pursue it in humility, recognizing that even nonessential doctrines shape our discipleship. (Romans 14:1, 4, 12, 22)
- Love in all things. In all things, we commit to Christlike love that is patient, humble, and active—forming us into the likeness of Jesus and binding us together in peace. (1 Corinthians 13)

### **A. The God We Know and Trust**

#### **1. The Scriptures**

- The Bible is the inspired Word of God, breathed out by the Holy Spirit through human authors. It is fully trustworthy, revealing God's truth and His ongoing plan to redeem and restore all creation. The Bible shows us who God is, how He has acted in history, and how we are called to trust and follow Him. It is our sure and sufficient guide for faith, life, and the hope we have in Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:20-21; 2 Timothy 3:16-17; Luke 24:27; Hebrews 4:12)
- It is the story that ultimately leads to Jesus, rather than a collection of doctrinal statements or moral directives. (Luke 24:13-35, John 5:39)
- Jesus, who is called the Word (John 1:1), is the ultimate interpretive lens of the Bible. (Luke 24:17, John 17:17, Matthew 5:18)
- The Bible should be read in its historical, cultural and literary context.
- The Word of God is the triune God's active self-expression—His voice, His presence, His will—made most fully known to us in the person of Jesus, the living Word. Scripture stands as a trustworthy and Spirit-breathed witness to this Word, but it is not the only way God speaks. The Holy Spirit continues to guide us into truth, and even creation quietly proclaims the wonder and glory of its Creator. (John 1:1-14; Hebrews 1:1-3, 4:12; John 16:13; Psalm 19:1-4; Romans 1:20; 15:4)

#### **2. The Godhead**

- One God revealed in three persons: Father, Son, and Spirit. (Deuteronomy 6:4, Matthew 28:19, 2 Corinthians 13:14).
- The Trinity is relational, reflecting the divine love and unity at the heart of all creation.
- Each person of the Trinity is equal in essence, power, and glory.

- God is both transcendent, above and beyond all creation (Isaiah 55:8-9), and immanent, present and active within it (Jeremiah 23:23-24) and He seeks to be in relation with us.
  - God, in His triune nature, is the source and fulfillment of all true worship. He is worthy of all praise as the Creator and Redeemer, whose glory fills heaven and earth. (Psalm 96:4-6, Revelation 4:8-11, Romans 11:36)
  - The Person and Work of God the Father
  - Creator, sustainer, sovereign over all. (Psalm 139:1-18, Isaiah 40:18-31, Acts 17:24-25)
  - God is holy, just, and sovereign—eternal and unchanging in all His ways. (Romans 3:26; Malachi 3:6) He is full of steadfast love and mercy toward all He has made. (Psalm 145:8-9; Ephesians 2:4) He knows all things, holds all power, and is always present. (Psalm 139:1-10; Jeremiah 32:17)
  - The sender of Jesus and Father of believers. (Ephesians 1:3-6, Hebrews 12:5)
  - God reigns over all He has made, and His purpose is to restore it. Through Jesus Christ, He is bringing healing to a broken world—reconciling all things to Himself. What He has begun, He will surely finish (Colossians 1:19–20; Romans 8:18–25; Revelation 21:5).
  - He calls His church universal to participate in His mission, reflecting His love and justice in the world. (John 3:16, 2 Corinthians 5:18-20)
3. The Person and Work of Jesus Christ
- Jesus is the Messiah, the fulfillment of Israel's story and God's promise (John 1:41, Luke 24:25-27, Acts 2:36)
  - Jesus is fully God and fully human, the incarnate Word. (John 1:1-14; John 8:58, Colossians 1:15-20, Hebrews 2:14, Philippians 2:6-8, John 1:14)
  - Jesus was born of a virgin by the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 1:23-25)
  - Lived a sinless life, died as a substitute for sinners. (Romans 3:23-25, 1 Corinthians 15:3-4)
  - Jesus bodily resurrection inaugurated new creation, confirming His victory over death and secured the promise of restoration. (1 Corinthians 15:20-28, Romans 6:9-10)
  - He now lives and intercedes for believers. (Romans 4:25, Hebrews 7:23-25, 1 John 2:1-2)
  - Jesus' life, teachings, death, and resurrection inaugurated God's kingdom on earth. (Mark 1:15, Matthew 5-7)
  - Jesus' resurrection marks the beginning of new creation—the firstfruits of God's promise to restore all things under Christ. What began in Him will one day be fully realized, as all of creation is renewed and brought under His reign. (Ephesians 1:10; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28)
  - Jesus is now exalted as Lord, reigning at the right hand of the Father and will return to bring all things to completion, fully establishing God's reign on earth. (Acts 1:11, Philippians 2:9-11, 2 Thessalonians 1:5-10, Revelation 21:1-5, 22:12-13)

#### 4. The Person and Work of the Holy Spirit

- Following the completed work of Jesus Christ, the Father sent another Helper—the Holy Spirit—to dwell with and abide in believers forever. (John 14:15–18)
- The Spirit is God’s empowering presence, forming us into the likeness of Christ and enabling us to live in communion with Him. (John 14:16–17; Acts 1:8)
- He regenerates and indwells believers at salvation, sealing us for the day of redemption and marking us as God’s own. (Romans 8:1–13; 1 Corinthians 12:4–13; Ephesians 1:13–14)
- The Spirit dwells within God’s people, guiding them in wisdom and truth. (Romans 8:1–11, Galatians 5:22–23)
- He produces spiritual fruit in our lives—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. (Galatians 5:22–23; Ephesians 5:18)
- He convicts the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment, awakening hearts to the reality of God. (John 16:7–11)
- The Spirit empowers the Church to reflect God’s kingdom in the world, shaping a people who bear witness to Jesus through word and deed. (Acts 2; 2 Corinthians 3:18)
- The Holy Spirit forms us into the likeness of Christ, but when we resist Him through sin or selfishness, the Spirit can be grieved and His work in us quenched (Ephesians 4:30–31; Galatians 5:17–19). Yet even in our failure, He gently calls us back into the life of love and holiness we were made for.

### **B. God’s Pursuit and Our Becoming**

#### 1. Creation, Humanity’s Vocation and The Fall

- God created all things for His glory. (Genesis 1:1, Colossians 1:16–17)
- Humanity was created in God’s image, male and female, to bear His image, reflect His character, steward creation, and cultivate flourishing in the world. (Genesis 1:26–28, 2:18–25, Psalm 8:3–8, Ephesians 5:21)
- Male and female were created as equal in dignity, distinct yet interdependent, and united in purpose to reflect the love and unity of God and steward His creation. (Genesis 1:26–28, 2:15–18, 21–23, Galatians 3:28, Psalm 8:4–6, Matthew 19:4–6, 1 Corinthians 11:11–12, Ephesians 5:21, 31–32, John 17:21–23, Romans 8:19–21)
- Through the disobedience of Adam, humanity fell into sin, distorting God’s design and bringing brokenness into the world. (Genesis 3:1–19, Romans 5:12, 17–19)
- Sin is missing the mark of God’s expectations; it leads to separation from God and fractures God’s intended order and needs redemption. (Romans 3:23, Isaiah 59:2, Genesis 3) Yet even in judgment, God made a way: He subjected the world to futility not in finality, but in hope—so that through His intervention, all things might one day be redeemed. (Romans 8:19–21)
- Humanity shares in Adam’s disobedience—born into a condition of sin and separation from God. Whether seen as our representative or the archetype of our rebellion, Adam’s failure

set the pattern for a world in need of rescue. Apart from God's intervention, we cannot restore our broken condition (Romans 5:12; 1 Corinthians 15:22).

- God's mission is to rescue, heal, and restore His relationship with both humanity and His creation. (Romans 8:19-21)
- All life is sacred and every person has inherent dignity even as a distorted image bearer of God. (Psalm 139:13-16, Jeremiah 1:1-4)
- Marriage is a sacred covenant between one man and one woman, and sexual intimacy is a gift reserved for this relation. Marriage is designed to reflect Christ's love for the Church, marked by mutual service and self-giving love. (Genesis 1:27-28, 2:18-25, Malachi 2:14, Matthew 19:4-6, Mark 10:1-12, Ephesians 5:21-33, 1 Corinthians 7:1-16, Colossians 3:18-19, 1 Peter 3:1-7, Revelation 19:7-9)
- While marriage reflects Christ's covenant love, singleness also bears witness to the sufficiency of Christ and the hope of the kingdom (1 Corinthians 7:7-8, 32-35). Both are honored callings within the body of Christ. Whether married or single, all are called to live lives of chastity integrity and love within the community of faith.

## 2. Salvation and The Kingdom of God

- Salvation is about being rescued from sin, death, and being brought into God's kingdom mission. (Colossians 1:13-14, Ephesians 2:8-10)
- Salvation is also about joining in God's restoration project of renewing all things—healing hearts, reconciling relationships, restoring creation, and advancing His Kingdom on Earth as it is in Heaven. (Luke 4:18-19; Romans 8:19-21; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Revelation 21:5)
- Salvation is not merely about going to Heaven but about Heaven coming to Earth through Jesus. (Matthew 6:10, Luke 10:9, 17:20-21, Revelation 21:1-3)
- Jesus' sacrifice is the only way to salvation. (John 3:16, Acts 4:12)
- Salvation is by grace through faith, not works. Faith is a gift from God who invites, initiates and empowers. (Ephesians 2:8-10, Titus 3:5, Romans 5:1)
- True faith in Jesus leads to forgiveness and transformation. (2 Corinthians 5:17, Romans 12:1-2, James 2:16-17)
- Eternal life begins now as we live into the reality of God's new creation. (John 17:3, 1 Corinthians 15)
- God faithfully preserves His people, empowering and protecting them to persevere in faith. Scripture warns against complacency by calling believers to active trust and endurance in their relationship with Him (John 10:28-29, Philippians 2:12-13, Hebrews 3:14, 6:4-6, 2 Peter 1:10).

## 3. Sanctification

- A believer is set apart for God at salvation (1 Corinthians 6:11; Hebrews 10:10). At the moment of faith in Jesus Christ, they are sanctified, marked as God's own. This initial setting apart is the beginning of a lifelong process of growth and transformation. As believers engage with God's Word and the Holy Spirit works in their hearts, they are progressively



sanctified, becoming more like Christ and maturing in their faith. (Romans 12:1–3; 2 Corinthians 3:18)

- The Spirit enables believers to reflect God’s character and partner in His mission. (Romans 12:1-2, 2 Corinthians 3:18)
- Through sanctification believers become truer reflections of God’s character and participate more fully in His renewing work. (1 Peter 1:15-16, Romans 12:1-2)
- Final sanctification and believers’ glorification will occur at Christ’s return. (1 John 3:2-3)

### **C. Living as God’s People in the World**

#### **1. The Church**

- The Church is the renewed people of God, continuing the mission of Israel and bearing witness to His kingdom. (Ephesians 1:22-23, 5:25-27, 1 Peter 2:9, Romans 11:17-24)
- The universal Church consists of all who belong to Jesus across time and space, united by the Holy Spirit into one body. (1 Corinthians 12:12-13, Ephesians 4:4-6, Revelation 7:9-10)
- The local church gathers for worship, teaching, community and mission and is to be a foretaste of God’s future restoration. (Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 2:42-47, 2 Corinthians 5:20)
- The Church is not a building or institution but a family of disciples living in the way of Jesus, and embodying His love, justice and mercy. (Acts 2:42-47)
- The ministry of Jesus – proclaiming the kingdom, healing the sick, and freeing the oppressed – continues with the Church, and is empowered by the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 11:4-5, Luke 10:1-9, 17-20, John 14:12, Acts 1:18, 3:6-8, 8:6-7, 19:11-12)
- The Church is united yet diverse, equipped with spiritual gifts for ministry, and commissioned to proclaim the gospel, make disciples, and display Christ’s love and holiness. (1 Corinthians 12:4-7, Galatians 5:22-23, Matthew 28:18-20, Acts 2:42-47)
- The Church, though imperfect, serves as the visible witness of God’s kingdom, anticipating the day when Heaven and Earth will be made new, and God will dwell fully with His people once more. (Ephesians 1:13-14, Revelation 21:1-5)

#### **2. Baptism and The Lord’s Supper**

- Baptism is a sign of God’s covenant faithfulness and a symbol of union with Jesus Christ. It marks our entrance into the family of God, signifying our participation in Jesus’ death and resurrection and our calling to a new life of discipleship. Baptism is administered to believers as a response of faith, and, depending on conviction and tradition, may also be given to the children of believers as a sign of God’s covenant promises and the intention to raise them in the knowledge and grace of the Lord. We acknowledge and respect differing understandings of baptism within the body of Christ, and we celebrate the shared meaning of baptism as an outward sign of the inward work of God, the grace that precedes us, and the life of obedience that follows. (Matthew 28:19–20; Romans 6:3–5; Galatians 3:26–27; Colossians 2:12; Acts 2:38–39; Genesis 17:7; Proverbs 22:6)
- The Lord’s Supper reminds us of Jesus’ sacrifice and resurrection, spiritually nourishes us, unites us with Him and one another, and is administered to all who partake in a worthy

manner. The Lord meets us at His table, strengthening us by His Spirit. (1 Corinthians 10:16-17, 11:23-29, Luke 22:19-20, John 6:53-56)

### 3. The Role of Government and Justice

- Earthly governments are temporary and flawed, but believers are called to respect and obey governing authorities, but never as a higher authority than God or at the cost of disobeying God's will or call to speak and act in faithfulness to the gospel. Jesus is Lord, Caesar is not. (Romans 13:1-7, Acts 5:27-29, 1 Timothy 2:1-3)
- Justice and mercy are central to God's heart, and we are called to seek the flourishing of all people. (Micah 6:8)
- Allegiance belongs to Jesus as Lord and the Kingdom of God which transcends national and political systems. (Philippians 3:20, Revelation 11:15)

## D. Spiritual Realities and the End of the Story

### 1. Spiritual Beings and The Unseen Realm

- There is a spiritual reality beyond the physical world. (Ephesians 6:12)
- Satan, fallen angels, and evil are real, and they oppose God and deceive human beings but have been defeated in Christ. (Luke 10:18, 1 Peter 5:8, Colossians 2:15, Revelation 12:7-9, 20:10)
- Angels serve God's purposes, but their role should not be overemphasized. (Hebrews 1:14, Daniel 10:12-14)

### 2. The Restoration of All Things

- Jesus will physically return to bring full restoration. (Acts 1:11, Revelation 21:1-5)
- Resurrection and our final hope are heaven and earth being reunited. (1 Corinthians 15:20-28, Romans 8:19-25)
- Jesus will set things right with both justice and renewal. (Acts 17:31, Revelation 20:11-15, Matthew 25:31-46)
- Evil will be undone, and creation made new. (Isaiah 11:6-9, Revelation 22:1-5)
- Every soul will endure eternally—either in joyful life with God or in separation from Him. At Christ's return, those united to Him will share fully in His restored creation, while those who reject Him will face separation and loss. (2 Thessalonians 1:8-10; Matthew 25:31-46; John 5:28-29; Revelation 20:11-15)
- In the meantime, believers must be ready by living holy and faithful lives, standing firm against evil, and preaching the gospel. (Mark 8:38, Titus 2:13, Revelation 2-3, Matthew 28:19-20, 2 Timothy 4:1-2)

## V. Historic Creeds of the Church

We affirm and uphold the historic creeds of the Christian faith as faithful summaries of biblical truth and expressions of the Church's enduring confession. In unity with the one, holy, universal, and biblical Church, we recognize the Apostles' Creed, the Nicene Creed, the Chalcedonian Definition, and the Athanasian Creed as foundational statements of Christian doctrine. These creeds are

authoritative in their testimony to the faith once delivered to the saints (Jude 1:3). Therefore, we authorize their use in worship, teaching, and personal devotion as expressions of the Church's shared confession, binding us to the historic faith of Christians across time and tradition.

- We affirm the Apostles' Creed as a concise confession of faith, used historically in catechesis and baptism, summarizing the core tenets of the gospel.
- We confess the Nicene Creed, in its form established by the Councils of Nicaea (325 AD) and Constantinople (381 AD), as the definitive statement of our belief in the Trinity and the full divinity and humanity of Jesus Christ.
- We uphold the Chalcedonian Definition as a faithful witness to the mystery of Christ's two natures—fully divine and fully human—in one person, without confusion, change, division, or separation.
- We affirm the Athanasian Creed as a rich theological statement on the Trinity and Christology, recognizing its depth in articulating the equal divinity and unity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

## **VI. Preaching Culture**

At Eternal Church, our preaching is shaped by a commitment to expository teaching, the meta-narrative of Scripture, and the transformative power of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We believe God's Word is alive and active, with the power to change lives and reshape the world. Therefore, we strive to prepare faithfully and preach with intentionality, declaring both the objective truth and undeserved grace of God's Word.

Our preaching is expository, meaning that every sermon is anchored in a specific passage of Scripture. We seek to observe its contextual meaning with scholarly integrity and apply it faithfully to daily life, ensuring that our teaching remains rooted in God's revealed truth.

We are committed to preaching the whole, unified story of scripture. Rather than viewing the Bible as a collection of isolated stories, we guide our congregation to see it as a continuous story of redemption, with every passage ultimately pointing to the transformative gospel of Jesus Christ and His kingdom.

Rooted in the transformative power of the gospel, our preaching magnifies the completed work and redemptive grace of Jesus, reminding our congregation that the grace we received is not and cannot be earned by our own merit. This grace not only changes individuals but calls us outward—to love our neighbors, confront injustice, and embody the hope Jesus brings to a broken world. Therefore, our application is centered on both the personal justification found in Jesus and the Spirit-empowered sanctification that compels us to live as agents of renewal. This is the goal for every sermon at Eternal.

## **VII. Church Governance**

Eternal Church is led by collaboration of four distinct groups: (1) Pastors and staff (“Pastoral Team” and “Staff,” respectively), (2) Elders (“Elder Team” and, together with any duly appointed Lead Pastors, the “Session”), (3) Deacons (“Deacon Team” or “Diaconate”), and (4) other volunteer leaders (“Other Leaders”), all under the headship of Jesus Christ and the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Covenant Members of Eternal (collectively the “Congregation”) also have responsibility relating to leadership and decision making.

In addition to the above, the church has three corporate officers (“Officers”), in accordance with South Carolina law: a President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer.

With respect to overall leadership (both strategic decision-making and day-to-day operations), the primary leaders are the Elder Team, Pastoral Team, and Staff. Most day-to-day decisions are Pastor/Staff-led, with oversight by the Elders. For strategic decision-making, the Elders typically work closely with the Pastors and Staff, especially the Pastors. Ultimately, the governing authority of the church is the Session, with some decisions reserved for the Congregation or requiring approval by the Congregation.

With respect to ministry, the Pastors/Staff, Deacons, Other Leaders, and other volunteers, together with the Elders, lead ministry efforts in many ways and in many different contexts with a shared vision, mission and values.

### **A. Corporate Officers**

In South Carolina, every nonprofit is required to have at least three key officers: a President, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. These roles are more than just structural necessities—they are expressions of stewardship, designed to ensure the organization is led with integrity, accountability, and clarity. Each position carries the weight of responsibility to serve the church with wisdom and faithfulness. At Eternal, these officers serve under the authority and direction of the Session, to whom they are ultimately accountable.

#### **1. Responsibilities**

**President:** The President shall be responsible for overseeing the general affairs of the church. This includes presiding at meetings, signing legal documents on behalf of the church, implementing policies, reporting on the activities of the church, supporting the Pastors and Staff, and preparing annual reports or similar reports. While certain responsibilities may be delegated, the President retains ultimate responsibility to the Session for the overall management of the Church’s operations.

**Secretary:** The Secretary shall be responsible for ensuring proper communication and documentation within the church, particularly for governance purposes. This includes notifying members of meetings, recording and maintaining the proceedings of meetings as needed, preparing agendas, managing minutes, and ensuring that all necessary records are kept. Although certain tasks may be delegated, the Secretary remains accountable to the Session for the integrity and accuracy of all governance-related documentation and communication.

**Treasurer:** The Treasurer shall be responsible for overseeing the financial matters of the church. This includes managing finances, maintaining accurate records, preparing budgets, reporting on financial status, and managing the banking activities of the church. While certain financial tasks may be

delegated, the Treasurer is ultimately accountable to the Session for the financial health and integrity of the Church's resources.

## 2. Qualifications

Each corporate officer should be a trusted and committed Covenant Member of the church, demonstrating spiritual maturity, ethical leadership, and a heart for service. These roles are essential for ensuring the church functions effectively and in alignment with its mission and values.

The President must possess strong leadership abilities and an understanding of church governance, including bylaws, policies, and nonprofit regulations. They should demonstrate sound decision-making skills, ensuring all actions align with the Church's mission and values. Additionally, the President must exhibit spiritual and ethical integrity, serving as a role model in faith and accountability.

The Secretary must be highly organized and detail-oriented, ensuring accurate recordkeeping and legal compliance. They should have strong communication skills and the ability to manage sensitive information with integrity and discretion. A commitment to appropriate transparency and accountability is essential for maintaining the church's official records and documentation.

The Treasurer must have expertise in financial management, including budgeting, financial reporting, and compliance with nonprofit financial regulations. They should be highly accountable, ensuring responsible stewardship of church resources. A strong ethical foundation is necessary to maintain financial transparency and integrity in managing the Church's fiscal responsibilities.

## 3. Selection and Appointment of Corporate Officers

Corporate officers—President, Secretary, and Treasurer—must be active Covenant Members of Eternal Church for at least one year and actively engaged in worship, service, and church ministries. Nominations are made by the Session or pastoral leadership and reviewed for qualifications, leadership abilities, and dedication to the church. Final selection is determined by a majority vote of the Session, ensuring alignment with the Church's mission and values. Once appointed, corporate officers commit to faithfully stewarding the Church's governance, finances, and administration.

## 4. Removal

Corporate Officers serve at the discretion of the Session and may be removed for any reason by a majority vote of the Session.

# **B. The Session**

## 1. Authority

The Session is the Board of Directors of the church. Unless otherwise set forth in the Church's Articles of Incorporation, all corporate powers of Eternal shall be exercised by or under the authority of the Session, and the business and affairs of Eternal shall be managed under the direction of the Session. The Session has, among its other corporate powers, the power to amend the Bylaws of Eternal Church (by a two-thirds majority vote), provided that no amendments to the Bylaws shall be made that are inconsistent with the Articles of Incorporation. The Session is also the chief spiritual and governance authority in the local church under the headship of Jesus.

Matters that the Congregation must vote on are (1) the purchase or disposal of real property, (2) entering into debt equal to or greater than the current fiscal year budget, (3) appointment of a Lead

Pastor, and (4) election of Elders and Deacons. The Session does not have authority to decide such matters on its own without a Congregational vote.

## 2. Composition

The Session shall be comprised of two groups: (1) all Elders (there shall be at least five elders) and (2) Lead Pastors (if any) who have been called by the congregation to be Pastors in accordance with Articles of Incorporation (there shall be a maximum of two Lead Pastors on the Session). Such Lead Pastors (if any) and Elders shall together form the Session. Each member of the Session shall have one vote in matters requiring a decision, and all such decisions must be made by majority vote. However, notwithstanding the foregoing, the Session shall have the authority to form one or more committees consisting of a subset of the Session, and the Session can delegate decision making authority to such a committee with a majority vote. In such an instance, a specific committee shall have the authority to act with the authority of the complete Session within the scope of the delegated authority of the specific committee, provided that any such committee shall consist of at least three members of the Session and that the ratio of Elders to Lead Pastors on the committee is 2:1 or greater. Each member of any such committee shall have one vote, and decisions of the committee shall be by majority vote.

## 3. Corporate Responsibilities of the Session

The Session as defined in the Articles of Incorporation is the Board of Directors for Eternal church and is the ultimate governing authority as explained in the Bylaws. As such it has three primary fiduciary duties: duty of care, duty of loyalty, and duty of obedience.

- Duty of Care requires Session members to act with the same level of care that a reasonably prudent person would use in similar circumstances. This means:
  - Making informed decisions based on available information.
  - Attending meetings regularly and staying engaged in the affairs of Eternal Church.
  - Exercising due diligence in financial management, policies, and general oversight of the church's operations.
  - Seeking expert advice when necessary (e.g., legal, financial, or other professionals).
- Duty of Loyalty requires Session members to act in the best interests of Eternal Church, rather than in their own personal interests. This includes:
  - Avoiding conflicts of interest and promptly disclosing any potential conflicts to the Session.
  - Refraining from using their position for personal gain or to improperly benefit others.
  - Consistently prioritizing the health and mission of Eternal Church over individual or external agendas.
- Duty of Obedience requires Session members to ensure that the church adheres to its mission, governance documents, and legal requirements. This includes:
  - Complying with the church's governing documents (such as the Articles of Incorporation, Bylaws, Handbook of Practices).

- Following applicable local, state, and federal laws, including those governing tax-exempt organizations and religious activities.
- Ensuring the church stays true to its stated religious and mission objectives.

#### 4. Session Committees and Councils

##### Elder Advisory Committee / Executive Committee

##### a) Elder Advisory Committee

The Elder Advisory Committee (ADCOM) is a subset of the full Session. It is comprised of 3-5 active elders from the Session, along with the Executive Pastor. The ADCOM members are nominated and approved by the larger Session and serve for two years, though this rotation is flexible, and members of the ADCOM can be renominated for consecutive terms. The ADCOM structures and guides Session meetings, responds to certain emergent pastoral needs, and engages any issue of crisis to discern the best course of action. The ADCOM provides input on topics and checks on the overall health of the pastoral team/staff in collaboration with the Executive Pastor. In the event a rapid decision is needed, and there is insufficient time to bring the decision to the full Session, or in the event the decision is of a routine nature, the ADCOM acts with the authority of the full Session to make such a decision. Some specific responsibilities of the ADCOM are below.

- Prioritizes and schedules topics to be addressed by the Session to best meet the needs of the church.
- Schedules, structures the agenda, and guides Session business meetings.
- Regularly checks in with the health (spiritual, mental, physical) of the Pastoral Team and Staff.
- Provides wisdom and/or decision making for items or issues that are either time sensitive or not needing the attention or awareness of full Session.
- Previews and triages emergent pastoral, member, or churchwide needs that will need the attention of the full Session for input, engaging any issue of crisis to discern the best course of action for a healthy resolution.

##### b) Communications Committee

- Made up of 2-3 elders.
- Publishes and distributes minutes of elder business meetings to the Session.
- Communicates to the congregation on behalf of the Session, in coordination with the Director of Communication.
- Creates short monthly summaries of elder actions, decisions and/or discussions to be used by elders to send to their flocks.

##### c) Special Projects Committee

- Made up of a subset of the Session.
- Leads workstreams that are typically too lengthy and/or detailed for the entire Session.
- Keeps the full Session informed on progress and actions needed during business meetings.

- Empowered to make small tactical decisions to move the project forward while large decisions are referred to the full Session.
  - At the conclusion of a project, all remaining decisions will be presented to the Session for action.
- d) Finance Advisory Council (see Appendix for Charter)
- Made up of elder(s), stewardship deacon(s), Executive Pastor, Financial Administrator, Treasurer and may include Member(s) with relevant expertise.
  - Led by elder or deacon
  - Provides financial oversight and accountability, as well as advice to pastors/staff and elders on matters of finances, accounting, planning, and reporting.
  - Council to be reappointed yearly by the Session
- e) Personnel Advisory Council (See Appendix for Charter)
- Made up of elder(s), member(s) of the Financial Advisory Committee and may include Member(s) with relevant expertise.
  - Led by elder or deacon
  - Provides personnel oversight and accountability, as well as advice to pastors/staff and elders on setting policies on matters of compensation, benefits, performance appraisals, equipping, and development of Eternal employees.
  - Council to be reappointed yearly by the Session
- f) Women's Advisory Council
- Initially, made up of willing female deacons, Women's Ministry leader(s), female staff, and wives of elders, though any of these women could opt out of serving on the Committee.
  - Initially led by a female deacon but can be changed to fit the needs of the committee.
  - Provides discernment, advice, and feedback to the Session to ensure that the needs, interests, and spiritual well-being of the church are addressed and supported, including but not limited to with respect to women.
  - Meets at least quarterly as a council or more often at the discretion of the chair of the Council and at least twice yearly with the Session, or more often if requested by the Session or Committee.
- g) Witness Advisory Council
- Made up of elder(s), deacon(s), Executive Pastor, and Member(s) with relevant interest and expertise.
  - Led by elder or Executive Pastor.
  - Provide discernment, advice, and feedback to the Session on effectively witnessing` to the gospel both locally and globally.
  - Support connection to those sent out by the congregation and contribute to their being sent "in a manner worthy of God." (3 John 6-7)



- Provide input to the Session on use of Eternal resources to support witness and mission.
  - Meets at least quarterly as a council or more often at the discretion of the chair of the Council and at least twice yearly with the Session, or more often if requested by the Session or Committee.
- h) Elder Chair
- Elected by the Session from among ADCOM.
  - Leads and is responsible for final elder decisions.
  - Provides oversight and accountability to the Executive Pastor.
  - Meets regularly with pastors to provide encouragement, consultation, and feedback.
- i) Diaconate Liaison
- Made up of an elder who provides discernment, advice and feedback to the Deacons.
  - Attends Deacon meetings.
  - Meets regularly with the Deacon Chair to provide encouragement, consultation, and both give and receive feedback.
  - Provides regular updates to the Session on health and activities of the Diaconate.
  - Supports the deacons to make sure they are provided the resources needed to carry out their service.

### **C. Shepherds and Overseers: Elders and Pastors**

#### **1. Elders**

The church is led by qualified elders who bear the responsibility of shepherding the congregation. (1 Timothy 5:17, 1 Peter 5:1-5) Elders oversee the spiritual health of the church through teaching, guidance, and discipline. As shepherds of the flock, they are called to lead with wisdom, care for church members, and uphold the church's vision and doctrine. Each elder is entrusted with specific members, ensuring both proactive and responsive shepherding.

An elder is one who "shepherds the flock of God" (1 Peter 5:1-4), exercises oversight, leads with humility (Hebrews 13:7), takes responsibility for the church (1 Thessalonians 5:12), and is accountable to God for the spiritual well-being of its members (Hebrews 13:17).

The New Testament emphasizes that the church is led by a plurality of qualified leaders who serve together in unity and equality. This collective leadership helps ensure that the church remains biblically faithful, spiritually strong, and effectively guided.

#### **a) Authority of Elders**

The Elders faithfully shepherd the church, both proactively and responsively, guiding the congregation through teaching, discipleship, and prayerful leadership. They provide direction for our church's vision and mission, making thoughtful decisions on matters of governance, structure, and pastoral care. Within the Session, various committees serve as extensions of its leadership, entrusted with full authority in their specific areas of oversight. While the Session holds ultimate responsibility, they work closely with the pastoral team on major decisions and collaborate with the Deacons to care for the church body and community.

## b) Qualifications of Elders

Eldership is a sacred calling, entrusted to those who embody the character of Jesus in both their personal lives and their leadership. The role of an elder is not about status, power, or mere competency, but about faithfulness to God, integrity in daily life, and a heart devoted to shepherding His people. Scripture provides clear guidance on the kind of men who are to lead the church—men of wisdom, humility, and spiritual maturity, whose lives reflect the gospel they proclaim. At the same time, no one meets these qualifications perfectly. All fall short, and every elder must lead with the humility that comes from knowing they, too, are in need of God's grace. The standard is high, not to demand perfection, but to point us to Jesus—the only true and perfect Shepherd. Elders are called to live in a way that reflects Him, leading not by their own strength, but by the transforming work of the Holy Spirit. These qualifications are not a rigid checklist but a portrait of Christlike leadership, a life shaped by God's mercy and faithfulness. (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, 1 Peter 5:1-5)

### (1) Personal Character

1. Above Reproach – An elder must be blameless in conduct, living with integrity so that no valid accusation, criticism, or blame can be brought against his actions or character. This does not mean perfection, but a life marked by faithfulness, honesty, and righteousness. He should embody the faithfulness of Jesus, reflecting the Kingdom of God in every aspect of life. An elder must be free from scandal or reproach, particularly in matters of morality, integrity, and personal conduct. He must take responsibility for his actions, owning mistakes rather than shifting blame, and demonstrating a pattern of repentance and seeking forgiveness. His life should demonstrate purity and a steadfast commitment to righteousness, serving as an example of Christlikeness to the congregation. (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6-7)
2. Husband of One Wife – In a culture where extramarital relationships, concubinage, prostitution, and temple sexual practices were commonplace, Paul calls elders to a different standard—one of faithfulness, exclusivity, and covenantal love. An elder's marriage should be a living reflection of the gospel, mirroring Christ's love for the Church. This means a commitment marked by steadfast love, mutual respect, and sacrificial care, demonstrating what it means to embody God's faithfulness. Stability and integrity in marriage matter, but past failures do not automatically disqualify someone from eldership. If a person abandoned their spouse or was unfaithful and has not shown true repentance, they would not meet the biblical qualifications. However, if their current marriage is characterized by faithfulness, stability, and Christ's unwavering love, they may still be eligible to serve. The heart of this qualification is not perfection, but a life that bears witness to God's grace and redemptive love in the covenant of marriage. (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:6, Genesis 2:24, Ephesians 5:25-32)
3. Temperate and Self-Controlled – An elder is called to be a man of discipline and emotional stability, someone who does not act on impulse but exercises wisdom and restraint. He is sober-minded, making decisions with clarity rather than being swayed by fleeting emotions or desires. True biblical wisdom is not just about intellect but about aligning one's heart and actions with the Spirit of God, cultivating self-mastery that reflects the character of Jesus. This kind of temperance extends to every area of life e.g., speech, actions, habits, and decision-making. An elder must exhibit self-control in how he speaks, ensuring his words build up rather than tear down. His choices should reflect careful discernment, avoiding

excesses or indulgences that compromise his witness. A life of self-discipline and restraint is essential, not only for his own walk with Jesus but for the example he sets for the church. In a world driven by impulse and self-indulgence, he is to model a life shaped by the Spirit, bearing the fruit of self-control, patience, and wisdom. (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8, Galatians 5:22-23, 1 Peter 5:8, Proverbs 15:1, James 1:19-20, 1 Corinthians 9:25-27)

4. **Respectable** – An elder’s life should be marked by order, honor, and integrity, commanding respect not through status but through Christlike character. His actions, words, and decisions should reflect a God-centered passion that inspires others toward holiness. Respectability is not about appearances but about a life lived consistently before God and others—one that invites imitation because it points to Jesus. (1 Timothy 3:2, Colossians 4:5-6)
5. **Hospitable** – Hospitality is more than simply hosting—it is a posture of welcome, reflecting the radical generosity of the gospel. An elder should create an environment where others feel seen, valued, and cared for, embodying Christ’s love in tangible ways. Whether through opening his home, sharing meals, or making room for the lonely, he reflects God’s invitation into His family. (1 Timothy 3:2, Titus 1:8, Romans 12:13, Hebrews 13:2)
6. **Not Given to Drunkenness** – An elder is called to live with wisdom and discernment, ensuring that nothing—whether alcohol or any other substance—compromises his judgment, self-control, or witness. His life should reflect a deep dependence on the Spirit rather than on anything that could hinder his ability to lead with clarity, integrity, and grace. Scripture warns against the dangers of excess, calling believers to find true joy and fulfillment in being filled with the Spirit rather than the fleeting pleasures of indulgence. His life should reflect wisdom, discipline, and dependence on God rather than addiction or escape. (1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7, Proverbs 20:1, Ephesians 5:18)
7. **Not Violent but Gentle** – An elder is not quick-tempered, harsh, or aggressive, but instead demonstrates kindness, patience, and restraint. The way of Jesus is not dominance but servanthood—true power in the kingdom is exercised through humility, not force. An elder should not only avoid harshness but actively show empathy and care for the needs of others, treating them with Christlike gentleness. He must lead with a steady hand, resolving conflict with grace and treating others with the same mercy he has received. (1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7, James 1:19-20, Galatians 5:22)
8. **Not Quarrelsome** – An elder should not be contentious or argumentative but seek peace and unity within the body of Jesus. The world thrives on division and hostility, but the gospel calls leaders to be peacemakers, resisting unnecessary conflict and leading with wisdom. This does not mean avoiding truth, but speaking it in love, with a heart set on reconciliation. (1 Timothy 3:3, Romans 12:18, 2 Timothy 2:24)
9. **Not Greedy for Money or Dishonest Gain** – An elder must not be driven by materialism, dishonest gain, or a love of money. He must recognize that all belongs to God and we are merely stewards of His resources. The idolatry of wealth is a danger to the soul, and a leader in God’s church must model generosity and contentment, trusting in God as the true provider. His motives in ministry should be pure, serving out of love rather than entitlement or personal profit. (1 Timothy 3:3, Titus 1:7, Hebrews 13:5, 1 Peter 5:2)

10. A Lover of What is Good – An elder should delight in what is good, pure, and godly. His heart should be shaped by a love for righteousness, seeking out what is honorable and reflecting God’s goodness in all areas of life. True joy is found not in temporary pleasures but in the lasting beauty of God’s truth. (Titus 1:8, Philippians 4:8)
11. Upright and Just – Fairness, honesty, and righteousness should define an elder’s dealings with others. He should not show favoritism, exploit those under his care, or act in ways that compromise his integrity. Justice is central to God’s character, and His leaders are called to reflect that justice in their relationships and responsibilities. (Titus 1:8, Micah 6:8)
12. Holy – Holiness is not about self-righteousness but about devotion to God. An elder’s life should be consecrated to Jesus, reflecting the transformative work of the Spirit. He should not conform to the patterns of the world but live in a way that points to the holiness of God. (Titus 1:8, 1 Peter 1:15-16)
13. Disciplined – An elder is called to be a man of self-mastery, living with consistency and intentionality in his walk with Jesus. Discipline is not about rigid rule-keeping but about training the soul to find joy in obedience. Through daily habits of prayer, study, and faithfulness, he strengthens his own spiritual life and sets an example for others. (Titus 1:8, 1 Corinthians 9:27)

## (2) Family Life

1. Manages His Household Well – An elder’s leadership is first tested and shaped in the home. The way he nurtures, guides, and cares for his family is a reflection of how he will lead the church. His home should be a place of love, stability, and godly order, where his leadership mirrors Christ’s balance of authority and grace. If a man cannot lead and serve well within his own household, he will struggle to do so within the family of God. (1 Timothy 3:4-5, Titus 1:6, Ephesians 6:4).
2. Keeps His Children Submissive and Respectful – A well-ordered home is not about rigid control but about shepherding hearts. An elder is called to raise his children with love, discipline, and wisdom, teaching them to walk in respect and obedience. Biblical parenting is not about harsh demands but about cultivating an environment where children learn to honor authority because they see it exercised with patience and integrity. (1 Timothy 3:4, Proverbs 22:6)
3. His Children are Believers – An elder’s children should reflect his spiritual influence, growing in faith and obedience as they are nurtured in God’s truth. While salvation is ultimately God’s work, a father plays a crucial role in shaping the spiritual climate of his home. Through intentional discipleship, prayer, and daily example, he lays a foundation for his children to know and follow Jesus. There is a range of interpretations on this passage. Some believe Paul is requiring that an elder’s children be professing believers, while others see this as a call for faithful, respectful, and well-disciplined children. Since salvation is God’s work alone, an elder cannot guarantee his child’s faith, but he is responsible for cultivating a home where faith is modeled and made available. (Titus 1:6, Deuteronomy 6:6-7, Ephesians 2:8-9, John 6:44, Romans 9:16, 1 Corinthians 3:6-7)

### (3) Spiritual and Teaching Ability

1. **Able to Teach** – An elder must be a skilled and faithful teacher, able to communicate God’s truth with both wisdom and clarity. gospel-centered teaching involves more than just knowledge—it requires both truth and grace, helping others grow in understanding and love for Jesus. Whether in preaching, discipleship, or personal conversation, elders should be able to instruct in a way that nurtures faith and shapes lives. (1 Timothy 3:2, 2 Timothy 2:2)
2. **Holds Firmly to the Trustworthy Message** – An elder must be unwavering in their commitment to the gospel, standing firm in the truth of Scripture. In a world of shifting beliefs and cultural pressures, leaders in the church must hold fast to sound doctrine, ensuring that their teaching and leadership reflect God’s unchanging truth. This is not just about maintaining tradition but about faithfully embodying God’s new creation and the redemptive story He is writing in His people. (Titus 1:9, 2 Timothy 3:16-17)
3. **Encourages Others by Sound Doctrine** – The ministry of an elder is one of encouragement, building up the church through the truth of God’s Word. When people are rooted in sound doctrine, they find confidence, peace, and joy in Jesus. Elders play a vital role in strengthening believers, offering wisdom, hope, and reassurance that sustain faith and deepen trust in God. (Titus 1:9, 1 Thessalonians 5:11)
4. **Refutes False Teaching** – Throughout history, the church has needed faithful leaders to uphold and protect the gospel message. Elders are entrusted with this responsibility, standing for truth and ensuring that the teaching of the church remains aligned with Scripture. This calling requires both courage and discernment, as they guide the church in wisdom, clarity, and love. (Titus 1:9, Jude 3, Acts 20:28)
5. **Rightly Handles the Word of Truth** – An elder is committed to knowing and applying God’s Word with faithfulness and care. A deep, ongoing engagement with Scripture ensures that their teaching is both accurate and life-giving. Like the Bereans, who examined the Scriptures daily, elders approach God’s Word with humility and diligence, seeking to faithfully steward its truth in all they do. (2 Timothy 2:15, Acts 17:11)

### (4) Reputation and Experience

1. **Not a Recent Convert** – Elders must be spiritually mature individuals whose faith has been tested and proven over time. Leadership in the church requires more than enthusiasm; it demands depth, wisdom, and a steady walk with Jesus. Those who serve must have a strong personal relationship with Jesus, shaped by prayer, rooted in Scripture, and marked by faithful obedience to God’s Word. Their lives should bear the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control—demonstrating the character of Jesus in their daily walk. Maturity in faith also means resisting pride and self-reliance, remaining humble and teachable. A leader’s spiritual journey should reflect steady growth and increasing discernment, equipping them to shepherd others with wisdom and grace. A recent convert, no matter how passionate, is not yet ready for this weight of responsibility. Maturity takes time, and leadership should be entrusted to those whose faith has been refined through seasons of growth, challenge, and endurance. (1 Timothy 3:6, Hebrews 5:14)

2. **Has a Good Reputation with Outsiders** – In the first-century world, Christian communities stood out—and not always in ways that made life easier. They were accused of being atheists for rejecting the Roman gods, disloyal to Caesar for declaring that Jesus, not Rome, was Lord, and socially disruptive for challenging traditional social structures. In this climate of suspicion, Paul’s instruction to church leaders wasn’t about seeking approval but about living in a way that upheld the credibility of the gospel. This remains just as true today. Elders are called to live with such integrity, wisdom, and faithfulness that even those outside the faith recognize their character. The goal is not to be popular or avoid criticism—faithfulness to Jesus will sometimes bring opposition—but to ensure that any resistance is because of allegiance to Jesus, not because of arrogance, hypocrisy, dishonesty or moral failure. An elder must be able to receive correction and criticism with humility, recognizing that accountability is part of godly leadership. When accusations come, elders should be bold, authentic, and transparent, ensuring their lives point to Jesus and do not discredit the gospel. Elders may not always be liked or agreed with, but they should be respected as people of honor whose lives reflect the light of Jesus. The enemy is maliciously eager to discredit the gospel by discrediting those who represent it, elders must not fall into his trap. (1 Timothy 3:7, Matthew 5:16)
3. **Not Arrogant or Overbearing** – True gospel leadership is marked by humility, not dominance, manipulation or control. An elder is not called to control or coerce but to serve with grace, patience, and a heart that reflects Jesus. Gospel humility isn’t about low self-esteem—it’s about self-forgetfulness, a life oriented toward God and others rather than self-promotion. A leader in the church must not be arrogant, insisting on their own agenda, or overbearing, using their position to demand obedience. Instead, they should model the humility of Jesus, who, though He had every right to assert His authority, chose instead to serve. An elder must not see himself as above correction or more important than others. He should not seek constant praise or validation but serve with a heart that desires to glorify God, not himself. True leadership is not about self-importance but about humbly serving as Jesus did. Elders are to lead with wisdom, gentleness, and a posture of listening, considering the needs of others above their own. The best leaders do not seek power but steward it well for the good of those they serve. (Titus 1:7, Philippians 2:3-4)
4. **Faithful Steward** – Elders are not owners but stewards—entrusted with God’s people, His Word, and the resources of His church. Leadership is a sacred responsibility, requiring integrity, wisdom, and faithfulness in all things. Whether managing finances, shepherding people, or making decisions that shape the life of the church, an elder must handle what has been given to them with care and accountability. A faithful steward does not exploit people or resources for personal gain but manages them with wisdom and integrity. Faithfulness in small things reveals the character needed for greater responsibility. A leader who cannot be trusted with earthly resources cannot be trusted with the weightier matters of spiritual leadership. Elders must be honest, transparent, and above reproach in their stewardship, ensuring that all they oversee is used for God’s glory and the good of His people. (Titus 1:7, Luke 16:10)
5. **Leads by Example** – An elder’s leadership is not about position or authority—it’s about setting an example worth following. The most effective leaders don’t just teach faith; they

live it. True leadership is not about appearing faultless but about responding to failure with humility, accountability, and a commitment to growth. Elder's lives should reflect Jesus, marked by love, integrity, and steadfast faith. They are called to shepherd God's people not by force or mere words but by the way they live. Their character, relationships, and daily choices should inspire others to walk more closely with Jesus. A leader's response to critique should reflect maturity, grace, and a willingness to grow in Christ Leadership in the church is never about lording over others but about modeling a life surrendered to Jesus. As Paul said, "Follow me as I follow Christ." An elder's life should make that invitation clear. (1 Peter 5:3, 1 Corinthians 11:1)

6. Additional Qualifications – An elder must be an active Covenant Members of Eternal Church for at least one year and actively engaged in worship, service, and church ministries and has gone through the Selection and Nomination process described below.

The call to eldership is not about perfection but about spiritual maturity, faithfulness, and a willingness to lead as Jesus leads—through service, humility, and unwavering commitment to God's truth. These qualifications are not just expectations but a vision for godly leadership, a high calling that requires dependence on the Holy Spirit and a life continually shaped by the gospel. Elders are to shepherd the church as Jesus shepherds us—with love, patience, and sacrificial care, leading not from a place of control, but as examples of grace and truth. In doing so, they point the church not to themselves, but to Jesus, the true Shepherd and Overseer of our souls.

c) Core Responsibilities of Elders

- Upholds truth through teaching and discipleship while protecting the church from false teachings and teachers.
- Serves as primary steward of the church vision and mission, long term plans, goals and priorities.
- Evaluates activities in light of our mission and goals.
- Cares for and nurtures the flock proactively, responsively, prayerfully and humbly; visits the sick and distressed, counsels those in need or refers them to qualified counselors and/or shepherds.
- Engages and partners with the Diaconate to pull together the body to serve and support the flock (individuals and corporately) and meet tangible needs.
- Encourages and actively participates with all members in worship, learning, sound doctrine, witness, and service, exhorting and admonishing when necessary.
- Promotes a climate of peace and goodwill and as differences and conflict arise fosters mutual understanding.
- Exemplifies the life and ministry expected of all baptized followers of Jesus Christ.
- Provides decision support to Pastoral Team and Staff.
- Makes the final decision on the most important issues (e.g., hires and terminations of Executive Pastor and Teaching Pastor, large purchases for church, budget approval), except

where such decision making is delegated to the Congregation by Eternal's charter and/or by-laws.

#### d) Selection and Appointment of Elders

The process of selecting elders and deacons is a structured and prayerful journey to ensure that qualified individuals are called to lead with integrity and devotion.

- **Nomination & Discernment** – Nominations are made by the congregation and reviewed by the Session. Nominees must be active Covenant Members of Eternal Church for at least one year and actively engaged in worship, service, and church ministries. Those making nominations must also be members for at least one year and actively engaged in worship, service, and church ministries. Nominees begin the discernment process by receiving information on qualifications, roles and responsibilities and they complete a questionnaire. Elders begin to walk with the nominee through their discernment process by meeting as needed to clarify expectations, discuss the questionnaire, and in prayer. This process includes a clean background check as well.
- **Congregational Update** – Accepted and willing nominees are presented to the congregation, along with the message that all - congregation, Session and nominees - enter into a discernment period.
- **Training & Final Decision** – Nominees attend meetings, undergo training, and engage in mutual discernment with the elders. The final decision is communicated to the congregation.
- **Official Appointment** – After discernment and training nominees who remain are presented to the congregation for a vote. Candidates with the highest number of votes are installed, depending on the number of nominees and number of open spots.

#### e) Removal

If an Elder is no longer qualified, they may be removed by two-thirds vote of the Session. Members of any subcommittee serve at the discretion of the Session and may be removed by a majority vote of the Session.

### 2. Pastors

Pastors are called to shepherd the church with care and conviction, leading God's people through the faithful preaching and teaching of His Word, the administration of the sacraments, and the ongoing work of pastoral care. Their calling is not simply to lead from the front but to walk alongside the congregation, guiding the spiritual life of the church, encouraging growth, and equipping the saints for ministry in their daily lives. Before stepping into this sacred responsibility, pastors are examined by the Session, who prayerfully discern whether their doctrine and character align with the biblical standards for shepherding God's flock. Once affirmed, they are confirmed by the congregation, a reflection of the church family's recognition and trust in their pastoral leadership.

Associate Pastors serve as fellow shepherds, bringing their own unique gifts to the ministry of the church. While they share in preaching, teaching, and pastoral care, they may also take on specific leadership roles, such as discipleship, missions, family ministry, or outreach, depending on the needs of the congregation. Unlike Pastors, who are called by the Session and confirmed by the



congregation, Associate Pastors are called and confirmed by the Executive Pastor only, reflecting a distinction in their role while still affirming their pastoral authority and responsibility.

Regardless of title or specific duties, every pastor serves under the same high calling—to shepherd God’s people with wisdom, humility, and faithfulness. Their leadership is not about status or power but about stewardship, a life laid down in service to Jesus and His church.

#### a) Authority of Pastors

Authority in the church is not about control or power, but a sacred trust given by God. Both pastors and elders carry authority, yet their roles are distinct and complementary.

The pastor’s authority is ministerial and spiritual, rooted in the preaching and teaching of God’s Word. His voice is important not by position or charisma but by faithfully proclaiming truth. They call the church to worship, obedience, and discipleship—not by force, but by conviction. Their authority extends beyond the pulpit into shepherding, worship, and equipping the saints, always tethered to Scripture.

The elders carry governing and protective authority. They do not rule individually but lead collectively, ensuring sound doctrine, wise decision-making, and spiritual health. They guard against false teaching, provide accountability, and oversee church direction, exercising authority with wisdom and care.

The pastors lead under the authority of the elders, yet they are not subordinate. Their authority lies in teaching and shepherding, while elders provide oversight and governance. Both serve under the ultimate authority of Jesus, the Chief Shepherd—leading not through dominance, but faithfulness to His Word.

#### b) Qualifications of Pastors

The qualifications for a pastor and an elder are largely similar, as both roles require godly character, sound doctrine, and the ability to shepherd God’s people (see above). However, there are key differences in calling, gifting, and primary function within the church.

- Teaching Authority – While elders must be "able to teach" (1 Timothy 3:2), pastors have a greater responsibility for preaching and doctrinal instruction (2 Timothy 4:2).
- Full-Time Shepherding – A pastor is typically vocational, dedicating his full time to ministry, while elders serve as lay leaders. Elders provide oversight but do not necessarily preach regularly.
- Leadership & Governance – Elders function as a plurality, making collective decisions regarding church direction and discipline. The pastor leads under the authority of the elders but focuses more on shepherding and equipping the church through preaching, discipleship, and ministry leadership.
- Calling & Gifting – While all elders shepherd, not all are called to the pastoral office, which requires a distinct gifting in preaching, vision-casting, and equipping the saints (Ephesians 4:11-12).

While both pastors and elders must meet high biblical standards, the pastor’s authority is ministerial—focused on teaching and shepherding primarily the community, whereas elders provide oversight,

governance, and shepherding primarily individuals and families, ensuring the church stays faithful to its mission. Both serve under Christ's ultimate authority, leading with humility and faithfulness.

c) Core Responsibilities of Pastors

- Determine and implement each sermon series and direct the teaching team to ensure our Truth Coordinate is a core foundation.
- Provide weekly Sunday services to learn, worship, and apply God's word as a larger community. Establish structure of services, including worship, prayer, communion, prayer teams, sermon delivery, etc., seeking input from deacons, elders, and other volunteers where their roles are impacted.
- Provide ministry area vision, structure, and implementation for the purposes of equipping the saints and discipleship, including but not limited to the areas of Family Ministry, Discipleship, Community, Assimilation, Worship, and Witness/Mission.
- Provide pastoral counseling on topics of theology, discipleship, conflict, marriage, family, and cultural issues.
- Provide excellent communication to welcome, integrate, and connect attenders/members into our church body.
- Provide shepherding, direction, and development of our pastors/staff within various team and reporting structures.
- Manage approved budgeted accounts for healthy ministry.
- Provide appropriate reporting to the Session regarding ministry, staff, pastors, building, and church life and seek input on major changes in direction.

d) Pastoral Roles

(1) Executive Pastor

- Provides visionary leadership in collaboration with elders and pastoral staff including setting strategic goals, developing ministries, planning for the congregation's spiritual growth, and fulfilling the mission to spread the gospel.
- Equips and provides pastoral oversight (e.g., setting goals, providing direction, align efforts with vision and mission of Eternal, building healthy culture, shepherding) of the other pastors and church staff.
- Leads and is responsible for final pastor/staff decisions.
- Coordinates with elders, deacons, and staff to ensure Eternal is governed in alignment with biblical principles (e.g., key decisions on doctrine, policies, and overall direction).
- Provides oversight and stewardship of church resources, ensuring that the church is operating within its budget and is financially healthy.
- Accountable to the Session, specifically to the Elder Chair.

## (2) Family Ministry Pastor

- Leads pastoral oversight of a teaching team, with a focus on developing teaching series and scheduling a rotation of teaching with the goal of helping the congregation grow in knowledge of scripture, fostering spiritual maturity, and equipping believers for ministry.
- In collaboration with other pastors and elders, ensures that Eternal's teaching remains doctrinally sound, holds fast to biblical orthodoxy, and guards against false teachings.
- Provides leadership in setting the vision and direction for family-focused ministry that aligns with Eternal's overall mission and helps integrate family life with the gospel.
- Provides resources and support for parents, helping them teach biblical truth to their children and live out their faith in the home.
- Ensures children attending Eternal are taught age-appropriate biblical truth and are nurtured in their faith, and provides a safe environment structure.
- Provides leadership, direction and team formation for a healthy Youth Group environment, learning, community and discipleship.
- Oversees, leads and directs the Family Ministry Team.
- Reports to Executive Pastor.

## (3) Discipleship and Care Pastor

- Leads pastoral oversight of discipleship, care and counseling ministries.
- Serves as part of the teaching team on a regular basis, upholding our truth coordinate.
- Provides leadership in setting the vision, direction, and pathways for discipleship at every level from new believer to mature Christian with the goal of spiritual maturity.
- Leads effort to equip future leaders to take on roles in teaching, ministry and service.
- Provides resources to individuals and small groups for spiritual growth, accountability and community.
- Provides help and resources for individuals facing spiritual challenges, personal struggles, or emotional crises, ensuring that counsel and care are rooted in scripture and biblical wisdom and that individuals find peace and healing in God's Word.
- Oversees, leads and directs the Director of Connections to ensure community life of the church.
- Reports to Executive Pastor.

## (4) Worship Pastor

- Responsible for pastoral oversight of Worship ministry and Sunday gatherings.
- Sets the vision of worship ministry that encompasses both personal devotion and corporate worship, ensuring that worship is theologically sound and spiritually enriching and points worshippers to Jesus Christ.
- Oversees the Production Director, ensuring excellence of our ministry production needs.

- Leads effort to recruit and equip worship team members, caring for their spiritual growth and maturity, as well as their focus on worshiping God rather than performing.
- Reports to Executive Pastor.

#### e) Selection and Appointment of Pastors

Calling a pastor is not about filling a position—it is about faithfully discerning the shepherd God has prepared for His flock. At Eternal Church, we hold this process with humility and reverence, knowing that the right leader will not be chosen by human effort alone, but by God’s sovereign hand.

- Prepare Hearts in Discernment - Before taking any steps forward, the church enters a time of reflection, prayer and discernment, seeking God’s lead including:
  - A season of corporate and individual prayer, inviting the Holy Spirit to lead the process.
  - Seeking collective wisdom from church elders and key leaders to identify the spiritual needs of the congregation.
  - Reviewing the church’s mission, theological commitments, and pastoral expectations for the next season of ministry.
- Form the Search Team - A pastoral search team is entrusted with the task of discerning the right leader for our community. Some characteristics of the team include:
  - A broad composition of Elders, Deacons, and Members representing the full spectrum of Eternal membership.
  - Active Covenant Members of Eternal Church for at least one year and actively engaged in worship, service, and church ministries.
  - Spiritually, emotionally, and relationally mature individuals capable of defining the theological and pastoral qualities essential for the next season of church life.
  - A commitment to collaboration, transparency, and authenticity, ensuring the process is both prayerful and thorough.
  - Team members take a prayerful posture by seeking God's direction through Scripture and intercession.
- Seeking and Discerning Candidates - With a clear sense of calling, the search team begins reviewing candidates. The process is both practical and deeply spiritual. The following is a framework with sample questions, but it’s not meant to be exhaustive:
  - Calling & Spiritual Maturity – What has God been stirring in your heart? How do you understand the pastoral calling? What are your rules of life?
  - Doctrinal Alignment – How do you approach Scripture, teaching, and theological integrity? Having studied our statement of beliefs e.g., Vision and Mission, Values, Four Coordinates, Statement of Beliefs, etc. where do you see alignment or differences?
  - Shepherding & Leadership – How have you shepherded people through seasons of joy and pain? How do you cultivate a culture of discipleship and mission within a

church? How do you handle pastoral counseling, church conflict and difficult conversations?

- Philosophy of Preaching & Worship – How do you prepare sermons? What role does worship play in spiritual formation and how do you collaborate with the worship leader? What is your perspective on team teaching and a primary teacher model? How would you incorporate Spiritual Formation / Direction with preaching the word? What are the advantages and disadvantages of expository, textual and topical preaching?
- Cultural Engagement – How do you address current cultural issues with both truth and grace? How do you equip a congregation to navigate faith in today's world?
- Personal & Family Life – How does your ministry impact your family and how do you maintain healthy boundaries? How do you cultivate personal spiritual health and accountability?
- In addition to formal interviews, the search team listens to past sermons, reviews theological writings, and speaks with references including spouse to gain a more complete picture of each candidate's life and ministry.
- The search team may also consider including a group of outsiders like the Greater Charlotte Church Planting Network as part of the interview process.
- A clean background check will also be part of the process with full disclosure of the results to the congregation at the appropriate time.
- Engaging the Congregation - At Eternal Church, we believe pastoral leadership is communal, and the church body should have a voice in the process. For example, this may include:
  - Search teams provide a thorough written review of candidates including background check, ministry experience, and candidates answers to questions.
  - Candidates are invited to meet with church members, engage in informal conversations, Q&As, and to preach.
  - Church members and leaders are encouraged to participate and the reflect not only on what the pastor says, but how they carry themselves—their humility, wisdom, and ability to shepherd with both truth and grace.
- Confirmation & Calling - Once the search team and elders have prayerfully evaluated all aspects of a candidate's character, calling, theological alignment, response from the congregation they come together for a final discernment process. They ask:
  - Is there unity and peace in this decision?
  - Has God made His will clear?
  - Does this pastor demonstrate both biblical qualifications and a heart aligned with our mission?
  - When there is clarity, the elders extend an official call to the pastor, inviting them to step into this role. The candidate also must confirm that they sense God leading

them to accept. this step is mutual—both the church and the pastor must affirm the calling before moving forward.

- Affirm the Call – With full transparency the Session prepares and shares a thorough summary of the findings of the Search Committee and their own observations regarding the candidate background, gifting, theological alignment, calling, etc. Final candidate is presented to the congregational vote by a majority of the quorum of Members.
- Installation & Celebration - Once the pastor has accepted the call, the church gathers to commission, install, and celebrate their new shepherd. Elders, leaders, and church members lay hands in prayer, symbolizing their commitment to walk together in faithfulness.

f) Removal

If a Pastor is no longer qualified, as an at will employee they may be removed by a majority vote of the Session.

## **D. Deacons: Servant Leadership**

A deacon is one who is "charged with the temporal affairs of the church". The apostles ordained them in Acts 6:1-6. The Greek word translated *deacon* signifies servant and is so translated in John 12:25. It is also translated *minister* (Mark 10:43, 1 Corinthians 3:5, 1 Thessalonians 3:2). Stephen and Phillip are two of the clearest examples of a deacon in the Scriptures (Acts 6:8-8:2, 8:26-40, 22:20).

The Deacons are wise, sure, and humble servants who protect and promote church unity by assisting the Pastoral Team, Staff, and Elders in meeting the needs of the church (1 Timothy 3:8-13). Deacons collaborates with the Session concerning needs of our church body. When meeting needs, the Deacons, in addition to their direct service, recognize the giftings present in individuals in the body. They bring together these parts so that the body can function in meeting needs through service.

### **1. Authority**

Deacons are called to serve, not to lead with authority (Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 3). Deacons support the church by meeting practical needs, showing compassion, and assisting in ministry so that elders can focus on teaching and prayer. Deacons do not govern the church but instead reflect the servant-hearted nature of Jesus, who came not to be served, but to serve (Mark 10:45). Their leadership is shown through humility, generosity, and faithful service, strengthening the church and pointing others to Jesus. We honor the work of Deacons as a vital part of God's mission, ensuring that the love of Jesus is displayed through acts of care and service.

### **2. Qualifications**

The office of Deacon is open to both men and women. The leader who serves in the office of deacon must be so qualified that the church will willingly follow their servant leadership (see 1 Timothy 3:8-12, Acts 6:1-7).

- Dignity - this quality is found in a person who possesses and manifests a dignity (worthy of respect) founded on high moral distinction and seriousness of purpose. They are held in high regard by others and know the importance of living the Christian life.
- Not Double-tongued - A double-tongued person is one who will say one thing to one person and then turn around and say another entirely contradictory statement to another. By making different representations to different people about the same thing credibility is destroyed. A deacon must be sincere and consistent in what he says (Proverbs 6:16- 19).
- Not Addicted to Much Wine - this requirement is not total abstinence but rather prohibits misuse leading to dependency on wine (1 Timothy 3:8, 5:23, Proverbs 20:1, 23:29-35, Romans 14:13-15:3).
- Not Fond of Sordid Gain - Legitimate gain becomes sordid or dishonest gain when wealth is made the prime objective rather than seeking to glorify God. An improper focus would disqualify a person from giving genuine service to God (Proverbs 13:7, Mark 8:36, 1 Timothy 6:6-10).
- Holds to the Mystery of the Faith with a Clear Conscience - The "mystery of the faith" is the revealed truth of the gospel. A Deacon, in order to be able to minister spiritually, must have a full understanding of the revelation of the Bible so that they are fully and unfailingly persuaded of its truth and to give spiritual support to believers (1 Timothy 1:5, 3:16, Matthew 13:11).

3. Responsibilities of Deacons – The primary functional roles in which our Deacons serve include the following

a) Stewardship

Provide tangible help to people in need, often financial, both within the church and in the broader community, in such a way that people are pointed to Jesus and witness Him working through the church.

- Review, discern, and approve (if appropriate) financial support requests of church members, regular attenders, and others within the Eternal Church community.
- Engage members of the outside community who contact the church seeking financial and/or other forms of tangible assistance.
- Review, approve, and coordinate requests for counseling financial assistance.

b) Hospitality

Foster an environment of joy, connectedness, and community throughout the congregation and amongst the volunteer teams on which we serve. Additionally, proactively engage others (volunteers, church members and regular attenders, and new visitors) in a manner that makes Sunday services a comfortable, smooth, gospel-centered, and hospitable experience for every man, woman, and child that walks through the front doors of the church. Serve as the coordinators and organizers of the volunteers that make Sunday services a comfortable, smooth, gospel-centered, and hospitable experience for every man, woman, and child that walks through the front doors of the church.

- Be a proactive hospitable presence at church services and other church events.
- Foster an environment of joy, connectedness, and community amongst the volunteer teams on which we serve.

c) Helps

Comfort and pray with people who are going through seasons of hardship, including but not limited to death of a loved one, medical issues, marital and/or parenting struggles, and loneliness. Help meet non-financial physical needs such as meals, moving, yard work and the like

- Collaborate with the Shepherd Team and Deacons reviewing Stewardship request to provide spiritual support to people with financial and physical needs.
- Actively engage in Monthly Prayer Meetings and Widow Ministry.
- Proactively identify needs within our church community and engage with the rest of the Diaconate to develop potential solutions to such items.

d) Special Events & Projects

Serve as a resource for special events and projects that either take place at the church building, are organized at the church-wide level, or are add-ons to the typical Sunday service.

- Serve as point-of-contact and liaison between the Diaconate and the Staff as it relates to Special Events.
- Collaborate with Events Coordinator to mobilize Deacons and other volunteers to fulfill service needs for events, as needed.



e) Other Responsibilities

Mobilize and enable new ministry efforts by supporting the physical needs of such ministries. Faithfully serve in volunteer capacities and respond to meet immediate, tangible needs (both for Sunday services and ad-hoc requests) that arise within the church. Find solutions to challenges that arise in a caring manner to promote harmony in the church and allow the Pastoral Team, Staff, and Elders to focus on their roles.

f) Deacon Chair

- Elected by the Diaconate and from among the Diaconate.
- Leads and is responsible for final deacon decisions
- Prepares agenda for and facilitates monthly Deacon meetings.
- Engages the Session, Pastors, and Staff, as appropriate, to ensure the Diaconate is well-informed and utilized in the most helpful ways to love and serve the church.

4. Selection and Appointment of Deacons

Nomination and discernment process follows the same path as Elders. This process is a structured and prayerful journey to ensure that qualified individuals are called to lead with integrity and devotion.

- Nomination & Discernment – Nominations are made by the congregation and reviewed by the Session. Nominees must be active Covenant Members of Eternal Church for at least one year and actively engaged in worship, service, and church ministries. Those making nominations must also be members for at least one year and actively engaged in worship, service, and church ministries. Nominees begin the discernment process by receiving information on qualifications, roles and responsibilities and they complete a questionnaire. Elders begin to walk with the nominee through their discernment process by meeting as needed to clarify expectations, discuss the questionnaire, and in prayer. This process includes a clean background check as well.
- Congregational Update – Accepted and willing nominees are presented to the congregation, along with the message that all - congregation, Session and nominees - enter into a discernment period.
- Training & Final Decision – Nominees attend meetings, undergo training, and engage in mutual discernment with the elders. The final decision is communicated to the congregation.
- Official Appointment – After discernment and training nominees who remain are presented to the congregation for a vote. Candidates with the highest number of votes are installed, depending on the number of nominees and number of open spots

5. Removal

If a Deacon is no longer qualified, upon recommendation of two-thirds of the Diaconate and two-thirds vote of the Session they may be removed.

**E. Staff**

The staff of Eternal are essential to the life and ministry of our church, serving with dedication and care to support the work of the congregation. Each staff member brings unique gifts to the daily

rhythms of church life, ensuring that ministry is carried out with excellence, compassion, and intentionality. Hired by Pastors or Associate Pastors based on the needs of the church and the gifting of the individual, their work is more than just keeping things running—it is a ministry in itself. No matter their role, every staff member serves under the same greater call—to glorify God and serve His people with wisdom, humility, and faithfulness.

1. Director of Communication & Events

- Ensures that all communications are consistent, clear, and in alignment with Eternal's core values and beliefs.
- Oversees Eternal's website, social media, email and digital newsletters and online content, ensuring regularity and clarity of message, consistency in identity, and supporting a culture of open communication and transparency.
- Supports the Deacons by relaying key information discussed during staff meetings in a timely manner, communicating identified needs that require deacon support, and technology-related requests (e.g., PCO).
- Oversees internal and external events in our church facility, calendaring the event, getting input from pastors on the event purpose, and ensuring set-up/clean-up, a presence of hospitality, and care for the event outcomes.
- Reports to Executive Pastor.

2. Director of Connections

- Provides vision and leadership that help people connect with Eternal with a focus on welcoming visitors, integrating newcomers into church life, and fostering a culture of engagement and belonging for those who consider Eternal their home church.
- Supports the Deacons by communicating identified needs that could use deacon support and assisting with mobilizing volunteers for various service opportunities.
- Provides leadership and development of community group leaders and group formation for healthy community and discipleship.
- Reports to Discipleship and Care Pastor.

3. Building and Property Manager

- Oversees the maintenance of our building, keeping up with normal wear and tear, annual checks, billing and maintenance of contract items.
- Oversees the maintenance of our property, ensuring lawn service completion and dealing with normal wear and tear.
- Provides our weekly room set-up and tear down of ministry activities and events, soliciting deaconate help when needed.
- Collaborates with Deacons in fulfilling identified needs that require building support.
- Reports to Executive Pastor

## **F. Other Volunteer Leaders**

Many people who call Eternal home help lead and carry out ministries of the church, across many different areas. In general, all volunteer leaders collaborate with and relate to another group described above—pastors/staff, elders, or deacons. All volunteer leaders thus work *under* and with the leadership of another group (pastors/staff, elders, or deacons).

## **G. Congregation**

The Congregation of Covenant Members plays many roles in leadership and ministry of the church—virtually everything the church does is done by Covenant Members working in collaboration with one another under the lordship of Jesus. Members in good standing, those who actively participate in the life, worship, and mission of the church, are essential to the church’s health and witness. All Covenant Members affirm the church’s Shared Commitments and commit to live with integrity, humility, and unity in alignment with the church’s teachings.

- Participate in regular corporate and personal worship, prayer and other spiritual disciplines in order to grow in faith and spiritual maturity and live a life worthy of the gospel of Jesus Christ.
- Exercise spiritual gifts, talents, interests and passions to serve Jesus in His Church by supporting and participating with Eternal in its service of God and its ministries to others.
- Join in spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ through lifestyle, mission, service, testimony, and witness.
- Pray for church’s mission, leaders, members, and its outreach efforts relying on the Holy Spirit to direct our steps.
- Promote an atmosphere of love, forgiveness, and reconciliation, as well as unity, purity and peace ensuring the church remains a healthy, and welcoming place for all.
- Respect and submit to the spiritual leadership of the Elders as they seek to follow Christ and lead in accordance with God’s Word.
- Support the mission and ministry of Eternal Church through faithful and sacrificial financial giving, as an expression of worship and stewardship.
- Additionally, the charter and/or by-laws of Eternal Church provide for decision making by the Congregation as a body in specific areas (e.g., purchase or disposal of real property, entering into debt, appointment of Senior Pastor, election of elders and deacons).

## **H. Delegation of Unenumerated Responsibilities**

It is to be understood that any particular task or area of responsibility not specifically enumerated and described in this document (“Summary of Leadership Roles and Responsibilities” or “Summary”) is delegated to the Pastoral Team and Staff, under the oversight of the Session and/or Congregation. In the event of any conflict between any provision of this Summary and any provision of the charter and/or by-laws of Eternal Church, the relevant provision(s) of the charter and/or by-laws control.

## **VIII.Policies**

### **A. Child Safety Policy**

At Eternal Church, we strive to create safe and joy-filled spaces where each child, student, and family can experience the joy of following Jesus. We are committed to partnering with families to raise and disciple children and students, ensuring they feel confident and secure in our care. This document summarizes our commitment to creating safe, welcoming, and supportive environments for children and students at Eternal Church.

#### **1. Volunteer Eligibility & Requirements**

- **Active Church Attendance:** Volunteers must attend Eternal Church for at least three months to ensure alignment with the church's mission and values.
- **Background Check:** Volunteers, staff members, deacons, and elders at Eternal Church must pass an approved background check to ensure the safety and security of the children in our care. Individuals with a criminal history involving minors or a history of violence are not eligible to serve in children's ministry or student ministry roles.

#### **2. Supervision & Safety Guidelines**

- **Open Communication:** We value transparency and encourage open lines of communication between volunteers, children, students, and parents. Volunteers and staff members are approachable and available to discuss any concerns or questions.
- **Physical Contact:** Volunteers are trained to be sensitive and respectful when it comes to physical contact. Any physical interaction will be brief, initiated by the child or student, and volunteers will be mindful to avoid even the perception of inappropriate physical contact.
- **1:1 Meetings:** Any one-on-one meetings between a volunteer and child or student will occur in public spaces, such as coffee shops or restaurants.

#### **3. Kids Ministry**

When you entrust your child to us, you can expect them to be cared for by adult and student leaders who call Eternal Church home and are known by our leadership team. All volunteers are thoroughly background checked through a third-party vendor, and we conduct yearly training to keep everyone updated on current policies and procedures. We adhere to AAP & CDC guidelines for health and safety.

- **Check-In System:** Every child is checked in using our secure database system. Parents and children will receive matching safety stickers, which are required to release a child after the service.
- **Room Supervision:** Our children's rooms are always staffed with at least two adult leaders. No child will ever be alone with a leader, ensuring proper supervision and accountability.
- **Safety Protocols:** Our children's wing is secured during ministry events to ensure safety and minimize risks.
- **Bathroom Policy:** Two adults are required to escort a child to the bathroom. A teen should never escort a child to the bathroom unless under the supervision of an adult.

#### 4. Student Ministry

When your student attends a Student Ministry event, you can be confident that every leader has been background checked and is either part of the Eternal Church family or invited by a trusted member of our team. Volunteers are also trained yearly to stay up to date with policies and procedures, and we follow all health and safety guidelines set by the AAP & CDC.

- Check-In & Name Tags: Students check in using our secure database system and are required to wear a name tag throughout the event. This helps ensure that we can keep track of students and maintain safety.
- Room Supervision: At least two adult leaders are always present in rooms and spaces, ensuring students are never left alone with another student or leader.

#### 5. Special Considerations for Trips & Events

- Traveling with Volunteers: When volunteers need to transport students, prior permission from a parent or guardian is obtained. For extended trips, we contract with professional drivers. Volunteers who drive students must also have background checks and a clean driving record.
- Room Assignments: For overnight trips, rooms are designated by gender. Adult leaders will never share a room 1-1 with a student. Adult leaders will always exercise caution and adhere to best practices when supervising sleeping arrangements.
- Supervision During Events: Students are expected to remain together with other students during ministry events or trips. If a private conversation is necessary, another trusted adult or student will always be present to ensure accountability.

#### 6. Questions and Concerns

Questions and concerns can be directed to [kids@eternalchurch.net](mailto:kids@eternalchurch.net)

## **B. Conflict of Interest Policy**

### **1. Purpose and Guiding Principles**

The leadership of Eternal Church is entrusted with spiritual, organizational, and financial responsibilities that require integrity, transparency, and selflessness. This policy ensures that all decisions made on behalf of the Church are free from undue influence, personal gain, or competing interests.

This policy applies to all Pastors, Elders, Deacons, Officers, staff members, and volunteers involved in decision-making. All who serve at Eternal Church are called to act in the best interest of the Church at all times. This includes avoiding any personal, financial, or professional interest that could impair—or appear to impair—their ability to carry out their responsibilities faithfully and objectively.

When a situation arises in which an individual has a potential conflict of interest, that individual must disclose the potential conflict to the Session or designated leadership team. They may then be asked to recuse themselves from related discussions or decisions. Eternal Church's general policy is that no individual should vote on or decide a matter in which they have a substantial conflict of interest.

### **2. Definitions**

**Interested Person:** Any Pastor, Elder, Deacon, Officer, staff member, or member of a committee with delegated powers from the Session who has a direct or indirect financial interest in a decision, transaction, or arrangement under consideration.

**Financial Interest:** A person has a financial interest if they or an immediate family member have an ownership or investment interest in any entity with which the Church is conducting business; are receiving compensation from the Church or from any entity with which the Church has a relevant relationship; or stand to benefit financially—directly or indirectly—from any transaction or arrangement under consideration by the Church.

**Compensation:** Includes salary, honoraria, consulting fees, gifts, or favors that are more than nominal in value. Having a financial interest does not automatically constitute a conflict of interest; disclosure and proper evaluation are required.

### **3. Procedures**

**Duty to Disclose:** An Interested Person must promptly and fully disclose any actual or potential financial interest, along with all material facts, to the Session.

**Determining Whether a Conflict Exists:** After full disclosure and any clarifying discussion with the Interested Person, the Session (excluding the Interested Person) shall determine whether a conflict of interest exists. It is always a conflict of interest for any individual to vote on or otherwise influence matters related to their own compensation.

**Addressing the Conflict:** if the Session determines a conflict of interest exists, the following steps shall be taken:

- The Interested Person may provide information or clarification to the Session but must not be present for deliberation or vote on the matter.
- The Session shall consider whether the transaction or decision is in the Church's best interest, aligns with Eternal's mission, and is fair and reasonable.

- If appropriate, the Session shall determine how to proceed, including whether to approve, modify, or reject the transaction or arrangement.

#### 4. Records and Documentation

The minutes of any meeting in which a conflict of interest is disclosed or discussed shall include:

- The name of the Interested Person, the nature of the financial interest, and relevant details;
- The determination made by the Session regarding the existence of a conflict;
- Any actions taken to address or mitigate the conflict;
- The names of those present for the discussion and vote, and a record of the vote itself.

#### 5. Periodic Review

To ensure ongoing compliance and awareness, this policy shall be reviewed yearly by the Session. All individuals covered by this policy may be required to affirm that they have read, understood, and agreed to abide by its terms.

## **C. Personnel Policy**

### **1. Purpose and Guiding Principles**

- Purpose: The personnel policies of Eternal Church exist to ensure a work environment that reflects Christian values, promotes ethical leadership, and fosters a culture of accountability, professionalism, and service. These policies guide all employment practices, ensuring compliance with legal standards and alignment with the church's mission.
- Applicability: These policies apply to all employees of Eternal Church, whether full-time, part-time, or temporary, as well as volunteers where applicable.
- Oversight: The Executive Pastor is responsible for fair and consistent enforcement of these policies.
- Core Personnel Principles:
  - Christ-Centered Workplace – Eternal Church fosters a work environment grounded in biblical principles, mutual respect, and service.
  - Integrity & Accountability – Employees are expected to uphold the highest ethical standards in their roles.
  - Stewardship & Professionalism – Staff members should manage time, resources, and responsibilities efficiently to support the mission of the church.
  - Compassion & Collaboration – Eternal values teamwork and a culture of support among staff and volunteers.

### **2. Employment Policies**

- Employment with Eternal Church is at-will. This means that either the employee or Eternal Church may terminate the employment relationship at any time, with or without cause or notice, except as otherwise provided by applicable law or written agreement. This policy does not create a contract of employment or a guarantee of continued employment.
- Eternal Church is a religious organization and ministry. As such, it reserves the right under Title VII of the Civil Rights Act and the First Amendment to employ individuals who affirm our Essential Tenets. Faith and conduct are integral to job performance in all roles.
- All employees are considered representatives of the church and must model a life consistent with our faith and practice. Employment decisions may be based on religious beliefs and practices in accordance with applicable federal and state laws.
- Eternal Church affirms the biblical understanding of sexuality and marriage as expressed in our Shared Commitments. Employees are expected to reflect these convictions in both personal life and public conduct. Behaviors inconsistent with these convictions may be grounds for discipline or dismissal.
- Employment Categories: Employees are classified as full-time, part-time, or temporary based on their hours and role within the organization.



- **Equal Opportunity Employment:** Eternal Church does not discriminate on the basis of race, gender, age, disability, or national origin, but reserves the right to employ individuals who align with the church's religious beliefs and mission.
- **Hiring Process:** All employment candidates must undergo an interview process, background check, and approval by the Executive Pastor. Some positions may require Session approval.
- **Job Descriptions:** Each position will have a written job description outlining responsibilities, expectations, and reporting structure.
- **Orientation & Training:** New employees will receive orientation and ongoing training to ensure success in their roles.
- **Proof of Age:** Following South Carolina labor laws Eternal does not hire anyone under 14. Minors (under 18) must provide proof of age before starting work, which will be kept on file during their employment.
- **Background Checks:** All Pastors, Elders, Deacons, employees and volunteers (Family Ministries only) must successfully pass a background check before their start date to ensure a safe and secure environment. Employment may be contingent upon the results. Information is kept confidential and evaluated in relation to job duties and ministry standards.

### 3. Workplace Expectations & Conduct

- **Code of Conduct:** Employees are expected to conduct themselves in a manner that reflects Eternals belief and values statement, professionalism, and integrity. (See Shared Commitment section of the Handbook of Practice)
- **Confidentiality:** Staff members must maintain confidentiality regarding church matters, financial information, and personal information of congregants. Access to giving records and information is restricted to the Financial Assistant only.
- **Conflict of Interest:** Employees are expected to avoid activities that create conflicts of interest, whether financial, relational, or organizational, that may compromise their responsibilities or the integrity of the church.
- **Conflict Resolution:** Disputes should be addressed in a biblical manner, following Biblical Peacemaking: Statement of Belief, seeking resolution through direct communication and, if necessary, leadership mediation. (Appendix B)
- **Work Hours & Attendance:** Employees must adhere to scheduled work hours and notify supervisors in advance of absences.
- **Electronic Communications and Data Security:** Employees are expected to use church-owned technology, email, and communication platforms for ministry purposes. Sensitive information (e.g., donor records, counseling notes, pastoral correspondence) must be handled with appropriate discretion and data protection practices. Employees must not share login credentials and are responsible for securing church-owned digital property.
- **Use of Church Resources:** Church property, including technology, vehicles, and office supplies, should be used responsibly for ministry purposes only.

- **Social Media:** Employees are expected to use social media in a manner that reflects the values, mission, and witness of the church. While personal accounts are the responsibility of the individual, staff should not speak on behalf of the church without authorization, disclose confidential information, or post content that is divisive, inflammatory, or inconsistent with Eternal Church's beliefs. Online activity should be guided by humility, integrity, and a desire to build up the body of Christ. Violations may result in corrective action.
- **Reporting Concerns:** Eternal values integrity, transparency, and accountability in our ministry. We encourage staff, volunteers, members, and stakeholders to report any concerns about unethical, illegal, or improper conduct without fear of retaliation. Concerns should be shared with the Executive Pastor or Elder Chair. All reports will be handled confidentially, with care for the dignity and safety of everyone involved. Those who speak up will be protected from dismissal, exclusion, or any form of mistreatment. Retaliation will not be tolerated and will be addressed promptly.

#### 4. Compensation & Benefits

- **Human Resource Records:** Human resource records are kept for applicants, employees, and past employees to document employment-related decisions, evaluate and assess policies, and comply with government recordkeeping and reporting requirements. Employees are responsible for ensuring their human resource records are up-to-date and should notify the Financial Assistant in writing about any changes in at least the following:
  - Name
  - Address
  - Telephone number
  - Number of dependents
  - Beneficiary designations for any of Eternal's employee benefit plans
  - Addresses and telephone numbers of dependents and insurance beneficiaries
  - Person(s) to be notified in case of emergency
- **Vendor Forms W-9:** Completed Forms W-9 will be required from all vendors, independent contractors, and honorarium recipients. Payments cannot be made until a completed Form W-9 is on file in Eternal's vendor file.
- **Payroll Changes:** Any payroll change, addition, or removal must be approved in writing through the ministry oversight Pastor and the Executive Pastor. This should be sent to the Finance Assistant with at least one week's lead time.
- **Pay Period:** Employees are paid semi-monthly via direct deposit. Salaries are determined based on job responsibilities, experience, and budget considerations.
- **Work Week:** Office hours are Monday - Thursday 9 am - 4 pm. Pastor's hours are Sunday - Thursday with Friday as a flex day. Part Time staff hours are set individually per their responsibilities to set days expected in office and out of office work hours. Certain roles require working evenings and weekends.

- Holidays: New Years Day, Martin Luther King Jr., Easter (offered another day to compensate for Easter being a workday), Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas (offered as the week between Christmas and New Years Day). Church takes a sabbatical the Sunday after Christmas.
- Paid Time Off (PTO): Denoting Full Time, Part Time, and Hourly employees PTO includes vacation, sick leave, and/or personal time off of work. Full Time employees receive PTO (vacation and sick leave) in accordance with their employment agreement. Part Time employees who are paid as salary, not hourly, receive PTO (vacation and sick leave) per the following.
  - Requests for PTO should be submitted to and approved by the employee's direct report (supervisor), given to the Events Manager to place on the church calendar, and tracked by the employee for reference with the supervisor as needed.
  - 1 to 5 years of employment = 2 weeks PTO
  - 5 years of employment onward = 3 weeks PTO
  - Hourly employees do not receive PTO.
- Salary Adjustments: Annual salary adjustments are subject to budget approval and generally occur in October and may be reviewed as part of the annual performance evaluation process.
- Maternity & Paternity Leave (Parental Leave) – Birthing parents who occupy a full-time position receive six weeks of paid leave at 100% of base pay. Birthing parents who occupy a part time position receive 2 weeks of paid leave at 100% base pay. Vacation can be used to extend time as approved.
- Children of Employees During Office Hours – Children over the age of 6 months are not to be brought to work by the employee unless specific approval has been given for an unusual situation. This is to maintain a healthy working environment, minimize distractions, and for the overall care of church members meeting pastors or counselors during working hours. Children under the age of 6 months may attend with the parent during working hours as needed.
- Computer Replacement – Staff members receive new computers every four years. All computers remain the property of Eternal Church; however, if an employee departs at least three years after the computer's purchase, they may keep it after removing all information and data related to the church.
- Phone Compensation – Employees working 20+ hours per week receive a \$50/month salary increase to cover phone expenses. This is considered compensation not reimbursement and employees pay their own phone bills.
- Expense Reimbursements: Work-related expenses must be pre-approved and submitted with receipts for reimbursement.
- Health & Retirement Benefits: Full-time employees are eligible for health insurance, retirement plans, and other benefits as approved by the Session.

- **Ministerial Compensation Issues:** Eternal's ministers are employees and receive IRS Form W-2. Under tax law, ministers are self-employed for Social Security and Medicare tax purposes, and therefore, Social Security and Medicare taxes are never to be withheld from ministers' paychecks. Ministers are required to pay quarterly tax estimates to the IRS directly. Eternal is not required to withhold Federal Income Tax Withholding (FWT) for ministers, but ministers can elect to have FWT withheld and sent to the IRS on their behalf.
- **Ministers' Housing Allowance:** The IRS allows churches to designate a portion of their ministers' salary as a housing allowance, which is free from income tax. Each year, the minister must submit an updated Housing Allowance Request Form. If a minister's housing expenses change during the year, they may submit a new Housing Allowance Request Form for approval. Housing allowances and/or changes may not be retroactively applied. The amended housing allowance amount will be effective at the time it is approved by the Session. The amount of compensation allocated to a housing allowance is exempt from income tax; however, it is subject to self-employment taxes (unless in the rare case the minister has filed Form 4029 with the IRS). It is the minister's responsibility to calculate the actual housing allowance exemption when preparing their personal income tax return.
- **Sabbaticals –** Pastors are granted dedicated time away from regular responsibilities to deepen their spiritual life, renew personal well-being, and strengthen their ministry. Beginning in the sixth year of service and recurring every five years thereafter, full-time pastors will receive one month of paid leave along with a \$5,000 allowance to help cover expenses such as travel, lodging, and retreat costs. After 10 years, the sabbatical extends to two months, and after 15 years, it increases to three months—the maximum length allowed. The \$5,000 allowance remains the cap, regardless of duration. Pastors may also request a working sabbatical for a specific ministry-related focus, such as writing a book or developing discipleship resources. These sabbaticals require prior approval from the Session, must align with an overall ministry plan, and do not include financial assistance.

#### 5. Performance & Accountability

- **Performance Reviews:** Employees receive annual performance evaluations conducted by their direct supervisor. Evaluations assess job performance, goal achievement, and areas for growth. Performance reviews for pastor will be conducted in January by Elder(s) and begin the review cycle. All performance reviews are to be completed no later than the end of February.
- **Corrective Action:** If an employee fails to meet expectations, the Executive Pastor may implement corrective action, including verbal or written warnings, probation, or termination if necessary.
- **Termination Policy:** Employment at Eternal Church is at-will, meaning either the employee or the church may end the employment relationship at any time, with or without cause. Termination procedures are to be handled with grace, clarity, and professionalism. An employee may be terminated involuntarily for reasons that may include poor performance, misconduct, or other violations of the Church's rules, guidelines, policies and procedures. The church reserves the right to discharge or demote any employee with or without cause.

- Any violation of church policy or improper behavior or conduct may warrant disciplinary action. Although the employment relationship may be terminated at will by the employee or the church without following any formal system of discipline or warnings, the church may exercise its discretion to implement discipline short of termination to give employees advance notice of problems with their conduct or performance in order to correct any problems.
  - Severance: Severance pay will be provided for employees involuntarily terminated due to layoffs or restructuring, offering two weeks of pay per year of service. Packages may include salary continuation, benefits, and transition support as determined by Session. This does not apply to terminations for cause or voluntary resignations.
6. Volunteer & Ministry Leadership Policies
- Volunteer Expectations: Volunteers are expected to adhere to the same ethical and conduct standards as paid staff.
  - Background Checks: Volunteers working with children, youth, or vulnerable individuals must undergo background screening before serving.
  - Ministry Training: Leaders and volunteers will receive periodic training to equip them for effective ministry service.
7. Safety & Security
- Anti-Harassment: Eternal Church is committed to maintaining a x-centered, safe, and respectful environment free from harassment, abuse, or coercive behavior of any kind. We uphold the biblical standard of treating all individuals with dignity, integrity, and care. Any form of harassment—verbal, physical, emotional, psychological, sexual, spiritual, or otherwise—will not be tolerated. Harassment includes, but is not limited to:
    - Verbal abuse – Derogatory comments, threats, coercion, inappropriate jokes, or manipulation.
    - Physical abuse – Unwanted touching, intimidation, physical aggression, or any form of assault.
    - Sexual harassment – Unwanted advances, inappropriate comments, explicit messages, coercion into inappropriate conduct, or any behavior that violates personal boundaries.
    - Spiritual abuse – The misuse of Scripture, authority, or religious position to manipulate, control, shame, or exploit others.
    - Narcissistic abuse – Patterns of deceit, manipulation, gaslighting, or controlling behavior that diminish the autonomy and well-being of others.
  - Reporting Incidents: Any individual who experiences or witnesses harassment or abuse should report concerns. Reports will be taken seriously, investigated promptly, and handled with confidentiality and care. Retaliation against those who report misconduct is strictly prohibited. Any individual found to have engaged in harassment, abuse, or coercive behavior will face disciplinary action, up to and including removal from leadership or church membership, as appropriate. Places to report abuse include:

- Executive Pastor
  - Elder Chair
  - Full Session – [elderquestions@eternalchurch.net](mailto:elderquestions@eternalchurch.net)
  - RAINN (Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network) – [www.rainn.org](http://www.rainn.org). Offers a national sexual assault hotline (800-656-HOPE) and resources for survivors.
  - The National Domestic Violence Hotline – [www.thehotline.org](http://www.thehotline.org). Provides support for those experiencing domestic violence or abuse, including within religious settings.
  - Childhelp National Child Abuse Hotline – [www.childhelp.org](http://www.childhelp.org). For reporting child abuse and getting assistance (800-4-A-CHILD).
- Emergency Procedures: Employees should familiarize themselves with emergency protocols, including fire evacuation, medical emergencies, and active threat situations.
  - Workplace Safety: Employees should report any safety concerns to their supervisor immediately.
  - Concealed Weapons: Eternal Church does not grant permission for anyone to carry a concealed weapon.
8. Grievance & Appeals Process
- Filing a Grievance: Employees with concerns about workplace treatment, unfair policies, or conflicts should first seek resolution through their direct supervisor. If unresolved, the matter may be escalated to the Executive Pastor or the Session.
  - Appeals: Employees may appeal disciplinary actions or grievances through a formal written process submitted to the Executive Pastor. If needed, the Session may review cases requiring further intervention.
9. Policy Review & Amendments
- Policy Updates: This personnel policy will be reviewed periodically and updated as necessary by church leadership to reflect legal and organizational changes.

## **D. Financial Policy**

### **1. Purpose and Guiding Principles**

- **Purpose:** The financial policies of Eternal Church ensure the faithful management of resources with integrity, accountability, and transparency. Our goal is to honor God through wise stewardship, maintain trust within our congregation, and support the ministry's mission effectively.
- **Applicability:** These policies apply to all employees, volunteers, contractors, and consultants, whether full-time, part-time, or temporary.
- **Oversight:** The Treasurer, Executive Pastor, and Financial Assistant are responsible for fair and consistent enforcement of these policies.
- **Core Financial Principles:**
  - **Biblical Stewardship** – Recognizing that all financial resources belong to God and are entrusted to us for His purposes (Psalm 24:1, 1 Corinthians 4:2).
  - **Transparency & Accountability** – Committing to clear and honest financial practices, ensuring responsible handling of all funds.
  - **Generosity & Faithfulness** – Encouraging a culture of giving, recognizing that generosity fuels the mission of the church (2 Corinthians 9:6-7).
- **Fiscal Year:** Eternal's fiscal year runs from October 1st through September 30th.
- **Accounting Method:** Internal financial statements follow a modified cash basis, with most receipts and expenses processed on a cash basis, while payroll and receivables follow an accrual basis.

### **2. Financial Oversight and Approvals**

- **Check Signing Authority:** Check-signing privileges are reserved for four pastors and one elder. One signature is required for checks up to \$1,000 and two are required for any amount over that. Executive Pastor approval is required for all checks over \$5,000.
- **Financial Statements & Reporting:** Eternal Church is committed to financial integrity, transparency, and faithful stewardship. Financial records will be maintained with accuracy and accountability, and financial reports will be made available to the congregation upon written request. While formal CPA audits will not be pursued due to cost, an internal financial review will be conducted annually by the Treasurer and nonstaff members of the Financial Advisory Council to ensure proper oversight and accountability.
- **Financial System Security:** To protect confidentiality, financial records must be safeguarded. The accounting system will remain password-protected, and physical records (e.g., invoices, checks) must be securely stored. Only the Financial Assistant and Executive Pastor are authorized to access and modify financial data.
- **Confidentiality of Giving Records:** All donation records, including tithes and offerings, will be securely maintained and accessible only to the Financial Assistant. Pastors, Elders, Deacons, and other staff members do not have access to individual giving records. Any reports or summaries related to income or giving must only present generalized data without

classifying donors by giving amounts or donor types. This confidentiality policy does not apply to fees collected as Restricted Income, such as payments for retreats, small group study materials, or similar purposes.

- Insurance Coverage: Eternal Church maintains insurance to mitigate risk, including:
- General Liability Insurance – Covers damages from accidents involving nonemployees on church property.
- Property Insurance – Covers damage or loss to church buildings, contents, and equipment caused by events like fire, theft, vandalism, or natural disasters.
- Workers' Compensation Insurance – Covers lost wages and medical costs for employees injured in workplace accidents.
- Tax Compliance: Payroll and sales/use tax deposits will be made in compliance with governmental regulations and deadlines.
- Fraud Prevention & Reporting: Any suspected fraudulent activity must be reported immediately to the Executive Pastor, Treasurer, or Elder Chair for review and action.
- Contract Approval: All contracts exceeding \$5,000 must be reviewed by the Executive Pastor and approved by Session before execution. Eternal Church must maintain written agreements with any vendor receiving more than \$10,000 annually.

### 3. Cash Handling and Security

- Receiving Cash Contributions:
  - At least two pre-approved individuals must be present when handling contributions.
  - Contributions must be counted in a secure area, with rotating counting teams.
  - A Contribution/Receipts Log and Deposit Form must be completed and signed in ink.
  - Checks received by mail must be endorsed immediately upon receipt.
  - Deposits must be made at least weekly.
- Counting Room Security: The counting area must be visible and free of blind spots. When in use, it must be locked, and personal belongings such as purses and backpacks should be stored away from the counting area.
- Income Storage: Income must be stored only in the church safe.
- Bank Accounts: Eternal maintains three bank accounts, all reconciled monthly.
- Reserve: Eternal Church will maintain a reserve fund to ensure financial stability and preparedness for emergencies. The reserve fund must cover a minimum of three months and a maximum of six months of operating expenses. Funds may be invested in low-risk accounts that align with church values. If reserves exceed six months of expenses, the excess funds will be allocated as follows:
  - Split between the mortgage and Missions until Missions reaches 10% of total expenses.



- Once Missions funding meets 10%, all excess funds will be applied to the mortgage.

#### 4. Budgeting and Financial Planning

- Annual Budget: The budget must be completed, approved by the Session, and shared with the congregation before the start of the fiscal year. It should align with Eternal's mission and vision.
- Event and Retreat Funding: Events must be self-funded unless budgeted in advance. Income and expenses must be tracked separately in the general ledger.
- Financial Assistant Responsibilities:
  - Meet with ministry leaders annually to discuss budget goals and procedures.
  - Communicate any changes in the proposed budget.
  - Monitor and report on budget performance throughout the year.

#### 5. Income and Giving

- Restricted Gifts: Temporarily restricted gifts must align with pre-approved purposes. If a donor requests an unapproved designation, the Financial Assistant will either:
  - Suggest a pre-approved designation.
  - Return the gift to the donor.
  - Present the request to the Session for a final determination.
- Noncash Gifts: All noncash (gifts-in-kind) donations must be pre-approved. Written acknowledgment is required, but value assessment is for internal purposes only. Gifts exceeding \$5,000 require IRS Form 8283, and dispositions within three years require IRS Form 8282.
- Stock & Donor-Advised Funds: Stock gifts must be processed through a charitable organization (e.g., Fidelity Charitable). Eternal Church does not issue tax receipts for such gifts.
- Vehicle Donations: Vehicles may be donated only if they have a free and clear title, with prior arrangements made with the Financial Assistant.
- Giving Statements: All gifts will be acknowledged through annual giving statements issued by January 31st.
- Non-Tax-Deductible Fees: Payments for weddings, funerals, registrations, etc., are not tax-deductible and will not be included in giving statements. Events with partial tax-deductibility will state the deductible portion in advance.
- Rental Income: Facility use must align with Eternal's mission and zoning permits. Fees will be managed by the Financial Assistant, and renters are responsible for setup, cleanup, and damage reimbursement.
- Non-Refundable Contributions: All donations are considered final and nonrefundable.

## 6. Expenditures and Approvals

- Segregation of Duties: No individual may approve, write, and sign a check for the same expense. At least two people must be involved.
- Check Requests: Must include supporting documentation (e.g., invoice, receipt) and be submitted to the Financial Assistant.
- Authorized Payments: The Financial Assistant may make payments within budgeted limits. Non-budgeted expenses are permitted as long as the ministry area remains within budget; otherwise, Session approval is required.
- Benevolent Financial Assistance: Must be approved by the Deacons over Stewardship and provided in the form of goods, services, gift cards, or direct payments (not cash). Further details are outlined in Eternal's Stewardship Policy Manual.
- Monthly auto-draft are a convenient method of paying reoccurring expenses and can be established by the Financial Assistant but must be approved by the Executive Pastor and reviewed quarterly by the Executive Pastor to assess their continuation.

## **E. Expense Policy**

### **1. Purpose**

Eternal Church is committed to financial stewardship and accountability. This policy ensures that all personnel and volunteers are reimbursed for reasonable and necessary ministry-related expenses while maintaining transparency and integrity in the use of church funds. This policy relies on discretion and discernment in the use of ministry funds, ensuring wise stewardship and financial accountability. When incurring ministry-related expenses, personnel and volunteers are expected to:

- **Ministry Purpose:** Expenses must serve a clear ministry purpose, such as pastoral care, discipleship, outreach, counseling, leadership development, or church operations.
- **Reasonable Expense:** Costs should be modest and appropriate for the setting. Extravagant or luxury purchases will not be reimbursed.
- **Pre-Approval:** Certain nonmeal expenses, such as ministry materials, event supplies, or office-related purchases, require prior approval.
- **Documentation:** An itemized receipt must be submitted, along with a description of the ministry's purpose and any necessary approval documentation.

### **2. Eligible Expenses**

#### **a) Ministry-Related Meal Expenses**

Our church values hospitality and relational ministry. Shared meals can be a meaningful way to encourage, disciple, and shepherd others. This policy ensures that church resources are stewarded wisely while fostering meaningful connections.

- **Ministry Purpose:** The meal should go beyond fellowship and serve a clear ministry purpose, such as pastoral care, discipleship, outreach, counseling, or leadership development.
- **Reasonable Expense:** Meals should be modest and appropriate for the setting.
- **Attendees:** The meal should involve a pastor and at least one congregant or ministry leader. Meals exclusively among pastors should be limited to necessary planning and team-building occasions.

#### **b) Ministry-Related Travel Expenses**

Church personnel, approved volunteers, and mission teams may be reimbursed for ministry-related travel, including mission trips, youth retreats, and conferences. To ensure financial responsibility and proper planning, these trips must have a pre-approved budget by the Executive Pastor. This budget should include clear assumptions for restricted income, restricted expenses, and general expenses. Reimbursement for related expenses is subject to the following guidelines:

- **Airfare and Transportation:** Travel should be booked at the lowest reasonable fare. Frequent flyer miles and travel credits may be retained for personal use but should not influence booking decisions.
- **Lodging:** Accommodations should be safe, convenient, and cost-effective. The church will not cover incidentals such as movies, in-room snacks, or valet parking unless unavoidable.

- Meals: Per diem rates apply (\$15 breakfast, \$18 lunch, \$35 dinner). Meals provided by hosts or included in conference fees will not be reimbursed. Alcoholic beverages are not reimbursable.
  - Mileage Reimbursement: Personnel using personal vehicles for ministry purposes may be reimbursed at the IRS standard mileage rate.
  - Personal Expenses: Costs associated with sightseeing, souvenirs, and personal excursions are not eligible for reimbursement.
  - Personal & Spousal Travel: Personal travel combined with ministry trips must not increase costs or interfere with objectives. Expenses for spouses, family, or friends require Executive Pastor approval and must provide direct ministry benefit.
  - Pre-Plan: Mission trips, youth retreats, and other ministry-related travel play a vital role in the church's mission. To ensure financial responsibility and proper planning, these trips must have a pre-approved budget by the Executive Pastor. This budget should include clear assumptions for restricted income, restricted expenses, and general expenses.
3. Office & Administrative Expenses
- Office supplies, postage, and printing.
  - Technology-related purchases must be pre-approved and must be necessary for ministry functions.
  - Professional development (conferences, memberships, online courses), if pre-approved.
4. Non-Reimbursable Expenses
- Expenses unrelated to church activities.
  - Travel insurance, first-class airfare, or luxury accommodations.
  - Entertainment (movies, concerts, personal streaming services).
  - Alcoholic beverages, tobacco, or recreational drugs.
  - Membership dues for clubs or gyms.
  - Valet parking (except when unavoidable).
  - Excessive or extravagant spending.

#### 5. Approval and Reimbursement Process

Effective financial stewardship ensures transparency and accountability in all ministry-related expenses.

- Approval: To ensure accountability all reimbursements must be approved by the ministry oversight Pastor and/or Executive Pastor.
  - Purchases over \$1,000 require prior approval from the ministry oversight Pastor or Executive Pastor.
  - Non-budgeted expenses over \$2,000 require Session approval.
- Credit Card Usage: Church-issued KleerCard credit cards must be used exclusively for ministry-related expenses. Personal use is prohibited.

- Cardholders are personally responsible for any unauthorized purchases.
    - Misuse of the card may result in disciplinary action or revocation of card privileges.
  - Reimbursement Procedures: All expenditures must be uploaded into the KleerCard APP within 7 days and no later than the 5th business day of the month.
    - To ensure transparency and accurate reimbursements all expense reports must include the date of the expense, a description of its purpose, the account the expense is to be booked to, a legible receipt, and a list of participants (if applicable).
    - Incomplete or late submissions may not be processed.
    - Approved reimbursements will be issued within 14 days via check or direct deposit.
6. Budgeting & Accountability
- All ministries must operate within the approved budget.
  - The Finance Advisory Council will audit expense reports periodically.
  - Any suspected misuse of funds should be reported for review.

## **F. Building Use Policy**

### **1. Purpose**

Our building and property are God's gift for our stewardship of His presence, work and Word through all we do. We desire and intend to use what God has entrusted to us for His glory, to spiritually grow and equip our church family for ministry, and to seek to love our neighbors and community with the love of Jesus Christ.

The purpose of our Building Usage Policy is to provide guidance, clarity and requirements for use of our facilities for ministry. This includes existing and new ministries by our church and partners who would like to rent space for a ministry or community event.

#### THE VISION OF ETERNAL CHURCH

To see every man, woman, and child living lives of WITNESS at home, at work, and at play.

#### THE MISSION OF ETERNAL CHURCH

We do this by treasuring the TRUTH of the gospel, WORSHIPING Jesus Christ in word and deed, and growing in COMMUNITIES of faith.

#### OUR FOUR COORDINATES

TRUTH | WORSHIP | COMMUNITY | WITNESS

#### STATEMENT OF FAITH

Adherence to our statement of faith provides guidance for all ministries and events in our building and on the property.

### **2. Priority of Use**

1. Our first priority as Eternal Church is to provide various worship services, ministries, programs, classes, or sponsored activities for our church body. Therefore, anything church related or church organized will have priority use of our facilities. The Eternal staff and leadership team have priority access to all rooms in the building at any time.
2. Eternal covenant members may schedule facility use at no cost for ministry related events, with the exception of the worship center and upstairs chapel. For our Small Group Vision & Meeting Procedures, please see the appendix on pages 7-8.
3. Eternal covenant members may request use of our facilities for a personal event for a small fee. Approval for these requests will be on an individualized basis and based on space availability at that time.
4. Regular attenders, visitors, and those who are a part of the broader Christian and local community may request the use of our facilities for a fee. Approval by the pastoral team will be required.

### **3. Usage Approval Process**

Step 1: Complete one of the following forms and attest to having read all of our policies and procedures. The form and approval will need to be completed at least 2 WEEKS in advance.

All requests will be considered but must be approved by the facilities use team.

## INTERNAL EVENTS FORM

All individuals requesting the use of our facilities for ministry related events must complete the Internal Event Request Form. <https://eternalchurch.churchcenter.com/people/forms/536367>

## OUTSIDE EVENTS FORM

All individuals requesting the use of our facilities for non-Eternal church ministry related or personal events must complete the Outside Event Request Form.

<https://eternalchurch.churchcenter.com/people/forms/553247>

Step 2: A 50% deposit (if applicable) will be required once your event is approved to secure the facility. In the event of a cancellation, a full refund will be paid if canceled 2 weeks prior to the scheduled date. FINAL PAYMENT is due 5 days prior to your event.

### 4. Facility Use Guidelines

- All local and state fire and safety regulations will be followed. Eternal's Emergency Evacuation Routes are posted on walls throughout the facility.
- No church equipment or property may be removed from the building.
- Reassignment or sublet to any other renter is strictly prohibited.
- Audio and Visual equipment, worship instruments and equipment may not be handled or used unless explicit permission is given by the Worship Pastor or Production Manager. Please do not touch or handle any instrument or equipment that you do not personally own. If AVL is required, we will assign a trained person to support the event.
- There is to be no personal use of the Eternal office equipment in the admin area.
- Groups are restricted to only those areas of the facility that the group has reserved.
- The ministry leader and team are responsible for minors in attendance when using space at Eternal Church. Small Groups: At least one adult and a helper is required for childcare. If additional help is needed another adult or teen is sufficient. Medium & Large Groups: Must review and adhere to our Child Protection Policy and Leader to Child Ratios. All adults working with children must be background checked by Eternal Church's preferred vendor, CHECKR. No adult is to be alone with a minor at any time, there should be at least an adult and designated helper.
- No food to be prepared inside the building. Food may be brought in from outside only.
- Smoking is not allowed in any part of the building or immediately outside our building.
- Clean-up is the responsibility of the ministry / event leader and team immediately after the event. This includes removing the trash, resetting of chairs & tables back to how it was found, counters wiped clean, and supplies used put away. Any spill should be cleaned immediately.
- In the room of use, lights are to be turned off and doors closed after the event.
- After hours or nonbusiness hours: The ministry leader is responsible to lock up the facility (checking all doors to outside) after the event is finished and ensure all lights are turned off.

- Non member and outside events are responsible for any and all damages incurred by their use and should report these to the Building and Property Manager right away.
- Eternal assumes no responsibility for the use of the building and facilities by the renter and has no liability to the user for such use, and further the user agrees to indemnify and hold Eternal harmless from all third party claims, liability or damages arising out of such.
- Wedding receptions are not permitted following the ceremony. They must be held at a different location.
- Eternal Church reserves the right to cancel or change this agreement at any time due to ministry activities and needs. WE RESERVE THE RIGHT TO REFUSE RENTAL TO ANYONE (MEMBER OR NON-MEMBER) FOR ANY REASON.

## 5. Room Size Guidelines and Potential Rooms Available

### SMALL GATHERING ROOMS 1-12 people

- Ground Floor Rooms:
  - Cafe
  - Gathering Room
  - Green Room
  - Kids Worship
  - Student Center
- Second Floor Room:
  - Conference Room

### MEDIUM GATHERING ROOMS 13-50 people

- Ground Floor Rooms:
  - Kids Worship
  - Student Center
- Second Floor Room:
  - Conference Room

### LARGE GATHERING ROOM 51-100 people

- Second Floor Room:
  - Chapel

### EXTRA LARGE GATHERING ROOM 101-500 people

- Ground Floor Room:
  - Worship Center

## 6. Facility Costs

50% due at reservation. Remaining amount due 5 days before the event.



Event Costs for Single Use The following fees apply to outside events that are non Eternal Church ministry related events.

A discounted fee will be offered to covenant members of Eternal Church for personal events.

<b>Room Size</b>	<b>Covenant Member Cost (Non-Ministry Personal Use)</b>	<b>Non-Member Cost</b>
Small (1-12)	\$10	\$25
Medium (13-50)	\$25	\$50
Large (51-100)	\$100	250
Extra Large (101-500)	\$500 (3 Hours, \$100 per additional hour)	\$500 (3 Hours, \$100 per additional hour)
<b>Additional Costs</b>		
A/V Tech (any event need)	\$200 (2 Hours, \$100 per additional hour)	\$200 (2 Hours, \$100 per additional hour)

Weddings Please refer to our Wedding Document for more information

#### PRIMARY CONTACTS FOR QUESTIONS

- Executive Pastor: Chad Hollowell (704) 877-7780
- Building and Property Manager: Josh Eckstein (630) 649-2956

Eternal Church

1650 O'Henry Lane, Fort Mill, SC 29708

Rooms available for use (must have approval)

[Insert Floor Plan Image](#)

## **IX. Appendix**

### **List of Roles**

As of June 8, 2025

#### **1. Officers**

Chad Hollowell (as Executive Pastor) – President

Guy Rockey (as lead elder) – Secretary

Garrett Copeland (as deacon in charge of stewardship) – Treasurer

#### **2. Pastors**

Chad Hollowell – Executive Pastor

Jacob Collins – Associate Pastor Teaching and Discipleship and Care

Josh Leftwich – Associate Pastor Teaching and Family Ministry Pastor

Jesse Schlicher – Associate Pastor Worship

#### **3. Staff**

Kristen Gardner – Director of Communications & Events

Josh Eckstein - Building and Property Manager

Melissa Woodruf - Director of Connections & Financial Assistant

#### **4. Elders**

Chad Hollowell

Rick Allen (Term began June 2025 and will end June 2029)

Scott Carroll (Term began June 2025 and will end June 2029)

Andrew Davis – Deacon Liaison (Term began June 2025 and will end June 2028)

Troy Fleming (Term began June 2025 and will end June 2028)

Matthew Johnson (Term began January 2024 and will end June 2027)

Alex Nelson (Term began June 2025 and will end June 2028)

Kirk Ogden (Term began January 2024 and will end June 2027)

Guy Rockey – Secretary (Term began January 2024 and will end June 2027)

Steven Rungaitis (Term began June 2025 and will end June 2029)

Aaron Shier (Term began January 2024 and will end June 2027)

Jason Vinson – Chair (Term began June 2025 and will end June 2029)

#### **5. Elder Advisory Committee**

Chad Hollowell

Jason Vinson

Matthew Johnson

Aaron Shier

6. Communication Committee

Chad Hollowell

Kristen Gardner

Kirk Ogden

Alex Nelson

Steven Rungaitis

7. Special Projects Committee

TBD

8. Women's Advisory Council

TBD

9. Finance Advisory Council

Garrett Copeland

Chad Hollowell

Troy Fleming

John Shumate

Melissa Woodruff

10. Personnel Advisory Council

Rick Allen

Scott Carroll

Troy Fleming

Aaron Shier

11. Missions Advisory Council

Rick Allen

Andrew Davis

Kirk Ogden

12. Deacons

Denis Belove

Cindy Carroll

Garrett Copeland

Kim Gray

Ronda Patterson

Scott Patterson

Cori Rockey

John Shumate

Nancy Swicegood

Emily Zimmer – Chair

13. Check Signers

Chad Hollowell – Executive Pastor

Jacob Collins – Associate Pastor Teaching and Discipleship and Care

Josh Leftwich – Associate Pastor Teaching and Family Ministry Pastor

Jesse Schlicher – Associate Pastor Worship

Troy Fleming - Elder

Garrett Copeland



## **Biblical Peacemaking: Statement of Belief**

### **Our peace with God**

A foundational element of the Christian faith is the grace we receive when we place our faith in Jesus Christ. By doing this, we acknowledge our brokenness and the debt our sin creates with God, along with the damage it causes to our relationship with Him.

It is only through faith in Jesus Christ that our sins are *forgiven*, and His death on the cross *makes amends* for the damage our sins cause. We are therefore *reconciled* to God in a harmonious, loving relationship made possible only by Jesus.

God also calls us to be peacemakers with others. While we can never duplicate what Jesus has done for us, scripture does give us the direction of God's will for us throughout the peacemaking process and we should prayerfully call upon the Holy Spirit to lead us.

Biblical Peacemaking for believers is:

- Compulsory for both the sinner and the one sinned against. It is always your responsibility to make the first move toward reconciliation regardless of where the fault lies. (Matt 5:23, 18:21-35)
- More concerned with rescuing a sinner than a checklist or process (see Matt 18:15-20)
- Primarily motivated by mercy for the sinner, not justice (see Matt 18:21-35)
- Designed to promote unity between people and God (see Matt 5:21-26, Rom 12:14-21)
- Offering unconditional forgiveness to the sinner; making amends and reconciling are conditional as both the sinner and the person who committed the sin must come together (see Luke 17:1-4)




### **Our peace with other Christian believers**

While our peace with God is secure through our faith in Jesus, our sin also causes damage to others. We cannot, in our human nature, achieve the same peace that Jesus provides between us and God, but we can use His work as a model for how we are to pursue peace with others. Through prayer and God's help:

- We must *forgive* (if we are the offended party) the person who committed the sin (the offending party); if we are the offending party we must humbly *seek forgiveness*

- The offending party must repent and seek to *make amends* for the damage caused
- We are *reconciled* once the damage is settled and we jointly agree the matter is resolved and unity is restored

## Biblical Peacemaking: Action Overview

Forgiveness	Making Amends	Reconciliation
		
The offended and God	The offender and offended from and to each other	The offender and offended together
<b>UNCONDITIONAL</b>	<b>CONDITIONAL</b>	

The goal of the peacemaking process is a unified relationship with others. At Eternal church, this is further defined by our Community Coordinate:

Eternal Church is characterized by biblical community. Members in covenant with God and His church learn and are enabled by God to love each other, encourage one another, and build each other up. We care for one another, serve one another, and bear each other's burdens. We are kind to one another and forgive each other. We teach, admonish, and exhort one another with the Word of God. We stir one another up to love and good deeds. We are involved in one another's lives and know each other well enough to be fruitfully involved in one another's discipleship. As the local body of believers grows, they must work hard together to cultivate community with one another beyond merely gathering once a week for worship. Such community is necessary for each of us individually to grow in Christ and all of us together to display His love to the world around us. Truth is also most clearly revealed in a community devoted together in the pursuit of the revelation of God in the Bible. The "church" is the people of God which is why the most popular phrase (over 100 times) to define the life of the early church was "one another".

The following sections further define the 3 specific steps of biblical peacemaking.

### **Peacemaking step 1: Forgiveness**



Forgiveness is the act of releasing a debt to God for justice. Further, it is a conscious decision by an offended party to give up their rights to get even with the offender. This holds true even if the offender refuses, or is unable, to apologize or even acknowledge their actions or the damage caused.

When we forgive, we walk in the footsteps of Jesus, who already forgave us. It is the responsibility of the offended party to forgive their offender, unconditionally. The chart below adds clarification to what forgiveness is, and just as importantly, what it isn't.

Forgiveness IS:	Forgiveness IS NOT:
<b>Commanded by God</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This is a common command in scripture (see the Lord's Prayer and included scripture)</li> </ul>	<b>Condoning, dismissing, excusing or enabling</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You simply release the offense to God for justice</li> <li>The offender still needs to sincerely repent, humbly seek forgiveness and turn from hurtful behavior</li> </ul>
<b>Costly</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You voluntarily pay the debt (emotional / physical/spiritual/material) the sin caused to you without any ill-will</li> </ul>	<b>Forgetting or Trusting</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You must acknowledge the offense to properly forgive the offender</li> <li>Rebuilding trust will likely occur over time</li> </ul>
<b>Trusting God with the hurt you experienced from another's sin</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>You trust God to heal the pain you experienced from the sin</li> </ul>	<b>A feeling or conditional</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Forgiveness is a decision and action you make</li> <li>You can choose to forgive no matter how you feel; granting forgiveness often comes before feeling forgiving</li> </ul>
<b>Between you and God only</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We are called to forgive regardless of whether the sin against us is acknowledged</li> </ul>	<b>Making amends or reconciling</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Forgiveness alone does not bring about peace or restore unity</li> <li>After forgiveness, there may still be hurt feelings because the relationship is not necessarily restored to its original state.</li> </ul>
<b>Releasing any desire to "get even"</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is no desire to do something harmful in return for your hurt; rather, you are called to pray for them positively</li> <li>The offended can and should call out the offender's behavior with the intent of restoring them gently (Gal 6:1)</li> </ul>	<b>Just about the offender</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The longer you retain the hurt, the more that wound will hurt you</li> </ul>

## Peacemaking step 2: Making Amends

Jesus Christ willingly went to the cross to die for our sins even though He bore no guilt. Following His example, we are called to pursue peace with those who have sinned against us and those we have sinned against ourselves. Making amends is the act of pursuing peace with others.

Whereas forgiveness is unconditional, *making amends is conditional*: both the offender and the offended must agree to work together to make amends during an agreed timeframe. Depending on the nature of the offense, the offended may need time to heal before, during and after forgiving the offense. Likewise, the offender may need time to fully acknowledge their sin and the damage it caused before seeking forgiveness.

In some cases, the offender and/or offended may never agree to make amends. A later section outlines courses of action you should try in these instances.

When the act of making amends is agreed to by both the offender and offended, there are several components to successfully complete this step:

Action	Example
The <b>offender</b> must humbly and specifically admit their sin and state their desire to reconcile	"I'm sorry I yelled at you; I had a tough day at work and I took out my anger on you instead of resolving my anger in a healthy way."
The <b>offender</b> must then ask for forgiveness for their sin	"I know I hurt you deeply. Will you please forgive me for the way I treated you?"
The <b>offended</b> party grants forgiveness; this is an absolute prerequisite for making amends	"Yes, it was very hurtful. And, I forgive you."
The <b>offender</b> humbly asks if there is anything they can do to make up for the hurt they caused	"What can I do to demonstrate my care for you and my desire to restore our relationship?"
The <b>offended</b> party rebukes the offender (if needed), and always in truth, while pursuing the offender gently and humbly	"This is the 3 <sup>rd</sup> time this has happened in the last month. I need to see positive change with your anger control before this relationship can be fully reconciled. Meanwhile, I still care for you and will support you during this `process."
The <b>offender</b> commits to repent (as needed)	"I commit to complete an anger management workshop in the next 3 months. Is there anything else you would like me to do?"

Note there may need to be agreed boundaries set during the making amends step. For example, if the offense involves physical abuse, agreeing to boundaries around where to live and meet during the making amends process may be required. Likewise, if the offense involves a breach of trust, some boundaries around physical and/or emotional separation may be necessary until trust is reestablished.

### **Peacemaking step 3: Reconciliation**

Reconciliation in a conflict is reached when all parties agree the matter has been settled satisfactorily. The parties in the conflict may remember the sin for some time, but it just won't matter anymore. There may still be work to do in the relationship, but for the matter in question, unity and harmony have been restored.

Helpful tips for reconciliation:

1. Take responsibility for your role in a conflict. Rarely are conflicts entirely the fault of one party. Humbly admitting your role validates the other's pain.
2. Apologize. In addition to asking for forgiveness, humbly apologizing makes forgiveness easier for the injured party.
3. Forgiveness does not heal grief and anger immediately. Give yourself space and grace for working through your hurt.
4. Be empathetic toward others. You may not be the only injured party and sincere empathy can significantly help peacemaking.
5. Understand some offenses may take time to fully resolve. Major breaches to trust will likely take much longer to heal than minor offenses.

### **What if Peacemaking is unlikely or impossible?**

As mentioned above, forgiveness is unconditional. Making amends and reconciliation are conditional. That is, both the offending and offended parties must agree to make amends and be reconciled. In some cases, that is either unlikely or impossible.

Where the offender is unknown, or deceased, peacemaking is obviously not possible. Forgiveness is still required and that act alone should help healing. But, what if the offender and/or the offended do not show any interest in pursuing peace? What if it isn't safe for either or both of the parties to pursue peace? What if pursuing peace actually leads to sin?

Again, step 1 in the peacemaking process is forgiveness and that is unconditional. If you earnestly seek peace to repair a relationship, whether you are the offender or the offended, and the other person does not share that interest, or cannot be trusted to do it safely, or being together leads to sin, there are still things you can do. *We should never give up pursuing reconciliation.*

1. Pray the other person will come to understand the fracture in the relationship and seek to restore peace.
2. Recognize that some emotional/spiritual/physical wounds take longer to heal and more time may be needed before pursuing peace; pray for patience in the waiting. *This can be true for both the offender and the offended party.*
3. Reconciliation should be postponed if the offender or offended exposes the other party to emotional/spiritual/physical harm during the reconciliation process. Reconciliation must always be conducted in a safe way and involving a trusted 3<sup>rd</sup>-party may be necessary.
4. Reach out to mutual acquaintances to determine if there is any context they are aware of that may shed light on the situation and provide a path to peace.
5. If safety is a concern for either party, reach out to others you trust to help establish safe boundaries to pursue peace (e.g. meeting only in public places, meeting at a trusted friend's house, etc.)
6. Reach out to church leadership or professional counseling for assistance.
7. Prayer is a useful tool. Continue praying and seek guidance from other Christian believers to help. Remember, God wants us to live in peace and you can trust Him.

## Illustrated Biblical Peacemaking Process

### 1: Forgiveness

**From:** Offended party    **To:** God

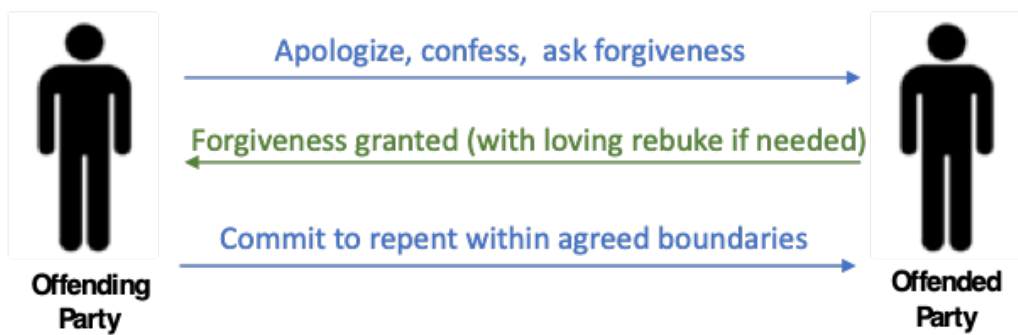


Offended party forgives the offender and releases any debt or obligation from the sin(s) to God

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### 2: Making Amends

**From:** Offending party    **To:** Offended Party



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### 3: Reconciliation

**From:** Both Parties    **To:** Each Other

Repentance completed within boundaries and both parties agree the issue is resolved; *it doesn't matter anymore*

**Unity is restored!**



## **Biblical Peacemaking: Example Scenario**

A wife has been physically abused by her husband for a period of time. After a recent argument, it happens again. In retaliation, she throws His heirloom watch that belonged to His father onto their hardwood floor then moves out of their home.

### **Step 1: Forgiveness**

- She offers prayer(s) of forgiveness for her husband's role in the argument, and His physical violence, and releases him to God's justice
- He offers prayer(s) of forgiveness for His wife's role in the argument, and the damage to the watch, and releases her to God's justice

### **Step 2: Making Amends**

- He confesses His role in the argument and His physical abuse of her
- She confesses her role in the argument and her destructive response
- They communicate forgiveness to each other
- They create boundaries and expectations for repentance
  - He will complete an agreed program to prevent further abusive behavior
  - They agree to live separately and only see each other in safe and controlled circumstances (meet at a party with mutual friends, meet at a public restaurant for dates, etc.) until he completes the program
  - They agree to see a Christian marriage counselor to help them deal with conflict resolution in respectful and productive ways
  - She will take responsibility for finding a jeweler to restore the damaged watch to its previous condition

### **Step 3: Reconciliation**

- Both parties agree the husband has completed the agreed program successfully
- The watch has been satisfactorily restored
- She moves back into their home and they resume living together

**While they each may remember this event, it doesn't matter anymore.**



### **For further reading**

This statement of belief is intended to provide an overview of Biblical Peacemaking and how we apply those beliefs within the Eternal church community. In addition to the scripture references included in this document, the following article provides much more detail on the peacemaking process should there be interest in deeper study.

[Serving each other through forgiveness and reconciliation](#), by Tim Keller

### **Scripture References**

The following pages contain passages of scripture used by the Session and Pastors to inform this statement of belief.



## Matthew 5:21-26 English Standard Version

*“You have heard that it was said to those of old, ‘You shall not murder; and whoever murders will be liable to judgment.’ But I say to you that everyone who is angry with His brother will be liable to judgment; whoever insults His brother will be liable to the council; and whoever says, ‘You fool!’ will be liable to the hell of fire. So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift. Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are going with him to court, lest your accuser hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you be put in prison. Truly, I say to you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.*

### **Key principles:**

- Sin against a brother or sister is a serious matter and creates distance between the sinner and the Lord as well as between the sinner and the brother/sister. Unresolved offense between believers affects the worship of the believers. *If there is offense between you and your brother/sister, take care of it.*
- Sin between brothers/sisters is also a community problem.

### Thoughts on Matthew 5:21-26

- Sin is both outward and a matter of the heart. The heart is where even the worst sins are born.
- When we sin against another person (that is, when we are an “offender,” so to speak), we MUST seek reconciliation with the person against whom we have sinned (the “offended” person, so to speak), and quickly.
- Reconciliation in this passage means the enmity is removed between the parties and harmony or unity is restored.
  - Here, unity means the baseline unity that all brothers and sisters have in Christ—we can take communion together, recognizing that our disagreements, wounds, differing perspectives or anything else that may have divided us or divide us still are far less weighty and meaningful than our common submission to Jesus.
- If we do not reconcile with our offended brother/sister, the situation will get worse.
- The Kingdom of God is a community in which MORE is owed to an offended brother/sister than mere co-existence and more than is owed to those outside the church.
- This passage is applicable to all offenses and is not limited to the specific example of anger in the passage.

## Matthew 18:15-20 English Standard Version

“If your brother sins against you, go and tell him His fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them.”

### **Key Principles:**

- This passage is primarily about the pursuit by the church/community of the sinning person, to rescue them and bring them back into the fold, by whatever means necessary (even excommunication if necessary) by escalating those involved to help persuade the sinner toward repentance.
- This passage is more about the call (and beauty) of seeking out in compassion a sinning believer to help them see their sin and repent, and less about an offended person seeking justice for themselves. It's about a mission of mercy.

### Additional Thoughts on Matthew 18-15-20

- The context of this passage in Matthew: humility, lack of self-aggrandizement, and care for little ones/children → parable of the lost sheep (the Lord rejoicing over the rescue) → forgiveness (our passage) → the parable of the unforgiving servant (the next passage).
- We see both the grievousness of sin and the joy of the Lord in the rescue of those who are lost.
- We also see (with the lost sheep parable connection) a responsibility to seek out those who have sinned. The gentleness of this rescue reminds us of Galatians 6:1, and the charge to restore your brother gently when caught in sin.
- In the passage itself, we see that the confrontation is meant largely (if not also primarily) for the sake of the good of the brother who sinned.
- Perhaps our passage is a “bridge” between the parable of the lost sheep and the parable of the unforgiving servant. Read alone, our passage can feel more like “justice” than “mercy.” There is a reference to “gaining a brother,” but much of the text can feel more like a legal proceeding resulting in excommunication (judgment and justice, not love and mercy). But the parable of the lost sheep should help us prepare our hearts for our passage, by showing us how the Lord feels about those who are lost—they are like wayward sheep, and the Lord rejoices when they are found again. And, if we are still feeling judgmental after the “pre-parable” of the lost sheep, then the “post-parable” of the unforgiving servant cures us of that tendency to forget how much we too are sinners who have been forgiven much—more indeed than the sins against us.
- It's possible that the “two or three” witnesses are not meant merely to bring charges against the sinner, but to “hear both sides” to help the community understand what is true. A more

“Hebrew” reading might be that the witnesses are intended to establish the gravity of the sin, not whether or not there is sin (the passage presumes that condition of sin is clear—the existence of sin is not in question).

- Some manuscripts omit the “against you” in verse 15, saying simply: “if a brother sins.” This could further emphasize the communal nature of the situation, and the call to rescue those who sin, whether against us specifically or not. If “against you” is not present, then it is even harder to read this passage as a “process map” for a campaign of justice by an offended believer against an offending believer.
- There’s also perhaps an element of protecting the church/community from an unrepentant person. But even in that case (in this passage), the primary goal of excommunication is for ultimate persuasion of the unrepentant person.

#### Matthew 18:21-35 English Standard Version

*Then Peter came up and said to him, “Lord, how often will my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you seven times, but seventy-seven times.” Therefore the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a king who wished to settle accounts with His servants. When he began to settle, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. And since he could not pay, His master ordered him to be sold, with His wife and children and all that he had, and payment to be made. So the servant fell on His knees, imploring him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you everything.’ And out of pity for him, the master of that servant released him and forgave him the debt. But when that same servant went out, he found one of His fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii, and seizing him, he began to choke him, saying, ‘Pay what you owe.’ So His fellow servant fell down and pleaded with him, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you.’ He refused and went and put him in prison until he should pay the debt. When His fellow servants saw what had taken place, they were greatly distressed, and they went and reported to their master all that had taken place. Then His master summoned him and said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you pleaded with me. And should not you have had mercy on your fellow servant, as I had mercy on you?’ And in anger His master delivered him to the jailers, until he should pay all His debt. So also my heavenly Father will do to every one of you, if you do not forgive your brother from your heart.”*

#### **Key Principles:**

- A main point of this passage appears to be: if we don’t forgive, then we are the lost ones.
- This parable echoes the Lord’s Prayer: “forgive us our sins as we forgive those who sin against us.”

#### Additional thoughts on Matthew 18-21-35

- The context of this passage in Matthew is the other Matthew passages: humility, lack of self-aggrandizement, and care for little ones/children → parable of the lost sheep (the Lord rejoicing

over the rescue)→ forgiveness (the previous passage) → the parable of the unforgiving servant (our passage).

- The lens we are to use when viewing a brother or sister who has sinned against us is not “how often or how badly have they sinned?” but “how much have I been forgiven?”
- As Tim Keller says, the forgiveness we receive from God and our forgiveness of others are intertwined and inextricably linked.

#### Luke 17:1-4 English Standard Version

And he said to His disciples, “Temptations to sin are sure to come, but woe to the one through whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung around His neck and he were cast into the sea than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin. Pay attention to yourselves! If your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him, and if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.”

#### Key principles:

- The passage itself (especially when seen as something of a parallel to Matthew 18:15-20) seems to add an idea: “if you brother repents, forgive....”
- Instead, a main thrust of Luke 17:1-4 is the requirement that we **must** forgive all repeatedly, especially repentant believers, essentially without a limit.
- Another main thrust of Luke 17:1-4 is the requirement that we **must** rebuke a fellow believer who sins against us.

#### Thoughts on Luke 17:1-4

- The context of this passage in Luke seems to be relatively limited or less clear, compared to other passages we’ve studied. Luke seems to place several somewhat disconnected sayings all together in this section of Luke. However, N.T. Wright sees a theme of humility in this section.
- this passage itself (including the first couple verses) tells us that sin happens, and we are warned not to be the cause of sin.
- We know from other passages that we are to be forgiving people by nature (whether offenders repent or not), and from this passage we know that we absolutely must forgive if/when someone repents. Forgiveness is not optional in such a situation.

#### Romans 12:14-21 English Standard Version

*Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight. Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all. If possible, so far as it depends on you, live peaceably with all. Beloved, never avenge yourselves, but leave it to the wrath of God, for it is written, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay, says the Lord.” To the contrary, “if your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him something to drink; for by so doing you will heap burning coals on His head.” Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.*

#### Key Principles

- The context of this passage within Romans, in part, is Paul describing the ethic, the nature of the people of God—what this community is supposed to look like.
- This passage includes specific commands (e.g., feed your enemy) regarding how God’s people are to behave. God’s people are to be those who overcome evil (including of others) with good, rather than repaying evil for evil.
- Several points are made but in relation to peacemaking we are instructed to humble seek reconciliation and peace to the extent that it is possible, recognizing there are circumstances where it may not be possible.

#### Thoughts on Romans 12:14-21

- Right before our passage (also in this same section of Romans) we see the “living sacrifice” and the diversity and unity of the body of Christ.
- Paul recognizes that we don’t have control over how others respond—we cannot force someone else to act peaceably toward us.
- Further, it seems that people who do these things can only do them through a heart of forgiveness.
- This passage may depict a “chicken and egg” type situation, in which people who behave as described here will have forgiving hearts—if they didn’t have forgiving hearts already, they will have them after behaving like this. Likewise, people who have forgiving hearts will behave as described here—it will be natural. The heart posture and the actions go together. If you genuinely have one, you will genuinely have the other.
- Another main point of this passage: revenge is not an option for the believer or believing community.

## Incident Response Framework

**Purpose:** The intention of this framework is to provide a series of guidelines to assist the leadership of Eternal Church work prayerfully and consistently through issues, incidents, or events with potentially serious impact.

**Spiritual Disciplines:** Apart from the specific procedural guidelines, healthy spiritual disciplines and gospel-centered heart postures should govern all actions before, during, and after the event in question. Specifically, it is the desire of Eternal to:

- Find ways to use the event, and the intended outcomes for each participant, to glorify God, proclaim the gospel, and bring healing and health to God's world
- Ensure all decisions and actions related to the event are primarily centered on shepherding the hearts and caring for the needs of the Eternal Church body, Eternal Church leadership, and any other involved parties
- Actively model the spiritual behaviors and heart postures we encourage as a church throughout the process, especially including:
  - Prayer and submission to the Holy Spirit
  - Repentance
  - Love of God and our neighbors
  - Humility

**Circumstances for which this Framework is Intended:** Any situation in which the integrity of Eternal Church, its pastors, staff, elders, deacons, or other leaders is called into question, rightly or wrongly. Specific scenarios include:

- a. Church doctrine/teaching is being challenged internally or externally, such as in the following examples:
  - i. Eternal is accused of being hostile toward the LGBTQ+ community
  - ii. A person claims Eternal interprets scripture incorrectly
- b. The safety of church members is questioned while on property or participating in church events, such as in the following examples:
  - i. A person claims to have seen someone bring a concealed handgun to a Sunday service
  - ii. A teen claims to have been sexually harassed or abused during a youth retreat
- c. Stewardship of church resources (money, building, etc.), such as in the following examples:
  - i. Eternal staff is accused of funneling funds into "pet" projects
  - ii. The neighborhood around Eternal accuses church members of reckless driving, littering, etc.

- d. Personal integrity of church leaders (past or present) is questioned, such as in the following examples:
  - i. A person accuses a leader on social media of inappropriate, immoral, or illegal behavior in the past and/or present
  - ii. A congregant claims his or her elder shepherd made inappropriate comments/advances to him or her

Procedural Guidelines: The following guidelines describe specific steps Eternal Church should take in response to a triggering event. There are three main stages: assessment and planning, response, and post-event analysis.

### **1. Assessment and Planning**

- a. Triage team (typically AdCom) begins by focusing on the spiritual disciplines outlined above and asking the Holy Spirit to guide all subsequent actions based on those disciplines and how they might apply to this specific situation, with special emphasis on prayer, submission to God, repentance, humility, and love of God and others
- b. Based on the results of step a, determine initial scope of response and whether a crisis manager (quarterback or “QB”) is needed
  - i. If so, select the QB
  - ii. Could be any elder/deacon/staff member depending on the situation and specific knowledge/skill required
- c. Gather relevant facts and context for the particular situation or triggering event, specifically including the following:
  - i. What is alleged to have happened (specifics and context)? On what basis was the allegation made, and by whom?
  - ii. Is the allegation true, based on available evidence?
  - iii. How “public” is this event? (e.g., newspaper, broad social media, small group of people, individual)
  - iv. What other facts and context are known or can be gathered relatively quickly that would help inform the response?
- d. Based on prayer, identify key spiritual issues and shepherding needs
  - i. Whether or not a QB is needed, who needs to be involved in creating the response?
  - ii. Whether or not a QB is needed, who needs to be informed of the response?
  - iii. Identify any specific issues the QB/response team should take into account, such as potential risks and magnitude of the situation (e.g., reputational risk for individuals and/or the church; potential stress for any of the individuals and families involved in either initiating the event or the subject(s) of the event)
  - iv. Identify a specific “Response Team,” and team leader (QB if there is one)

- e. Response Team drafts intended outcomes for each party involved with corresponding communication plan
  - i. What should be communicated, to whom, and when?
  - ii. What special characteristics need to be considered? (i.e. Don's story and our youth)
- f. Response team prepares a "Response Plan"
  - i. Typically with reference to existing documents or resources (e.g., from a previous event)
  - ii. Be sure to include only verifiable facts; if speculation/assumptions are needed, they should be clearly identified as such
- g. Response Team prays again over the proposed Response and Communication Plans to ensure alignment with the gospel and Eternal's spiritual disciplines described above

## **2. Response**

- a. The proposed Response Plan is reviewed and approved by appropriate leaders depending on specifics of the response (could be entire session, just staff, AdCom, etc.)
- b. Prayer and waiting if needed
- c. Response Team executes response with others as defined in the Response Plan
- d. QB monitors reaction to response to determine if further action needed, with report-outs as needed

## **3. Post-Event Analysis**

- a. QB summarizes event and response for AdCom/Session/Staff as appropriate
- b. Relevant group (e.g., AdCom, Session, or Staff) (i) reviews actual outcomes for each participant, (ii) evaluates the use of spiritual disciplines throughout the process, to ensure alignment and (iii) takes/directs further action if needed
- c. Lessons learned are applied to improve this framework and/or response document(s) or other resource(s)
- d. AdCom/Session/Staff or other relevant subgroup recommends and implements any proactive steps that will help prevent future crises and/or aid in the response to them, such as the following potential examples:
  - i. Drafting a communication to be posted publicly (e.g., on the Eternal website) or otherwise held ready
  - ii. Creating a dedicated tab on the Eternal website to post communications or information for the sake of transparency of the church without repeatedly having to revisit some topics



## **Example Use Case: Misuse of Church Funds**

Triggering event: An Eternal member posts on social media their concern over lack of transparency of the use of church funds and they are hearing staff members are funneling funds into pet projects.

### **Assessment and Planning**

- a. Use the Spiritual Disciplines to shape the approach
  - How can we disclose the truth about how church funds are budgeted and used while protecting confidential information and demonstrating our commitment to the four coordinates?
  - How can we repent for any actions that could lead to such an accusation and use this incident to inspire confidence in the transparency and integrity of church leadership?
  - How can we create a response that shows love to the accuser and our congregation?
  - How can we model humility to our congregation and public at large through our response?
- b. Facts and context
  - This is a public statement; impact unknown but could be widespread
  - Financial transparency at Eternal can be debated; misuse of funds is categorically false (hopefully)
  - The church maintains a detailed budget and maintains financial controls in place to prevent what is being alleged
- c. Pray for all concerned and for any insight and wisdom that should guide the next steps
- d. Given the nature of the post and potential for widespread damage:
  - Session and staff should be brought in to determine the response
  - Session and staff should be kept abreast of response progress
  - Special care/prayers should be devoted to those people with fiscal responsibilities/access
  - Assign a QB
- e. Pray over decisions made and check alignment with spiritual disciplines

### **Response**

- a. QB leads response creation
- b. Response reviewed, modified as needed, and approved by Session and Staff
- c. Pray over response and execute
- d. QB monitors reaction
- e. QB reports to Session and Staff as needed

## Post-Event Analysis

- a. QB provides post-action report in regular Staff and Session meetings
- b. Review alignment of outcomes and process to Spiritual Disciplines with recommended follow-up if needed
- c. Lessons learned discussed and decisioned
- d. Implement recommended actions
  - a. Example: Post quarterly financial updates on Eternal website; something high-level and simple to read:
    - i. Total giving        \$yy
    - ii. Total staff compensation        \$xx
    - iii. Building mortgage        \$xx
    - iv. Utilities        \$xx
    - v. Mission Support        \$xx
      - 1. Mission a\$zz
      - 2. Mission b\$zz



## **Financial Advisory Council Charter**

As of February 2025

### **I. Purpose**

The Financial Advisory Council (FAC) of Eternal Church serves to provide financial oversight, accountability, and strategic guidance to church leadership. The FAC supports the Elder Team (Session), Stewardship Deacons, and Financial Administrator in stewarding Eternal Church's resources with wisdom and integrity. The council ensures the church operates with financial transparency, strong stewardship, and long term sustainability. Council is not intended to be a corporate approach but provide adequate care and support for what our church needs at any given time. FAC will always focus attention on the double bottom line of financial (efficiency) and spiritual (ministry impact) .

### **II. Membership & Structure**

1. Composition – The FAC consists of the following members, reappointed annually by the Session:
  - Elder(s) with financial expertise.
  - Stewardship Deacon(s) overseeing financial assistance and church resources.
  - Treasurer, ensuring financial integrity and management.
  - Executive Pastor, ensuring alignment between finances and church mission.
  - Financial Assistant, offering operational insights.
  - Church Members with relevant financial experience (optional).
2. Leadership – The FAC is led by an elder, deacon, or Treasurer appointed by the Session.
3. Meetings – The council meets monthly to review financial matters and provide guidance.
4. Decision-Making – The FAC serves in an advisory capacity. Final financial decisions rest with the Session, Executive Pastor or church officers, in accordance with Eternal Church's bylaws.

### **III. Responsibilities**

The FAC functions as an advisory, not decision-making body which provides decision support in the following key areas:

1. Financial Oversight & Accountability

- Ensure compliance with financial policies, reporting standards, and stewardship principles.
  - Provide accountability for financial integrity, ethical handling of funds, and legal compliance.
  - Review financial practices and procedures to maintain responsible stewardship.
2. Budgeting & Planning
- Assist in developing and reviewing the annual budget.
  - Ensure financial resources are allocated effectively to support Eternal Church's mission, ministries, and long term goals.
  - Recommend budgeting policies and financial controls to promote responsible stewardship.
3. Financial Reporting & Communication
- Review periodic financial statements, expense reports, and cash flow analyses.
  - Ensure financial information is clearly communicated to the Elder Team (Session) and key church leadership.
  - Assist in communicating financial health, stewardship principles, and budget priorities to the congregation when appropriate.
4. Risk Management & Internal Controls
- Monitor internal financial controls to prevent fraud and financial mismanagement.
  - Advice on financial risk assessment and mitigation strategies.
  - Ensure Eternal Church maintains proper financial safeguards to protect resources.
5. Long-Term Financial Strategy
- Advice on capital projects, major expenditures, debt management, and financial sustainability.
  - Provide recommendations for reserves, savings, and investment strategies.
  - Ensure Eternal Church maintains a financially stable foundation for future growth.

#### **IV. Review & Amendments**

The FAC Charter is reviewed annually, usually in July by the council and the Session. Amendments must be approved by the Elder Team (Session).



## Personnel Advisory Council Charter

As of TBD

### I. Purpose

The Personnel Advisory Council (PAC) of Eternal Church serves to provide personnel oversight, accountability, and strategic guidance to church leadership. The PAC supports the Elder Team (Session), Executive Pastor, and relevant church officers in fostering a healthy, effective, and mission-aligned work environment for Eternal Church staff.

### II. Responsibilities

The PAC functions as an advisory body to provide guidance in the following areas:

1. Staffing & Organizational Structure
  - Advise on hiring, terminations, and role development for pastoral staff and employees.
  - Assist in assessing staff structure and alignment with church mission and vision.
2. Compensation & Benefits
  - Provide input on salary structures and compensation philosophy.
  - Review and recommend staff benefits, ensuring competitiveness and sustainability.
3. Performance & Accountability
  - Support the development of performance evaluation processes.
  - Advise on staff development, training, and conflict resolution.
4. Policies & Compliance
  - Ensure personnel policies align with legal and ethical best practices.
  - Advise on HR policies, including employee handbooks and workplace standards.
5. Workplace Culture & Staff Development
  - Promote a healthy, Christ-centered work environment.
  - Encourage leadership development, pastoral care, and team-building initiatives.

### **III. Membership & Structure**

1. Composition – The PAC consists of the following members, reappointed annually by the Session:
  - Elder(s) with HR, leadership, or organizational expertise.
  - Executive Pastor, providing leadership and alignment with church mission.
  - Church Members with relevant HR, legal, or business experience (optional).
  - Representative from the Financial Advisory Council, ensuring alignment with financial strategy.
2. Leadership – The PAC is led by an elder or deacon, appointed by the Session.
3. Meetings – The council meets quarterly or as needed to address personnel matters.
4. Decision-Making – The PAC serves in an advisory capacity. Final personnel decisions rest with the Session, Executive Pastor, and church officers in accordance with Eternal Church’s bylaws.

### **V. Review & Amendments**

The PAC Charter is reviewed annually by the council and the Session. Amendments must be approved by the Elder Team (Session).