

**CONSTITUTION OF NANSEMOND RIVER BAPTIST CHURCH OF SUFFOLK,  
VIRGINIA APPROVED ON DECEMBER 14, 2008  
Amended December 13, 2015**

**PREAMBLE**

This Constitution replaces and supersedes any and all prior Constitutions of the Nansemond River Baptist Church.

We, the members of the Nansemond River Baptist Church of Suffolk, Virginia, do ordain and establish the following Articles, to which we voluntarily and solemnly submit ourselves.

**ARTICLE I: Name**

The name of this church shall be known as “Nansemond River Baptist Church,” hereafter referred to as the “Church.”

**ARTICLE II: Purpose**

This Church is a nonprofit ecclesiastical corporation organized and operated exclusively to glorify God and exalt Jesus by reaching up through worship and prayer, reaching in through discipleship and fellowship, and reaching out through evangelism and ministry. To this end we are committed to proclaiming the whole counsel of God, especially His glorious Gospel of Grace in Jesus Christ throughout the world and to defending the "faith that was once for all delivered to the saints." (Jude 3, ESV)

**ARTICLE III: Articles of Faith**

As a member of the Southern Baptist Convention, the Articles of Faith of this Church shall be the same as that of *The Baptist Faith and Message* adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention June 14, 2000, or as amended.<sup>1</sup>

**ARTICLE IV: Statement of Biblical Belief Regarding Marriage and Sexuality**

We believe and affirm the term “marriage” has only one meaning: a single, exclusive covenantal union between one man and one woman, for life, sanctioned by God as delineated in Scripture.

We believe and affirm that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We believe that God has commanded no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of marriage between a man and a woman.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Baptist Faith and Message* states, “Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons.” The Church understands “pastors” and “elders” are synonymous.

We believe and affirm from the teaching of Scripture that any other form of sexual conduct, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexuality, gender reassignment, bestiality, incest, pedophilia, polygamy, or pornography is sinful and offensive to God.

We believe and affirm that in order to preserve the function and integrity of the church as the local body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the church members and the community, it is imperative that all church members, those employed by the church, or those who serve as volunteers in any capacity, shall abide by and agree to this Statement of Biblical Belief Regarding Marriage and Sexuality and conduct themselves accordingly by the grace of God.

#### **ARTICLE V: Church Polity**

Ultimate authority lies in Christ as the head of the Church and in the Scripture as the basis for all faith and practice. This Church shall remain free and self-governing. The government is vested in its membership and administered by its officers. In function, final authority shall reside in the membership as led by the Holy Spirit. They shall approve and/or affirm Biblically qualified leadership, to carry out Christ's purposes.

#### **ARTICLE VI: Membership**

Any person who professes repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, who has been baptized upon profession of their faith, and who has read and expresses agreement with the Church Covenant, Constitution, and By-Laws of this Church shall be eligible for membership.

#### **ARTICLE VII: Officers**

The officers of this Church shall be Elders and Deacons.

#### **ARTICLE VIII: Administrative Positions**

The administrative positions under this Constitution are Clerk, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary.

#### **ARTICLE IX: Affiliation**

- A. Believing that the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia and the Southern Baptist Convention are in harmony and in the spirit of the Constitution and Articles of Faith of this Church, we agree to participate in these organizations.
- B. This Church may withdraw its affiliation from the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia and/or the Southern Baptist Convention at a Special Members' Meeting. This meeting requires a 75% quorum of the eligible voting Church members. A three-fourths majority vote will be required for passage. This vote shall be by written ballot.

## **ARTICLE X: Property Holding**

The securing and maintaining of real property, buildings and equipment of this Church shall be for the express purpose of providing facilities for public worship and for the engagement of the missionary, educational, benevolent and social interests of this Church. These purposes shall be carried out in the spirit and character of this Constitution.

## **ARTICLE XI: Amendments**

Amendments to this Constitution may be made at any Special Members' Meeting when proposed amendments have been presented to the membership in writing and published for at least one month prior to the Special Members' Meeting as provided in C. Section 2 Special Members' Meeting of the By-Laws of this Church.

**BY-LAWS**  
**Amended December 13, 2015**

These By-Laws replace and supersede any and all prior By-Laws of the Nansemond River Baptist Church, hereafter referred to as the “Church.”

**A. Membership**

Section 1 - Qualifications

Any person who professes repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, who has been baptized upon profession of his or her faith, and who has read and expresses agreement with the Church Covenant, Constitution, and By-Laws of this Church shall be eligible for membership.

Section 2 - Admission of Members

The Elders<sup>1</sup> shall be responsible for determining each person’s qualification for membership. Before acceptance into Church covenant membership the applicant shall attend a New Members Class in order that the Elders may ascertain his or her Christian experience, doctrinal beliefs, and serious intent to wholeheartedly support the total ministry of this Church.

To be admitted into Church covenant membership, applicants shall be presented by the Elders for admission and accepted by vote of the members at any regular Sunday worship service. The congregation shall then receive the applicant into membership by a three-fourths majority vote.

Section 3 - Duties and Privileges of Membership

In accord with the duties enumerated in the Church Covenant, each member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the Church, consistent with God’s leading and with the gifts, time and material resources each has received from God. Only members shall be eligible to serve as officers or ministry team leaders. Non-members are eligible to serve on ministry teams. Additionally, non-members may serve the Church for purposes of support and professional consultation. It is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend all Members’ Meetings and vote on the election of officers, on decisions regarding membership status and on such other matters as may be submitted to a vote. All persons who are accepted as members, shall be entitled to vote in person (but not by proxy) provided the member is 16 years of age or older.

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<sup>1</sup> *The Baptist Faith and Message* states, “Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons.” The Church understands “pastors” and “elders” are synonymous.

## **A. Membership (continued)**

### Section 4 - On Church Discipline

The primary goal of Church Discipline is redemption and reconciliation. Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties, as outlined in A. Section 3, or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored and so opposing the welfare of the Church, shall be subject to the admonition of the Elders and the discipline of the Church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and the example of Scripture. Church discipline should only be contemplated after individual private admonition has failed.

### Section 5 – Membership Termination

Membership may be terminated by any of the following actions:

- a) Voluntary request for his or her membership to be rescinded,
- b) Transfer request by letter from another church,
- c) As an act of Church discipline at the recommendation of the Elders and by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present at any Members' Meeting,
- d) Willful negligence of the duties and privileges of membership as outlined in A. Section 3, for more than a year, upon the recommendation of the Elders, at the Annual Members' Meeting.

## **B. Church Polity**

### Section 1 - Membership

Under the authority of Jesus Christ and the Word of God, the membership of the Church is the final authority. The membership exercises its authority through the election of officers to govern the Church. However, the vote of the membership at a properly called Members' Meeting, as provided in these By-Laws, shall be required to effect the following actions:

- a) Accept members into the Church<sup>2</sup>,
- b) Elect Scriptural Officers of the Church,
- c) Elect Corporate Officers of the Church and a Board of Directors,
- d) Terminate members as outlined in A. Section 5c and 5d,
- e) Approve annual budgets of the Church,
- f) Authorize any expenditure of the funds of the Church when such expenditure is not covered by an approved budget, except as provided for in G. Budget and Finance
- g) Approve any transactions regarding real property,
- h) Accept, reject or otherwise dispose of any matter submitted to the membership of the Church by the Council of Elders,
- i) Adopt, amend or repeal the Constitution, By-Laws, and Covenant of this Church,
- j) Approve the call, job description and initial salary of the Lead Pastor and Pastor(s),
- k) Approve the job description and initial salary for all paid staff positions,
- l) Affiliate or discontinue affiliation with any denomination, convention or association.

## Section 2 - Church Offices

The Scriptural Officers of the Church shall be Elders and Deacons, who shall be members of the Church.

### a) Elders

The leadership of the Church shall be vested in a plurality of ordained Elders, who are responsible for governing the Church, teaching the Word and tending the flock of God in this Church. The Elders shall be equal in authority but may be specialized in function. Elders may be identified as Lead Pastor, Pastor, and Lay Elder. Lead Pastor and Pastor(s) are vocational and Lay Elders are non-vocational.

A Council of Elders shall be selected by the body of Elders to perform the duties as provided in D. Section 2 of these By-Laws. The Council of Elders shall elect its own Chairman for the purpose of moderating Elder meetings.

The Council of Elders of this Church shall recommend to the members no less than three Elders to serve as a board of directors, to be elected by the church at the Annual Members' Meeting. The board of directors shall be called upon to perform the legal and business transactions specifically designated to them by the Laws of the Commonwealth. In the discharge of their duties, they shall act only at the direction of the Council of Elders and of the Church.

### b) Deacons

To ensure that the Elders are able to focus their primary attention on the ministry of the Word, prayer, and oversight of the Church, Deacons shall receive ministry task assignments from the Elders. These tasks will concentrate on meeting the practical needs of the fellowship.

## **C. Meetings**

### Section 1 - Worship Meetings

Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day and may be held throughout the week as the Elders determine.

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<sup>2</sup>Members may also be voted upon at any Sunday worship service.

## **C. Meetings (continued)**

### Section 2 - Members' Meetings

In every meeting together, members shall act in a spirit of mutual trust, openness and loving consideration, which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

An Elder designated by the Council of Elders shall preside as moderator at all Members' meetings of the Church. The Elders shall see that the stated meetings of the Church are regularly held and that required reports are submitted to the Church by the responsible members or ministry team leaders.

The designated secretary of the Council of Elders shall determine if the requirements of a quorum are met for all Members' Meetings.

Meetings shall be conducted according to Robert's Rules of Order, unless these By-Laws specify otherwise.

Meeting minutes shall be made available to the congregation within 30 days.

#### a) Annual Members' Meeting

There shall be an Annual Members' Meeting, at which corporate officers and a board of directors are elected, and a budget approved by the membership, no more than three nor less than one month prior to the start of the fiscal year. The fiscal year will commence on January 1. For the Annual Members' Meeting, a quorum shall consist of 10% of the eligible voting Church members. The Elders shall present a meeting agenda to the Church no less than one week prior to the meeting. The agenda will then be approved at the start of the meeting.

#### b) Quarterly Members' Meetings

There shall be Quarterly Members' Meetings. For these meetings a quorum shall consist of 10% of the eligible voting Church members. The Elders shall present a meeting agenda to the Church no less than one week prior to the meeting. The agenda will then be approved at the start of the meeting.

#### c) Special Members' Meetings

Special Members' Meetings may be called as required by the Council of the Elders. Any member or ministry team may bring a request to the Elders to call a Special Members' Meeting.

In the event that the two parties are not able to come to agreement on the need for a Special Members' Meeting the requesting party may submit a written request, with the signatures of any 5% of the voting members, to the Elders. Upon receipt of the signatures, the Council of Elders will call a Special Members' Meeting.

## **C. Meetings (continued)**

### Section 2 - Members' Meetings (continued)

The date, time and purpose of any Special Members' Meeting shall be announced at all public services of the Church beginning at least two weeks prior to the meeting. The agenda, which may not be amended, will be presented by the Elders one week prior to the meeting.

For Special Members' Meetings other than a meeting held for the purpose of amending the Constitution, By-Laws, or Church Covenant, changing the Church's affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention, or dismissing an Elder or Deacon, a quorum shall consist of 10% of the eligible voting Church members. The agenda shall be approved at the start of the meeting.

- i) Special Members' Meetings held for the purpose of amending the Constitution, By-Laws, or Church Covenant shall require a quorum consisting of 20% of the eligible voting Church members. A two-thirds majority vote will be required for passage. This vote shall be by written ballot.
- ii) Special Members' Meeting held for the purpose of changing the Church's affiliation with the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia and/or the Southern Baptist Convention requires a 75% quorum of the eligible voting Church members. A three-fourths majority vote will be required for passage. This vote shall be by written ballot.
- iii) Special Members' Meeting held for the purpose of dismissing an Elder or Deacon requires a 20% quorum of the eligible voting Church members. A three-fourths majority vote will be required. This vote shall be by written ballot.

## **D. Officers**

### Section 1 - Summary

The Scriptural Officers of the Church are Elders and Deacons. The Corporate Officers of the Corporation shall be the President, Secretary and Treasurer.

### Section 2 - Elders

The Elders shall be comprised of men, called by God, who satisfy the qualifications for the office of Elder set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9.

Elders may be identified as Lead Pastor, Pastor, and Lay Elder. Lead Pastor and Pastor(s) are vocational and Lay Elders are non-vocational.

A man must be a member for at least two years before being considered as a candidate for the office of Lay Elder.

The Church shall elect Elders, gifted and willing to serve in this calling, in accordance with E. Section 2 of these By-Laws. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His Church.

The Lead Pastor, assisted by the other Pastors, shall be charged with the primary preaching and teaching ministry of the Church as well as the oversight of the day to day operation of the Church.

An Elder's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members of the Church (I Timothy 5:19) with reason to believe that an Elder should be dismissed should express such concern in writing to the Council of Elders. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and I Timothy 5:17-21. Dismissal of an Elder may only occur at a Special Members' Meeting.

The Council of Elders will be responsible for oversight of the ministry and resources of the Church. A majority of the Council shall be composed of Lay Elders not in the regular pay of the Church, and no Elder shall hold the office of Deacon.

The Council of Elders shall take responsibility to perform the following functions:

- a) Examine and instruct prospective members
- b) Oversee the work of the Deacons, Church administrative positions and ministry teams
- c) Oversee worship services
- d) Administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper
- e) Equip the membership for the work of the ministry
- f) Encourage sound doctrine and practice, admonish and correct error
- g) Oversee the process of Church discipline
- h) Approve membership letters of transfer
- i) Coordinate and promote the ministries of the Church
- j) Mobilize the Church for world missions
- k) Ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share our fundamental convictions.

The Council of Elders shall have the authority to create and assign ministry teams and positions to which it may delegate any specified aspect of its responsibility. The Council may also delegate to the Deacons the authority to appoint Deacons or other members of the Church to serve as members of such ministry teams. Every ministry team shall have a chairperson responsible for the overall operation of the ministry team, who shall be appointed by the Council. The Council may delegate the responsibility for selecting the chairperson to the Deacons or to the ministry team. The Council may also delegate to the Deacons the responsibility of developing and maintaining written procedures that govern these ministry teams. The Council shall have the authority to dissolve any ministry team or position which it created.

The Council of Elders may also propose paid staff positions, and the Council shall present a job description for each paid position to the membership for approval. The membership shall approve all candidates to fill such paid positions. The Council shall examine and recommend all prospective candidates for offices and positions.

## **D. Officers (continued)**

### Section 2 – Elders (continued)

The Council of Elders shall have primary responsibility to hire, supervise and evaluate staff members. This responsibility may, on a case-by-case basis, be delegated to the Deacons, other staff members or ministry team(s).

### Section 3 - Deacons

The office of Deacon is described in I Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7. The church shall recognize men who are giving of themselves in service to the Church, who possess gifts of leadership and who are called to further service.

A man must have been a member of the Church for at least one year before being able to be considered as a Deacon candidate.

The church shall elect Deacons in accordance with E. Sections 1 and 2 of these By-Laws. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His Church and set apart as Deacons.

The Deacons, with the agreement of the Council of Elders, may establish unpaid administrative positions or ministry teams to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities in the Church.

A Deacon's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members of the Church with reason to believe that a Deacon should be dismissed should express such concern in writing to the Council of Elders. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17. Dismissal of a Deacon may only occur at a Special Members' Meeting.

### Section 4 – Corporate Officers

The Council of Elders shall nominate the corporate officers annually to be elected by the members of the church at its Annual Members' Meeting. Corporate officers will perform tasks as assigned by the Board of Directors.

## **E. Elections**

### Section 1- Principles

The process for Church elections shall be interpreted and carried out to fulfill the following principles:

- a) Substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, should be an integral part of the election process,
- b) Nominations should proceed with the support of the Elders,
- c) All candidates for Church office should be treated with the grace, kindness and honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow members,
- d) The election process shall express a spirit of mutual trust, openness and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## Section 2 - Election of Officers

The election of Scriptural Officers shall be held at a Members' Meeting of the Church. Names of nominees to serve as Lay Elders and Deacons shall be presented by the Council of Elders and made known to the Church at least one month prior to voting. Church members may, at any time, nominate in writing a man to be considered by the Council of Elders for the position of Lay Elder or Deacon. Church members who believe God is calling them to serve as a Lay Elder may nominate themselves in writing to the Council of Elders for consideration.

Any member with reason to believe that a nominee is unqualified for an office should express such concern to the Elders in writing. Members intending to speak in opposition to a candidate should express their objection to the Elders at least two weeks prior to the Church Members' Meeting. If a candidate is not presented by the Council of Elders to the Church, the Council of Elders shall meet with the candidate to convey the reasons for their decision.

The election of Corporate Officers and a Board of Directors shall be held at the Annual Members' Meeting of the Church.

The moderator shall declare elected all persons receiving a three-fourths majority of all votes cast for any office.

The persons elected shall assume their respective offices upon election, unless another date has been specifically designated. Elections for officers may occur during the course of the year at any Members' Meeting, upon recommendation of the Elders.

## Section 3 - Calling of the Lead Pastor

In the calling of any man to this position, the same basic process of calling an Elder must be followed. In addition, however, the Church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential Lead Pastor, and before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the Elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Articles of Faith, Church Covenant, Constitution, and By-Laws of this Church. The election of the Lead Pastor shall be held at a Special Members' Meeting as provided in C. Section 2 of these By-Laws.

## Section 4 - Calling of Pastor

In the calling of any man to the position of a Pastor, the same basic process of calling an Elder must be followed. In addition, however, the Church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the spiritual gifts of any potential Pastor, and before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the Elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Articles of Faith, Church Covenant, Constitution, and By-Laws of this Church. The election of the Pastor shall be held at a Special Members' Meeting as provided in C. Section 2 of these By-Laws.

## **F. Administrative Positions**

### Section 1 - Summary

The administrative positions under the Constitution and these By-Laws are Clerk, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary. All persons holding these positions must be members of the Church.

The Church, upon nomination by the Council of Elders, shall elect at the Annual Meeting members to the positions of Clerk, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary. The functions of Treasurer and Financial Secretary shall not be performed by one member. The Treasurer and Financial Secretary shall be bonded by the Church in a suitable amount. The Elders shall provide a written description of duties to the Clerk, Treasurer, and Financial Secretary.

## **G. Budget and Finance**

Ministry team leaders shall present an itemized budget of their assigned ministry areas to the Council of Elders and Church Finance Team at least two months preceding the Annual Members' Meeting. With the approval of the Council of Elders the proposed budget shall be presented to the Church at least two weeks preceding the Annual Members' Meeting. This budget shall be presented for discussion at that time and called up for a vote at the Annual Members' Meeting.

Once a fiscal year has begun the Church Finance Team, with the approval of the Elder Council, may reclassify up to \$2,500.00 of budgeted amounts from one budgeted line item to another budgeted line item. The members of the church shall be notified of reclassification of funds by the Church Finance Team at the next scheduled members meeting following the change.

The Council of Elders and Church Finance Team shall maintain a Charitable Giving Policy, which shall govern all gifts, both undesignated and designated, to the church.

## **H. Amendments**

Amendments to these By-Laws may be made at any Special Members' Meeting when proposed amendments have been presented to the membership in writing and published for at least one month prior to the Special Members' Meeting as provided in C. Section 2 Special Members' Meeting of the By-Laws of this Church.

## **NRBC's CHURCH COVENANT**

(Adopted 12/14/2008 and Revised 11/6/2011)

By the grace of God we have been led to repent of our sins (Luke 15:10) and believe in Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior (John 20:31). We have confessed our faith (Romans 10:9-10) and have been baptized as believers by immersion (Matthew 28:19). Now, therefore, in the presence of God and by His grace, we joyfully and thoughtfully enter into a holy covenant with the members of Nansemond River Baptist Church (Gen. 9:11, 15:18, 17:1-9, 21:27, 31:44, Exodus 34:10, 1 Samuel 20:16, 2 Kings 23:3, 2 Chronicles 34:31-32, Neh. 9:38, 1 Cor. 5:11-12).

We promise to walk together in Christian love through the power of the Holy Spirit (John 13:34-35).

We will not forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Hebrews 10:25) but faithfully attend the Church's meetings for worship, prayer, study, and fellowship (Acts 2:42, Col. 3:16); we will use our spiritual gifts for the common good (1 Cor. 14:12; 26).

We pledge to faithfully participate in the ordinances of the Church, which are baptism (Matt. 28:19-20, Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39) and the Lord's Supper (Matt. 26:26-30, Acts 2:41-42, 1 Cor. 11:23-29). We will strive after unity in both doctrine and conduct (Phil. 1:27-28). We will both submit to the Church's discipline upon ourselves and lovingly assume our responsibility to participate in the discipline of other members, as taught in Scripture (1 Cor. 5:11-12, Matt. 18:15-18).

We will contribute cheerfully and regularly to this Church for its general ministry and expenses (2 Cor. 9:10-12), the relief of the poor (Romans 15:26), the cause of reformation and revival (2 Cor. 11:9; 8:3), and the spread of the Gospel throughout all nations (Matt. 28:18-20).

We will strive by God's grace to live as ambassadors of Christ in the world (2 Cor. 5:20); and denying ungodly desires (Titus 2:12) we will seek to fulfill our calling to lead a holy life (1 Peter 1:15) and to be salt and light (Matt. 5:13-16).

We will be just and honest in our dealings and faithful in our responsibilities and commitments (Eph. 6:10-17).

We will abide by the standards of sexual purity, integrity, and faithfulness as taught in the Bible (1 Cor. 6:18, Eph. 5:3-5).

We will reject all heretical beliefs and practices, using Scripture as our final authority (Rom. 16:25-27, 2 Tim. 3:16).

We purpose to watch over one another in brotherly love (Rom. 12:10), to remember one another in prayer (James 5:16), to help one another in sickness and distress (1 Tim. 5:10, James 1:27), and to cultivate compassion (Matt. 9:36).

Believing that the pursuit of peace with others accompanies true faith in Christ (Ps. 34:14, Rom. 14:19), we will be slow to take offense (1 Cor. 13:4-7), always eager to seek the reconciliation Christ commands (Matt. 5:23-25), and will work to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Phil. 1:27; John 17).

We resolve to practice personal and family worship, to train our children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, and to seek the salvation of our family, friends, neighbors, co-workers, acquaintances, and of all the world (Deut. 6:6-9, Pro. 22:6, Matt. 28:19-20).

We promise that if, in the providence of God, we leave this Church we will diligently seek to unite with another Church where we can continue to carry out the spirit and principles of God's Word (Acts 14:26-28, Heb. 10:25, Acts 17:1-4).