

P I L L A R   C H U R C H ' S

# Membership Class

## **Purpose**

This course is designed to inform any prospective member about the major issues related to membership and is presented by church leaders. This class is a prerequisite for membership at Pillar Church. Our goal is that at the conclusion of this course you have a clear understanding of the direction and structure of our church as well as knowledge of the benefits and expectations of membership.

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## Gospel

Our membership class has to start with the gospel because it is the **centerpiece** of the Christian faith. Nothing we do makes any sense or has any significance if our message is unclear or unsure. So let's start our conversation about membership with a reminder of the importance of gospel awareness, and a brief explanation of "the gospel."

"Gospel deficiency is the major crisis of the evangelical church. The good news has been replaced by many things, most often a therapeutic, self-help approach to biblical application. The result is a church that, ironically enough, preaches works not grace, and a growing number of Christians who neither understand the gospel nor revel in its scandal. The gospel must be central to our Christian lives; it is not the ABC's of spiritual growth, but the A-Z. Too often we see the gospel as an entry fee, an insurance certificate. But, the gospel is daily bread, It is robust and resilient enough to sustain for all of life, and for all of eternity."<sup>1</sup>

**Fact:** The word gospel means "Good News."

Ask around and you will quickly learn that there are a lot of definitions of "The Gospel." You may have heard various renditions at church, in books, or on the internet. If you pay attention, you will find a variety of well-meaning religious folks who will attempt to define the "good news" for you. According to the Bible, the Good news is:

*"For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." -2 Corinthians 5:21*

- We have committed serious crimes against a holy God. (Romans 3:23)
- God is just and cannot let our sin go unpunished. (Romans 6:23)
- God demands justice but displayed mercy by sending Jesus. (Romans 6:23)
- Jesus lived perfectly and died an innocent man. (Romans 5:8)
- Jesus' death satisfies God's anger over our sin. (Romans 5:8)
- If any person believes this message and turns to Christ, he will be forgiven. (Romans 10:9-10)

**Fact:** The word Christian means, "Little Christ." The early church first used the term because they were seeking to be like Christ.

Many people quickly identify themselves as Christians because of where they were born, who their parents are, or what church they attend. The Bible tells us clearly what it means to be a Christian. Even if you have considered yourself a Christian for a long time, we challenge you to compare your definition of "Christian" to the points of the gospel mentioned above.

***Becoming a Christian is more than merely...***

1. Being born in a Christian Nation.
2. Going to Church.
3. Being a good Person.
4. Being Baptized.
5. Knowing the Gospel.

***Becoming a Christian is...***

1. Repenting of Sin.
  - Repentance is a change in direction. The natural man pursues his own pleasure, but the Christian pursues Christ.
  - "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; **repent** and believe in the gospel." Mark 1:15
2. Believing the Gospel.

**Are you a Christian?**

- Do you believe the Gospel?
- Have you repented?
- Are you continually repenting? (See Appendix A for further discussion)

***Regenerative church membership*** is a distinctive of Pillar Church. This means that if you wish to be a member of Pillar Church, you give testimony to the fact that, through faith in Jesus Christ, you believe the Gospel and repent of your sins. The church will affirm your membership as long as she can be reasonably confident of your regeneration.

## Doctrine

“In essentials unity, in non-essentials liberty, and in all things charity.” - St. Augustine

In the church, unity is of utmost importance. Churches tend to make primary issues secondary ones, and make secondary issues primary. We feel like it is important to identify which issues are primary (closed handed) and which issues are secondary (open handed).

It is important to note that we are not claiming that “open handed” issues are not important issues. We are, however, claiming that they are not more important than the unity of our church. Some issues are that important; we call those “closed handed” issues. All members of Pillar Church affirm belief in these closed handed issues.

### Closed Handed Issues of Doctrine

**God:** God is the creator and ruler of the universe. He eternally exists in three persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. These three are co-equals and one God.



**The Father:** God the Father reigns with providential care over His universe. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise.

**The Son:** Jesus Christ is the only Son of God. He is fully God and fully man. He was born of a virgin, lived a sinless human life, and offered himself as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of all by dying on a cross. He arose from the dead after three days to demonstrate His power over sin and death, and ascended into heaven where he sits at the right hand of God.

**The Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit is present in the world to make people aware of their need for Jesus Christ. He lives in all

Christians from the moment of salvation, providing them with power for living and with guidance in doing what is right.

**Scripture:** The Bible is God's word to us. Human authors wrote the Bible under the supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. Because of its divine inspiration, the Bible is the supreme source of truth for all people. We believe that every word of the Bible is inspired and that, in its original form, the Bible has no error. We also believe that the Bible plays an indispensable role for the followers of Christ. It builds up, transforms, encourages, corrects, and protects the Christian as he or she studies and applies it.

**Man:** Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. In the beginning, man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Man's decision to sin caused a division between Creator and creation and left man in need of a Savior.

**Salvation:** Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense, salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

**Evangelism and Church Planting:** It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ, and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ, to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. We believe that disciples are most effectively made in the context of the local church. Therefore, church planting and missions are of utmost importance. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every Christian to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ.

**Ordinances:** There are two ordinances for the New Testament church. The first, baptism, is the immersion of a believer in water. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. Second, the Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby followers memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

**Gender Identity and Marriage:** God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God. Marriage was created and instituted by God for the good of his creatures and creation in order to display his gracious love and to teach the world about how he would unite himself to his redeemed people through Jesus Christ. Marriage is a single, exclusive, covenant union joined by God and entered into by one man and one woman. Only within such union does God intend sexual intimacy to occur.

## Open handed Issues of doctrine

(Selected Examples)



**End Time Views:** There are a lot of views on the end times and a lot of interpretations of the prophetic passages in the New Testament. Two members may take opposing viewpoints on eschatological issues and still agree on essential ones. This is not to say that both views are correct, but that neither is worth sacrificing unity over.

**Election vs. Free Will:** Some Christians of the reformed tradition believe that the Holy Spirit is the only agent who effects regeneration of Christians. While others argue that there is cooperation between the divine and the human in the regeneration process. This is an important argument with Godly, Bible-loving Christians on both sides. This is not to say that both views are correct, but that neither is worth sacrificing unity over.

**Education:** Many Christian parents place their children in the public school system in support of public education. Others believe that private Christian education or home schooling is the best decision. The issue should be discussed, debated and prayed over among those in the church but should never be reasons for division and disunity among the body of Christ.

**Giving:** Some believe that giving a full 10% of one's income as a "tithe" to the church is a Biblical mandate while others believe that the scripture intends for us to be generous and sensitive to the prompting of the Holy Spirit concerning the amount that we give. Valid arguments exist for both viewpoints but unity among the family of God is more critical than either.

**Bible Translations:** Some Christians believe that the King James Version of the Bible is the only inspired version in the English language while others prefer the ESV, the NASB, or the NIV. Still others mix and

match Bible translations depending on the setting. This is not to say that one translation of the Bible is not any better than another, but that no translation is worth division in the church.

## **For Further Reading**

In addition to affirming the Statement of Beliefs (“Closed Handed Issues of Doctrine”) that all members affirm, the elders and deacons of our church affirm three additional documents.

**Baptist Faith and Message of 2000**

**Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy**

**Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood**

## Distinctives

We think it is important to point out some of the positions that make Pillar Church distinct from other churches. Although some of the positions listed below could be found at other churches, they are not very common to find all in one place. Because we don't want you to be surprised by a stance we have after you become a member, we wish to inform you of our positions on various subjects. It is possible that you will not agree with one or more of the items on this list. If this proves to be true, you are encouraged to discuss the matter with one of our elders for further explanation. The list is in no particular order.

- We uphold Regenerative church membership - This means that if you wish to be a member of Pillar Church, you give testimony to the fact that, through faith in Jesus Christ, you believe the Gospel and repent of your sins. The church will affirm your membership as long as she can be reasonably confident of your regeneration.
- We are led by elders – The words elder, pastor, bishop and overseer are used interchangeably in the New Testament but are the same office. We currently have and seek to maintain a co-equal plurality of elders at all times.
- We are served by deacons – Deacons serve our church by directing the various ministries at Pillar Church and caring for the needs of the congregation. Pillar Church of Topsail currently has and seeks to maintain a healthy deacon ministry.
- We are congregational – Our membership has authority over certain areas of our life together and therefore make the final decision in these areas:
  - 1) Disputes between Christians
  - 2) Matters of Doctrine
  - 3) Matters of Discipline
  - 4) Matters of Membership.
- We plant churches – We believe that the great commission (Matthew 28:19-20) is a command to plant new churches, so we do our best to plant biblically faithful multiplying churches in every place we find lacking. We commonly send away people and resources that will likely never return to us for the establishment of new churches and the spread of the Gospel around the world.
- The Bible teaching is from a reformed perspective – This means that those who lead our church and commonly teach and preach are in theological agreement with those who led the 16<sup>th</sup> century protestant reformation in Europe. This includes doctrines such as the five Solas, Doctrines of Grace, Scriptural Inerrancy, Justification by Faith and the Priesthood of all believers.
- We celebrate the Lord's Supper weekly –
  - 1) We believe this was the practice of the early Christian church and seek to model our ministry after them (Acts 2:42-47; Acts 20:7).
  - 2) We wish to make the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ the centerpiece of each Sunday morning gathering.

3) We believe that the weekly observation of the Lord's Supper helps lead us to continual repentance both corporately and individually (Matthew 5:23-24; 1 Cor. 11:27-32).

- We are Complementarian - Complementarianism holds that "God has created men and women equal in their essential dignity and human personhood, but different and complementary in function with male headship in the home and in the church." We believe that God designed marriage to reflect the relationship of Jesus Christ and the Church. We believe that only men should be appointed into authoritative positions of leadership in the church. We believe that a Christian wife should submit to her husband as the church submits to Christ. We believe that a Christian husband should love his wife as Christ loved the church.

## Membership

*“For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body— Jews or Greeks, slaves or free—and all were made to drink of one Spirit.” – 1 Corinthians 12:12-13*

### Five Reasons That Becoming a Member is a Good Idea

*(Despite the fact that there is no explicit command for formal membership in the Bible)*

**REASON #1 – COMMITMENT IS GOOD** - People these days are commitaphobic. Marriage, Kids, Jobs... In practically every area of life, our society views commitment as a thing to be feared. But we, as followers of Jesus, are part of a new society. Just as in a love relationship, courtship is fine; we recognize that marriage is better. Formal membership is the way that you say to the church, "I want to be a part of this church – I believe her doctrine, I love her people, I want to serve in her ministries and I want to have a say in her direction." Likewise, the church says to you, "We want you to be a part of this group. We love you. We are going to help you walk closely with Jesus." It's a mutual commitment. It's good for you – it's good for the church.

**REASON #2 – IT PROTECTS YOU** - Perhaps the most important reason to join a church is that the church provides a measure of spiritual safety and accountability for the Christian. If you haven't noticed yet, humans sin a lot. Our hearts are prone to wander from God. The righteousness of Christ in us is continually at war with our selfish nature. The Christians who make up a church help spur each other on to righteous living. "If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!" (Ecc 4:10)

**REASON #3 – IT PLACES YOU SQUARELY "IN"** - You may like to think of the church as a business, a non-profit organization, or a social club, but according to the Bible, the church is a family (1 Tim 3:15), a body (1 Corinthians 12) and a bride (Ephesians 5:22-23).

- If the church is a family (and it is), a Christian without a church is a spiritual orphan.
- If the church is a body (and it is), a Christian without a church is like a hand without an arm.
- If the church is a bride (and it is), a Christian without a church cannot be complete.

Today in the average church there is no way of telling who is part and who is not. Membership is obtained easily and means very little. At Pillar Church we prefer to have meaningful membership and to work hard to do all we can to help those who formally identify themselves as Pillar Church walk with Christ.

**REASON #4 – LEADERS CAN OBEY THE SCRIPTURE** - The elders of every church have been assigned the task, "Shepherd the Flock of God" among you, but how can they do this if they don't know who is a part of the "Flock of God"? They are told to discipline those who are blatantly rebellious toward God. We are told to "Expel the wicked man" (1 Cor 5:13) and to make the church aware of unrepentant participants (Matthew 18:17). But how can we obey these commands if we cannot even tell who is part of the church and who is not?

**REASON #5 – THERE IS SCRIPTURAL SUPPORT FOR THE PRACTICE** - The idea of defining who are God's people and who are not is throughout Scripture and much of the New Testament is nearly

impossible to obey without defined church membership. Our current practice of maintaining a high view of membership flows from this biblical practice.

- Throughout Old Testament history, God made a clear distinction between His people and the world (see Lev. 13:46, Num. 5:3, Deut. 7:3).
- Christ says that entering the kingdom of God means being bound to the church “on earth” (Matt. 16:16-19; 18:17-19). Where do we see the church on earth? The local church.
- The New Testament explicitly refers to some people being *inside* the church and some people being *outside* (1 Cor. 5:12-13). This is much more than a casual association.
- The church in Corinth consisted of a definite number of believers, such that Paul could speak of a punishment inflicted by the majority (2 Cor. 2:6).
- Not only does the New Testament speak of the reality of church membership, but its dozens of “one anothers” are written to local churches, which fill out our understanding of what church membership should practically look like.<sup>2</sup>

Expectations for membership at Pillar Church will be discussed in the last session, but here is a quick look at what we expect of a person who wishes to become a member.

Anyone can be a member who...

1. Is personally trusting in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior.
2. Has been baptized according to the New Testament pattern of baptism by immersion as a personal witness of their faith in Christ.
3. Wishes to attend, love, serve, and submit to the other members of Pillar Church.

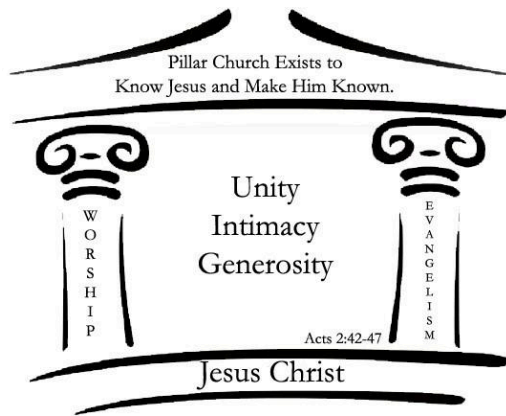
You can become a member by...

1. Professing Christ as Savior and Lord by being personally and publicly baptized.
2. Attending Pillar Church’s membership class.
3. Affirming the principles and beliefs outlined in this book.

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## Purpose

*“Church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.” – 1 Timothy 3:15*



**Our name:** Pillar Church of Topsail

We are called Pillar Church for two reasons.

1. 1 Timothy 3:15 describes the church as the “pillar of truth” The desire has always been to uphold the truth of the Gospel to those who live in our community.

2. We have two pillars. That is, we have two things that are absolutely essential to our purpose.

- Knowing Jesus - Worship
- Making Him known – Evangelism

## **Our Purpose: “Pillar Church exists to Know Jesus and Make Him Known.”**

We believe that the Church has two primary purposes: Worship and Evangelism.

- Worship, simply defined, is to Know Jesus.
- Evangelism, simply defined, is to Make Jesus Known.

You will find other purposes in the Bible for the Church:

- Prayer
- Music/Singing
- Proclamation
- Discipleship
- Fellowship
- Community
- Mercy & Social Concern

We believe that these purposes are easily categorized under two main headings:

### **Knowing Jesus**

- Prayer
- Music/Singing
- Proclamation (to the church)
- Community
- Fellowship
- Study

### **Making Him Known**

- Mercy & Social Concern
- Proclamation (to the world)
- Discipleship
- Church Planting

## Government

*“Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.” – 1 Peter 5:2-3*

Christ is the head of the Church (Colossians 1:18). He is the source of all that the Church is and does. His Word, the Bible, is our standard for every decision. Pillar Church’s existence is for His pleasure and purpose alone.

All Christians are ministers and priests of God (1 Peter 2:5-10), all Christians have received spiritual gifts from God (Romans 12:3-6), and all Christians have a special place of service in the church body (1 Corinthians 12). Pillar Church recognizes that God’s plan for church leadership is not specified in the pages of the Bible. Therefore, Pillar Church’s structure follows the example modeled by the early Christian church as recorded in the New Testament. Where Scripture is silent, we seek through prayer and biblical principles to mold the structure to a form most useful for His work.

### There are two offices at Pillar Church:

#### 1. **The Elders have four responsibilities.**

- I. To teach sound Doctrine. (1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:9; Acts 20:28-30; 1 Peter 5:2)
  - II. To provide overall Direction. (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13, Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:2)
  - III. To administer redemptive Discipline. (Matthew 18:16-20; Galatians 6:1-2)
  - IV. To model lives of Distinction. (1 Timothy 5:19-21; 1 Peter 5:3; 1 Timothy 3:2; Titus 1:6)
- Since the office of an Elder is a biblical one, certain qualifications of spiritual maturity must be met (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4). The Bible indicates that this office should only be held by men. These men will lead the church and be its primary teachers and shepherds.

#### **Qualifications for Elders:**

Above reproach  
The husband of one wife  
Believing children  
Sober-minded  
Not arrogant  
Not quick-tempered  
Self-controlled  
Respectable  
Hospitable  
Lover of good  
Upright  
Holy  
Disciplined  
Hold firm to the Word  
Able to give sound instruction  
Able to refute bad instruction  
Able to teach

Not a drunkard  
Not violent, but gentle  
Not quarrelsome  
Not a lover of money  
Not greedy  
Good manager of household  
Keep children submissive  
Not a new convert  
Well thought of by outsiders

**2. The Deacons have one responsibility.**

To serve the church. (*Acts 6:1-7*)

1 Timothy 3:8-13 gives the qualifications for those who are to serve as deacons. Pillar Church recognizes both male and female Deacons.. Due to six of the twelve qualifications describing the wife, a husband and wife serving (deaconing) together is ideal.

**Qualifications for Deacons:**

Dignified  
Not double-tongued  
Not addicted to wine  
Not greedy  
Hold to faith with a clear conscience  
Blameless  
Dignified  
Not slanderous  
Sober minded  
Faithful  
Husband of one wife  
Managing house and children well

**Staff**

Salaried staff is called at Pillar Church's discretion according to ministry needs. Staff members are hired to accomplish specific tasks related to the ministry. Staff members are eligible for church leadership positions just as any other member.

**The Current Elders Are:**

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**The Current Deacons Are:**

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## Ministries & Partnerships

*“Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.” – Hebrews 10:23-25*

*“And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.” – Acts 2:46-47*

### Our Ministries:

You will notice a lack of many of the traditional ministries that you may expect if you are coming from another church. We gather the church body together on Sunday mornings to worship God and fellowship with one another. We also gather the church body for members' meetings, public baptisms, and other times that are beneficial to the church.

In addition to these gatherings of the entire church, we have the following ministries:

**Family Gatherings.** We desire that each family is regularly meeting and discussing God and the Scriptures together. We desire that men (when able) lead this time with their family and disciple their families well.

**Making Disciples.** We desire that each member of the church be actively making disciples in their workplace, neighborhood, etc. This often happens in Life groups or 1-on-1 discipleship.

**Life Groups.** Most weeks, we gather together in intimate groups to spend time together, pray together, and discuss scripture together.

**Needs-based Ministry.** From time to time there will arise a need in our community that we as a church will be able to meet with a particular ministry. These are very important so that we remain a light to our community. Most of these ministries will be temporary in nature to meet the specific need.

## **Our Partnerships:**

As a church, one of the most common questions we get is “What kind of church are you?” or “What denomination are you?” We are a Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) Church.

### **What being Southern Baptist doesn't mean:**

1. It doesn't mean that we are governed by the SBC.
2. It doesn't mean that the SBC owns any of our property.
3. It doesn't mean that our offerings go to them.

### **Affiliations:**

#### **Southern Baptist Convention (SBC)**

The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) is a body of like-minded local churches cooperating together to reach the world with the Good News of Jesus Christ.

1. It means that we agree theologically with the SBC's theological positions. (You can read this with a simple Google search of “Baptist Faith and Message 2000”)
2. It means that we join 40,000+ other churches that have the same theological convictions in contributing to a shared mission fund called the cooperative program. That fund pays for more than 5,000 missionaries worldwide.

#### **New River Baptist Association**

The New River Baptist Association is comprised of 34 Southern Baptist churches which are located across four counties in eastern North Carolina. It was founded in 1960 specifically to reach the military population growing in Onslow County.

#### **Praetorian Project**

The Praetorian Project is a family of multiplying churches in military communities worldwide.

#### **Our Church Plants**

We desire to be a sending church to many church plants throughout the years. This capacity requires a lot of time, energy, effort, and funding as will be discussed in the next chapter. We also desire to be a supporting church to many church plants. This will typically involve financial and prayer support, but is significantly less involved than being the sending church.

## Church Planting

*"The Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."  
Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off." - Acts 13:2-3*

We are a church planting church. This means that a tremendous amount of our efforts and resources go into the establishment of new churches and the raising up of pastors and church planters. We preach and pray toward the goal of sending out our very best members and resources to plant new churches. "The vigorous, continual planting of new congregations is the single most crucial strategy for the 1) numerical growth of the Body of Christ in any city, and the 2) continual corporate renewal and revival of the existing churches in a city. Nothing else - not crusades, outreach programs, para-church ministries, growing mega-churches, congregational consulting, nor church renewal processes - will have the consistent impact of dynamic, extensive church planting." (Tim Keller)

**Below are six Church Planting truths that compel us to continually start new churches.**

1. Jesus sent out Church Planters and calls us to do the Same.
2. Real success is measured by our Sending capacity rather than our Seating capacity.
3. Growth through Multiplication is always more effective than growth through Addition.
4. New churches Grow Faster than older ones.
5. Every year in America 3,500 churches close forever.
6. New churches require new Leaders.

**There are three fundamental beliefs about church planting that guide us as we plant new churches and train new church planters.**

### **1. Theology Trumps Methodology**

We believe that too much training in methodology and not enough training in theology can be detrimental to the church planter. We operate with a fundamental belief that the more theologically grounded we are, the better planters we are. This is not to say that methodology does not play a role in church planting, but that the best church planting methodology flows from Biblical theology.

### **2. Churches Plant Churches**

We think that the local church is the means by which God will expand His kingdom. Para-church organizations are tremendous resources for the church planter and should be utilized to the extent that they are helpful. These organizations should never replace the local church as central authority in the church planting process.

### **3. Overgrowth is Undergrowth**

Fidelity to Christ is the goal of the Church, not growth. We seek to plant churches that view the luring work of the Holy Spirit as the only hope for church growth. Additionally, it is best that a steady stream of equipped saints, are dispersing from every local church to spread the Gospel to places where Christ is not yet known

## Past and Future

### Our Past:

In the Fall of 2020, Pillar Church of Jacksonville sent Joshua Brown and Paul Bailey to plant Pillar Church of Topsail.

- November 2020, Pillar Church of Topsail launches in the Sneads Ferry Community Center with a hand full of families from Pillar Jacksonville..
- May 2021. Pillar Topsail constituted as a church officially affirming her statement of beliefs, membership covenant, and constitution.
- August 2021, Pillar Topsail hires John Tolleson onto part-time staff.
- October 2022, Pillar Topsail hires Joshua Brown as a part-time staff Elder.
- October 2024, Pillar Topsail sends John Tolleson to plant Pillar Fayetteville with Johnathon Baggett.

### Our Future:

#### The Jerusalem Church vs. The Antioch Church

*“The founding of the Antioch church may be the most important movement in church planting history. Antioch would send missionaries throughout the world. Under the leadership of the Holy Spirit the Antioch church became the first great missionary sending church (Acts 13:3). On the other hand, the Jerusalem church turned increasingly inward and lost much of its vision, finally disappearing like the Judaizers of the early Christian movement. In contrast, the Antioch congregation reached the world by becoming the first church planting church.”*

– Ed Stetzer, *Planting Missional Churches*, p. 50.

*“The Christian Church was designed from the first to be aggressive. It was not intended to remain stationary at any period, but to advance onward **until its boundaries became commensurate with those of the world**. It was to spread from Jerusalem to all Judea, from Judea to Samaria, and from Samaria until the uttermost parts of the earth. It was not intended to radiate from one central point only; but to form numerous centers from which its influence might spread to the surrounding parts... The plan upon which the apostles proceeded... was to plant churches in all the great cities and centers of influence in the known world.”*

– Sword & Trowel, Vol 1 April 1865, p.63

## Where We Are Headed

**1. Planting** - We want to plant new churches.

- a. **The Praetorian Project** – The Praetorian Project is the effort to plant a network of like-minded, Gospel-centered churches in communities near military bases.
- b. **Member Planting/Missions** – When a member of Pillar Church is called to plant a new church or be a missionary we want to be involved! Throughout the history of the Universal Church generally and Pillar Church specifically, God has called men from local congregations to be sent out from those congregations. Whenever this happens we want to provide support, accountability, and instruction.

**2. Growing** - We want to grow stronger. We realize numeric growth is not the only goal of the church but the scripture makes it clear that God does grow His church and we want Him to add to His Kingdom in our city. (Acts 2:47). We also pray that there is a growing affection for Christ and a growing hunger to understand the Bible among the members of Pillar Church.

**3. Partnering** – We want to partner with other gospel-centered churches to better spread the gospel and establish churches in places where Christ is not yet known. Since we believe that Churches Plant Churches we want to make sure our partnerships are church based.

## How you can help

Serving Jesus is a great privilege and a great responsibility. We are always looking for people that are willing to identify their gifts, exercise their gifts, and grow in their gifts. Below are just a few ways you can serve with us.

**Worship Team**

**Greeting Team**

**Set-up Team**

**A/V Team**

**Children's Ministry**

**Life Groups**

**Discipleship**

## Expectations

Each member of Pillar Church is asked to commit:

1. **Time:** This involves committing time to personal growth through discipleship with other believers, and through regular fellowship. This includes attending Sunday morning worship on a consistent basis (Hebrews 10:24-25; Matthew 6:33).
2. **Talents:** The New Testament clearly teaches that the Holy Spirit has uniquely gifted every believer for the purpose of serving God and each other. Each person's gift is needed. Therefore, each member will seek to identify, develop, and exercise his/her spiritual gifts (Romans 12:4-6, 16:12).
3. **Treasures:** The New Testament says much about the godly use of money. It reminds us that we are bought by the blood of Christ and all we have belongs to Him. The Scriptures teach that each believer should freely give to support the work of Christ. Each member is encouraged to support the local body according to how God has blessed him or her financially, for this brings honor to Christ (Matthew 6:19; 2 Corinthians 8:9-11).
4. **Teaching:** Pillar Church is committed to the doctrines set out in this document. Pillar Church seeks to find leaders who will uphold and teach these doctrines plainly. Members are encouraged to learn and hold to these truths. If one disagrees on key points due to outside teaching or reading, they are asked to take their issues to the Elders for discussion and agree to neither publicly nor privately seek to influence others towards their views.
5. **Tongue:** Scripture warns us of the destructive ability of the tongue. It is essential for each member to commit the use of their tongue to the building up of each other and to the fostering of peace and unity (James 3:1-11, 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2).

- Eleven -

## **Interview**

- If you wish to become a member of Pillar Church we ask that you take the time to sit down with two of our elders to explain your faith in Christ and your interest in joining Pillar Church.
  
- The goal of the meeting is to:
  - 1) Establish a relationship between members of the leadership and you.
  - 2) To assess the credibility of your profession of faith in Christ (Matt. 18:18). Church elders are entrusted with the oversight of the church (1 Pet. 5:2). They are appointed to the office of elder precisely so that they can keep a close watch over the whole flock (Acts 20:28, Heb 13:17).
  
- The membership interview is very informal, sometimes in your home or before or after a worship service.
  
- Following the interview, if it is the desire of the prospective member and the church to join in membership, you will be presented before the congregation during a Sunday morning gathering.

# Appendix (A)

## “Baptism & Church Membership” (Excerpt)

By Dr. John Piper [www.desiringgod.org](http://www.desiringgod.org)

### 1) The privilege and responsibility of governing powers of the church.

Consider the implication of Matthew 18:15-17 where “the church” (*ekklesia*) appears to be the final court of appeal in matters of church authority as it relates to membership.

“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. 16 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. 17 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.”

If there is no church membership, how can you define the group that will take up this sensitive and weighty matter of exhorting the unrepentant person and finally rendering a judgment about his standing in the community? It is hard to believe that just anyone who showed up claiming to be a Christian could be a part of that gathering. Surely “the church” must be a definable group to handle such a weighty matter.

### 2) The possibility of being excluded from the church (excommunication).

There is another implication from Matthew 18:15-17, namely, that the unrepentant person is accountable to a group of people. This is an amazing event: formally excluding a person from “the church” so that he becomes to you “as a Gentile and a tax collector”—that is, an unbeliever. The same kind of exclusion is found in 1 Corinthians 5:1-5. How is this possible if the person is not considered a member of something from which he can be excluded? So both the person’s liability to excommunication and the involvement of “the church” in the process imply that the one being charged is a member and the group settling the matter are members.

### 3) A commitment to be held accountable by a Council of Elders to believe a basic affirmation and to live a basic covenant.

The point here is that without membership, who is it that the New Testament says must submit to leaders? Some kind of expressed willingness, covenant, agreement or commitment must precede submission. Consider the way the New Testament talks about the relationship of the church to her leaders.

Hebrews 13:17 “Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account.”

1 Thessalonians 5:12-13 “We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you and are over you (*proistamenous humōn*) in the Lord and admonish you, and to esteem them very highly in love because of their work.”

1 Timothy 5:17 “Let the elders who rule well (*Hoi kalōs proestōtes presbuteroi*) be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.”

How is this leadership and this submission to function where there is no membership defining who has made the commitment to be led and who has been chosen as leaders? If we downplay the importance of membership, it is difficult to see how we could take these commands seriously and practically.

#### **4) The privilege of being cared for with the primacy and special benefit of a local covenant family of believers.**

When the pastors and elders extend their care beyond the membership, it does not mean that there is no primacy to members. Consider Acts 20:28 where Paul tells the elders how to care for their flock.

“Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.”

This verse does not say elders cannot visit unbelievers or those who are not yet members. But it does make clear that their first responsibility is to a particular flock. Does it not make sense that this flock would have definition and limits? Who are we as elders and pastors responsible for? For whom will we give an account to God?

For these four reasons we believe that membership in the local church is of crucial importance. A person who continues in a state of disconnect from membership in a local church is walking in serious disobedience to God.

## **Appendix (B)**

### **The Chicago Statement on Biblical Inerrancy**

#### **Preface**

The authority of Scripture is a key issue for the Christian Church in this and every age. Those who profess faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior are called to show the reality of their discipleship by humbly and faithfully obeying God's written Word. To stray from Scripture in faith or conduct is disloyalty to our Master. Recognition of the total truth and trustworthiness of Holy Scripture is essential to a full grasp and adequate confession of its authority.

The following Statement affirms this inerrancy of Scripture afresh, making clear our understanding of it and warning against its denial. We are persuaded that to deny it is to set aside the witness of Jesus Christ and of the Holy Spirit and to refuse that submission to the claims of God's own Word which marks true Christian faith. We see it as our timely duty to make this affirmation in the face of current lapses from the truth of inerrancy among our fellow Christians and misunderstanding of this doctrine in the world at large.

This Statement consists of three parts: a Summary Statement, Articles of Affirmation and Denials, and an accompanying Exposition. It has been prepared in the course of a three-day consultation in Chicago. Those who have signed the Summary Statement and the Articles wish to confirm their own conviction as to the inerrancy of Scripture and to encourage and challenge one another and all Christians to growing appreciation and understanding of this doctrine. We acknowledge the limitations of a document prepared in a brief, intensive conference and do not propose that this Statement be given creedal weight. Yet we rejoice in the deepening of our own convictions through our discussions together, and we pray that the Statement we have signed may be used to the glory of our God toward a new reformation of the Church in its faith, life and mission.

We offer this Statement in a spirit, not of contention, but of humility and love, which we purpose by God's grace to maintain in any future dialogue arising out of what we have said. We gladly acknowledge that many who deny the inerrancy of Scripture do not display the consequences of this denial in the rest of their belief and behavior, and we are conscious that we who confess this doctrine often deny it in life by failing to bring our thoughts and deeds, our traditions and habits, into true subjection to the divine Word.

We invite response to this statement from any who see reason to amend its affirmations about Scripture by the light of Scripture itself, under whose infallible authority we stand as we speak. We claim no personal infallibility for the witness we bear, and for any help which enables us to strengthen this testimony to God's Word we shall be grateful.

Drafted October 26 – 28, 1978 , Summit I , International Council on Biblical Inerrancy Chicago, Illinois

#### **A Short Statement**

1. God, who is Himself Truth and speaks truth only, has inspired Holy Scripture in order thereby to reveal Himself to lost mankind through Jesus Christ as Creator and Lord, Redeemer and Judge. Holy Scripture is God's witness to Himself.
2. Holy Scripture, being God's own Word, written by men prepared and superintended by His Spirit, is of infallible divine authority in all matters upon which it touches: it is to

- be believed, as God's instruction, in all that it affirms; obeyed, as God's command, in all that it requires; embraced, as God's pledge, in all that it promises.
3. The Holy Spirit, Scripture's Divine Author, both authenticates it to us by His inward witness and opens our minds to understand its meaning.
  4. Being wholly and verbally God-given, Scripture is without error or fault in all its teaching, no less in what it states about God's acts in creation, about the events of world history, and about its own literary origins under God, than in its witness to God's saving grace in individual lives.
  5. The authority of Scripture is inescapably impaired if this total divine inerrancy is in any way limited or disregarded, or made relative to a view of truth contrary to the Bible's own; and such lapses bring serious loss to both the individual and the Church.

## **Articles of Affirmation and Denial**

### **Article I**

**We affirm** that the Holy Scriptures are to be received as the authoritative Word of God.

**We deny** that the Scriptures receive their authority from the Church, tradition or any other human source.

### **Article II**

**We affirm** that the Scriptures are the supreme written norm by which God binds the conscience, and that the authority of the Church is subordinate to that of Scripture.

**We deny** that Church creeds, councils or declarations have authority greater than or equal to the authority of the Bible.

### **Article III**

**We affirm** that the written Word in its entirety is revelation given by God.

**We deny** that the Bible is merely a witness to revelation, or only becomes revelation in encounter, or depends on the responses of men for its validity.

### **Article IV**

**We affirm** that God who made mankind in His image has used language as a means of revelation.

**We deny** that human language is so limited by our creatureliness that it is rendered inadequate as a vehicle for divine revelation. We further deny that the corruption of human culture and language through sin has thwarted God's Work of Inspiration.

### **Article V**

**We affirm** that God's revelation in the Holy Scriptures was progressive.

**We deny** that later revelation, which may fulfill earlier revelation, ever corrects or contradicts it. We further deny that any normative revelation has been given since the completion of the New Testament writings.

### **Article VI**

**We affirm** that the whole of Scripture and all its parts, down to the very words of the original, were given by divine inspiration.

**We deny** that the inspiration of Scripture can rightly be affirmed of the whole without the parts, or of some parts but not the whole.

#### **Article VII**

**We affirm** that inspiration was the work in which God by His Spirit, through human writers, gave us His Word. The origin of Scripture is divine. The mode of divine inspiration remains largely a mystery to us.

**We deny** that inspiration can be reduced to human insight, or to heightened states of consciousness of any kind.

#### **Article VIII**

**We affirm** that God in His Work of Inspiration utilized the distinctive personalities and literary styles of the writers whom He had chosen and prepared.

**We deny** that God, in causing these writers to use the very words that He chose, overrode their personalities.

#### **Article IX**

**We affirm** that inspiration, though not conferring omniscience, guaranteed true and trustworthy utterance on all matters of which the Biblical authors were moved to speak and write.

**We deny** that the finitude or fallenness of these writers, by necessity or otherwise, introduced distortion or falsehood into God's Word.

#### **Article X**

**We affirm** that inspiration, strictly speaking, applies only to the autographic text of Scripture, which in the providence of God can be ascertained from available manuscripts with great accuracy. We further affirm that copies and translations of Scripture are the Word of God to the extent that they faithfully represent the original.

**We deny** that any essential element of the Christian faith is affected by the absence of the autographs. We further deny that this absence renders the assertion of Biblical inerrancy invalid or irrelevant.

#### **Article XI**

**We affirm** that Scripture, having been given by divine inspiration, is infallible, so that, far from misleading us, it is true and reliable in all the matters it addresses.

**We deny** that it is possible for the Bible to be at the same time infallible and errant in its assertions. Infallibility and inerrancy may be distinguished, but not separated.

#### **Article XII**

**We affirm** that Scripture in its entirety is inerrant, being free from all falsehood, fraud or deceit.

**We deny** that Biblical infallibility and inerrancy are limited to spiritual, religious or redemptive themes, exclusive of assertions in the fields of history and science. We further deny that

scientific hypotheses about earth history may properly be used to overturn the teaching of Scripture on creation and the flood.

#### **Article XIII**

**We affirm** the propriety of using inerrancy as a theological term with reference to the complete truthfulness of Scripture.

**We deny** that it is proper to evaluate Scripture according to standards of truth and error that are alien to its usage or purpose. We further deny that inerrancy is negated by Biblical phenomena such as a lack of modern technical precision, irregularities of grammar or spelling, observational descriptions of nature, the reporting of falsehoods, the use of hyperbole and round numbers, the topical arrangement of materials, variant selections of material in parallel accounts or the use of free citations.

#### **Article XIV**

**We affirm** the unity and internal consistency of Scripture.

**We deny** that alleged errors and discrepancies that have not yet been resolved vitiate the truth claims of the Bible.

#### **Article XV**

**We affirm** that the doctrine of inerrancy is grounded in the teaching of the Bible about inspiration.

**We deny** that Jesus' teaching about Scripture may be dismissed by appeals to accommodation or to any natural limitation of His humanity.

#### **Article XVI**

**We affirm** that the doctrine of inerrancy has been integral to the Church's faith throughout its history.

**We deny** that inerrancy is a doctrine invented by Scholastic Protestantism, or is a reactionary position postulated in response to negative higher criticism.

#### **Article XVII**

**We affirm** that the Holy Spirit bears witness to the Scriptures, assuring believers of the truthfulness of God's written Word.

**We deny** that this witness of the Holy Spirit operates in isolation from or against Scripture.

#### **Article XVIII**

**We affirm** that the text of Scripture is to be interpreted by grammatico-historical exegesis, taking account of its literary forms and devices, and that Scripture is to interpret Scripture.

**We deny** the legitimacy of any treatment of the text or quest for sources lying behind it that leads to relativizing, dehistoricizing, or discounting its teaching or rejecting its claims to authorship.

#### **Article XIX**

**We affirm** that a confession of the full authority, infallibility, and inerrancy of Scripture is vital to a sound understanding of the whole of the Christian faith. We further affirm that such confession should lead to increasing conformity to the image of Christ.

**We deny** that such confession is necessary for salvation. However, we further deny that inerrancy can be rejected without grave consequences, both to the individual and to the Church.

## **Appendix (C)**

### **The Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood**

In December, 1987, the newly-formed Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood met in Danvers, Massachusetts, to compose the Danvers Statement on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood. Prior to the listing of the actual affirmations that comprise the Danvers Statement, we have included a section detailing contemporary developments that serve as the rationale for these affirmations. We offer this statement to the evangelical world, knowing that it will stimulate healthy discussion, hoping that it will gain widespread assent.

#### **Rationale**

We have been moved in our purpose by the following contemporary developments which we observe with deep concern:

1. The widespread uncertainty and confusion in our culture regarding the complementary differences between masculinity and femininity;
2. the tragic effects of this confusion in unraveling the fabric of marriage woven by God out of the beautiful and diverse strands of manhood and womanhood;
3. the increasing promotion given to feminist egalitarianism with accompanying distortions or neglect of the glad harmony portrayed in Scripture between the loving, humble leadership of redeemed husbands and the intelligent, willing support of that leadership by redeemed wives;
4. the widespread ambivalence regarding the values of motherhood, vocational homemaking, and the many ministries historically performed by women;
5. the growing claims of legitimacy for sexual relationships which have Biblically and historically been considered illicit or perverse, and the increase in pornographic portrayal of human sexuality;
6. the upsurge of physical and emotional abuse in the family;
7. the emergence of roles for men and women in church leadership that do not conform to Biblical teaching but backfire in the crippling of Biblically faithful witness;
8. the increasing prevalence and acceptance of hermeneutical oddities devised to reinterpret apparently plain meanings of Biblical texts;
9. the consequent threat to Biblical authority as the clarity of Scripture is jeopardized and the accessibility of its meaning to ordinary people is withdrawn into the restricted realm of technical ingenuity;
10. and behind all this the apparent accommodation of some within the church to the spirit of the age at the expense of winsome, radical Biblical authenticity which in the power of the Holy Spirit may reform rather than reflect our ailing culture.

#### **Affirmations**

Based on our understanding of Biblical teachings, we affirm the following:

1. Both Adam and Eve were created in God's image, equal before God as persons and distinct in their manhood and womanhood (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18).
2. Distinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart (Gen 2:18, 21-24; 1 Cor 11:7-9; 1 Tim 2:12-14).

3. Adam's headship in marriage was established by God before the Fall, and was not a result of sin (Gen 2:16-18, 21-24, 3:1-13; 1 Cor 11:7-9).
4. The Fall introduced distortions into the relationships between men and women (Gen 3:1-7, 12, 16).
  - In the home, the husband's loving, humble headship tends to be replaced by domination or passivity; the wife's intelligent, willing submission tends to be replaced by usurpation or servility.
  - In the church, sin inclines men toward a worldly love of power or an abdication of spiritual responsibility, and inclines women to resist limitations on their roles or to neglect the use of their gifts in appropriate ministries.
5. The Old Testament, as well as the New Testament, manifests the equally high value and dignity which God attached to the roles of both men and women (Gen 1:26-27, 2:18; Gal 3:28). Both Old and New Testaments also affirm the principle of male headship in the family and in the covenant community (Gen 2:18; Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; 1 Tim 2:11-15).
6. Redemption in Christ aims at removing the distortions introduced by the curse.
  - In the family, husbands should forsake harsh or selfish leadership and grow in love and care for their wives; wives should forsake resistance to their husbands' authority and grow in willing, joyful submission to their husbands' leadership (Eph 5:21-33; Col 3:18-19; Tit 2:3-5; 1 Pet 3:1-7).
  - In the church, redemption in Christ gives men and women an equal share in the blessings of salvation; nevertheless, some governing and teaching roles within the church are restricted to men (Gal 3:28; 1 Cor 11:2-16; 1 Tim 2:11-15).
7. In all of life Christ is the supreme authority and guide for men and women, so that no earthly submission-domestic, religious, or civil-ever implies a mandate to follow a human authority into sin (Dan 3:10-18; Acts 4:19-20, 5:27-29; 1 Pet 3:1-2).
8. In both men and women a heartfelt sense of call to ministry should never be used to set aside Biblical criteria for particular ministries (1 Tim 2:11-15, 3:1-13; Tit 1:5-9). Rather, Biblical teaching should remain the authority for testing our subjective discernment of God's will.
9. With half the world's population outside the reach of indigenous evangelism; with countless other lost people in those societies that have heard the gospel; with the stresses and miseries of sickness, malnutrition, homelessness, illiteracy, ignorance, aging, addiction, crime, incarceration, neuroses, and loneliness, no man or woman who feels a passion from God to make His grace known in word and deed need ever live without a fulfilling ministry for the glory of Christ and the good of this fallen world (1 Cor 12:7-21).
10. We are convinced that a denial or neglect of these principles will lead to increasingly destructive consequences in our families, our churches, and the culture at large.

## Appendix (D)

### Our Logo:



Our logo was designed in 2010 by Matthew Gideon of MWG Media Works in Austin, TX.

In architecture, there are five types of pillars. We chose the “composite” pillar for the following reasons:

- It is beautiful as the bride of Christ should be. –Eph 5
- It has leafy growth under the cap symbolizing life.
- It has two swirls on the cap representing our two purposes.

Symbolically, the pillar can have several meanings. In heraldry, the pillar signifies fortitude and constancy. Fortitude was also the reason that many pillars were erected, such as in ancient Egypt, to commemorate important events, with esoteric secrets engraved on them. We read in the book of Judges (9:6) of Abimelech, that a “pillar was erected in Shechem” when he was made king; and (2 Kings 11:14) it is said that a pillar was raised when Joash was made king, “as the manner was,” indicating that this was common practice. Thoth, the father of all wisdom, was said to have concealed his books by burying them under a pillar. A pillar is said to represent the bridge between heaven and earth.

# **Appendix (E)**

## **Constitution of Pillar Church of Topsail**

Preamble: This Constitution has been created in order to:

1. preserve and secure the principles of our faith,
2. preserve the liberties of each individual member of this church,
3. ensure freedom of action and independence from any religious body or organization, and
4. provide for orderly conduct of internal affairs, in dealing with others, and of governing church members.

Article 1 – Name: The name of this church shall be Pillar Church of Topsail.

Article 2 – Purpose: This church exists to bring glory to God and display His character by knowing Jesus and making Him known. This church shall endeavor to accomplish this purpose by:

1. loving God and obeying His commandments,
2. equipping the saints through biblical preaching, instruction, and study,
3. proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ through preaching, personal evangelism, and any other means consistent with the teachings of Scripture,
4. encouraging, supporting, and participating in missions work and the establishment of new churches – local, domestic, and international,
5. administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper,
6. encouraging biblical fellowship among believers, and
7. serving other individuals, families, and churches by providing for physical, emotional, and spiritual needs, in the name of Jesus Christ.

Article 3 – Governing Documents: The governing documents of this church shall be the Statement of Beliefs, Membership Covenant, and this Constitution.

Article 4 – Affiliations: This church shall be affiliated with the Praetorian Project, the New River Baptist Association (NRBA), the Baptist State Convention of North Carolina (BSCNC), and the Southern Baptist Convention (SBC).

Article 5 – Membership:

### *Section 1 – Qualifications:*

To qualify for membership in this church, a person must be:

1. a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration,
2. baptized by immersion, in obedience to Christ, following his or her regeneration, and
3. willing to commit themselves to serve Jesus Christ through the ministry and vision of this church.

The elders shall be responsible for determining each person's qualification for membership. In making this determination, they may rely on a person's profession of faith, or such other evidence as the elders deem appropriate.

### *Section 2 – Admission:*

To be admitted into church membership, applicants shall: 1. attend a membership class, 2. interview with at least one elder and one member to give credible evidence of repentance of sin, faith in Christ, and

understanding of the gospel,

1. attend a membership class,
2. interview with at least one elder and one member to give credible evidence of repentance of sin, faith in Christ, and understanding of the gospel,
3. commit to uphold, be governed by, and submit to the governing documents of this church, and
4. be recommended by the elders for admission and be presented before the gathered membership (weekly worship gathering or duly called members' meeting)

### *Section 3 – Duties and Privileges:*

In accord with the duties enumerated in the Membership Covenant, each member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of this church consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God. Further, members are privileged and expected to regularly attend its Lord's Day meetings, faithfully observe the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and submit to the church's discipline and instruction.

Only those who are members of this congregation shall serve in positions of leadership within the church. Notwithstanding, non-members may serve the church for purposes of administration and professional consultation. Under the oversight of the elders, persons from outside of the church may give instruction from the Scriptures for worship services, conferences, and other specifically determined occasions.

Under Christ, the members of this congregation shall have the final word in matters of doctrine, membership, discipline, and direction. Therefore, it is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend all Members' Meetings and participate in the affirmation of officers (thereby affirming doctrine), decisions regarding membership status (thereby affirming membership), the discipline of unrepentant members (thereby upholding discipline), the annual church budget (thereby affirming direction), and in other such matters that may be submitted by the elders to the congregation.

### *Section 5 – Discipline:*

Any member consistently neglectful of his or her scriptural duties as specified in the governing documents of this church, or who is otherwise 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. Any such action shall be done in accordance with Matthew 18:15-17; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5; 2 Corinthians 2:6-8; and any other pertinent Scriptures.

Church discipline can include admonition by the elders or congregation, suspension from participation in Lord's Supper, removal from office, and/or removal from membership. See Matthew 18:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; 1 Timothy 5:19-20; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5.

If private efforts to bring about the member's repentance and reconciliation are unsuccessful, one or more members shall bring the matter to the attention of the elders. The elders shall review and investigate the matter. After prayer and deliberation, the elders may:

1. dismiss the matter,
2. take disciplinary action, or
3. submit the matter to the members at a duly convened members' meeting for a decision.

If the members vote to discipline the member, it shall be announced to the members to carry out the biblical admonition to bring about repentance and restoration of the disciplined member. Members who have been removed from membership by the church shall be restored to full membership privileges

according to the spirit of 2 Corinthians 2:7-8 when their conduct is judged by the elders and the members to be in accordance with the governing documents and biblical repentance.

*Section 6 – Removal:*

This church shall recognize the removal of a person's membership:

1. upon the voluntary resignation of a member by letter,
2. upon joining in membership with another church,
3. upon the death of the member, or
4. as an act of church discipline, upon the recommendation of the elders, when three-quarters of the present members vote to terminate membership.

This church shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation from membership for the purpose of:

1. proceeding with a process of church discipline,
2. to protect that member from following false teaching, or
3. for any other reason the church deems necessary or prudent.

In these instances, this church has the right and responsibility to bring any disciplinary process to an orderly conclusion, and to make final determination as to the person's membership status in connection with that process.

**Article 6 – Offices and Staff:** The biblical offices in this church shall be elder and deacon. All officers shall be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

*Section 1 – Pastors/Elders:*

The leadership of this church shall be vested in the pastors/elders who are responsible to govern the church, giving themselves to the ministry of the Word and prayer, thereby tending the flock of God in this church. The purpose of this office is to lovingly guide, give oversight to, care for, and equip the membership to do the work of the ministry. The pastors/elders shall be equal in authority but may be specialized in function. This church shall maintain a plurality of elders, exemplifying the biblical model for church leadership as described in Acts 15:4; Acts 14:3; Acts 20:17; Philippians 1:1; Titus 1:5; 1 Peter 5:1; James 5:14.

Since the office of an elder is a biblical one, certain qualifications of spiritual maturity shall be met. Qualifications for elders are described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-4. The Bible indicates that only men shall hold the office of elder; therefore, only male members shall be considered for this position. This church shall maintain a majority of the eldership as non-staff (unpaid) elders.

The responsibilities of the elders shall include:

1. examination and instruction of prospective members,
2. examination and recommendation of all prospective candidates for offices and positions,
3. overseeing the work of the deacons,
4. conducting worship services,
5. overseeing the administration of the ordinances of baptism and Lord's Supper,
6. equipping the membership for the work of the ministry,
7. encouraging sound doctrine and practice,
8. admonishing and correcting error,
9. overseeing the process of church discipline,
10. overseeing the ministries of this church,
11. mobilizing this church for world missions and the establishment of new churches, and

12. ensuring that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share this church's fundamental convictions as expressed in the Statement of Beliefs.

*Section 2 – Deacons:*

This church shall recognize men and women who are giving of themselves in service to this church, and who possess particular gifts of service. Qualifications for deacons are described in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:1-7. The responsibilities of the deacons shall include:

1. freeing the elders to provide spiritual oversight to the congregation,
2. assisting the elders by performing services of administration, and
3. attending to the physical needs of the congregation.

*Section 3 – Appointment:*

The election of officers shall be held at a members' meeting.

Names of nominees to serve as officers shall be presented by the elders at the previous members' meeting provided the previous meeting occurred at least four weeks prior, and the election shall proceed as directed by the moderator.

The moderator shall declare elected all officers receiving a three-quarters vote of the members.

The persons elected shall assume their respective offices upon election, unless another date has been specifically designated.

*Section 4 – Removal:*

An officer's term may be terminated by resignation or dismissal by a three-quarters vote of the members.

*Article 7 – Staff:*

*Section 1 – Staff Pastor(s)/Elder(s):*

The staff pastor(s)/elder(s) shall perform the duties of pastor/elder described above and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching, teaching, and/or equipping.

*Section 2 – Support Staff:*

The pastors/elders may create or dissolve paid support staff positions. Support staff shall serve under the supervision of the pastors/elders. Support staff shall affirm and support the governing documents of this church, and shall exemplify godly character.

*Article 8 – Meetings and Voting:*

*Section 1 – Worship Meetings:*

This church shall meet every Sunday (the Lord's Day) and may schedule any other meetings deemed necessary by the elders.

*Section 2 – Members' Meetings:*

There shall be a regular members' meeting at least three times per year, at some time apart from a public worship service. The date, time, and location of regular members' meetings shall be announced at the public service of the church within two weeks preceding the meeting.

Special members' meetings shall be called as required by the elders. The date, time, and purpose of any special meeting shall be announced at the public service of the church within two weeks preceding the meeting.

An elder designated by the elders shall preside as moderator at all members' meetings of this church. The elders shall see that the stated meetings are regularly held and that required reports are submitted to the church by the responsible members.

A budget shall be approved by the congregation at a members' meeting not less than one month before the start of the fiscal year. Prior to this approval and subject to the elders' discretion, expenditures shall continue at the prior year's level. A fiscal year of the church shall be from January 1 to December 31.

*Section 3 – Voting:*

A three-quarters vote is necessary on all matters. All votes shall be cast at a regular or special members' meeting. Votes shall be tallied based on the number of votes cast by members present. Upon the discretion of the moderator, a members' meeting shall be postponed if a sufficient representation of the congregation is not in attendance. Some matters presented to the congregation may require a period of consideration before voting. The elders shall determine the instances where this is the case.

Article 9 – Non-Profit Status And Disposition Of Church Property: This church is not organized for profit.

*Section 1 – Division:*

In the case of organic division of this church, all assets shall belong to those members who abide by this document as determined by Pillar Church of Jacksonville.

*Section 2 – Dissolution:*

Should conditions arise when, for any reason, this church's work cannot continue, all assets shall be transferred to Pillar Church of Jacksonville for redistribution.

*Section 3 – Consolidation:*

Should the conditions arise where a consolidation with another church of similar biblical faith is advisable, the elders shall be authorized by a three-quarters vote of the congregation to negotiate the terms of such a consolidation. Should the terms of said negotiation be acceptable, the congregation shall approve the consolidation by a three-quarters vote.

Article 10 – Revisions and Amendments: Revisions or amendments to the Statement of Beliefs, Membership Covenant, or this Constitution shall be made only in the following manner:

1. Any member of the church can provide a suggested revision or amendment to the Statement of Beliefs, Membership Covenant, or this Constitution in writing to the elders of this church.
2. For a revision or amendment to the Statement of Beliefs, Membership Covenant, or this Constitution to be effected, the elders shall confirm its consistency with Scripture and unanimously affirm the revision or amendment.
3. After approval from the elders, the revision or amendment to the Statement of Beliefs, Membership Covenant, or this Constitution of this church shall be presented at a members' meeting for affirmation.
4. Any revision or amendment to the Statement of Beliefs, Membership Covenant, or this Constitution shall be approved by a three-quarters vote.

## Membership Covenant of Pillar Church of Topsail

Having been called and empowered by the Spirit of God to receive Jesus Christ as Lord, Savior, and supreme Treasure of our lives, and, on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

*1 Corinthians 12:4-20*

We commit, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this Church in knowledge, holiness and peace; to promote its maturity and fruitfulness; to sustain its corporate worship, ordinances, and discipline; to regularly assemble together to worship God and mutually build one another up in Christ; to welcome, and test, instruction from the Scriptures by the elders of the church which accords with the Statement of Beliefs; to faithfully attend the Members' Meetings; to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the Church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the Gospel through all nations.

*Acts 4:32-37; Ephesians 1:15-23; 3:14-21; 4:1-3, 11-32; Titus 2:1-15*

We also commit to maintain family and personal devotions; to disciple our children in the Christian faith; to seek the salvation of our relatives, acquaintances, and enemies; to walk properly before outsiders; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our conduct; to avoid all gossiping, slandering, backbiting, and unrighteous anger; to seek God's help in abstaining from all practices that bring unwarranted harm to the body or jeopardize our own or another's faith. *Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Ephesians 4:17-32; 5:22-6:9; 1 Corinthians 10:23-33; 1 Peter 2:9-12*

We further commit to watch over one another in brotherly love; to speak the truth in love to one another; to remember one another in prayer; to work for the unity of the Holy Spirit in the bond of peace with one another; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offense, but always willing to forgive, ready for reconciliation, and to be mindful of the words of our Savior to obtain it without delay.

*Matthew 18:1-35; Galatians 5:1-6:10; Ephesians 4:11-5:21; Hebrews 3:12-13; 10:19-25*

Finally, we commit that when we remove from this body of Christ, we will unite with a church where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant. Moreover, as a result of this covenant relationship, to these and all other scriptural duties we do humbly, voluntarily, and joyfully submit ourselves, promising and purposing to perform them, not in our own strength, but by the grace of God and the power of the Holy Spirit.

*Hebrews 10:24-25*

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all. Amen. *2 Corinthians 13:14*