

# **BY LAWS OF HARVEST COMMUNITY CHURCH**

**Revision – January 11, 2015**

## **ARTICLE I - NAME AND LOCATION.**

The name of this corporation shall be Harvest Community Church of Woonsocket, Incorporated (hereinafter the ‘Church’), with an address located at 60 North Main Street, Woonsocket, Providence County, Rhode Island, or such other location(s) as may be determined from time to time by the Board of Elders and Deacons. The Board of Elders and Deacons may also authorize additional offices as may be deemed desirable in other states or other countries (Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8-9).<sup>1</sup>

## **ARTICLE II - PURPOSE.**

The purpose of the Church shall be, for religious, charitable and educational purposes, to live and spread the orthodox, historic, Biblical Christian faith (Matthew 22:37-39, 28:19-20) in accordance with the Church’s Confession of Faith, Doctrinal Statement and Constitution, and in accordance with the policies and guidelines set forth by the Board of Elders and Deacons.

Further, it is the express purpose of this Church to minister the Word of God to the faithful (Acts 6:4); to conduct regular religious worship services through various forms of ministries, and to promote and encourage those that are in need through the various ministries of the Church (1 Thessalonians 5:11; James 1:27); to cooperate with other organizations and institutions in ministering God's Word (1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:4); to spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ by ministering through seminars, media, literature, and other forms of communication (Romans 10:15; 1 Corinthians 9:12, 18-19); to maintain a local church (Hebrews 10:25) as well as to implement a program of planting new churches in the United States and in foreign lands (Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8-9); to meet to the physical needs of our community whenever possible (James 1:27); to license and ordain qualified individuals for service in the ministry (Titus 1:5-9); and to do any and all other things and activities which will serve to promote the Gospel of Jesus Christ under the direction of the Holy Spirit, and in accordance with the provisions set forth in the Scriptures, the Holy Bible (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

## **ARTICLE III - GOALS AND OBJECTIVES.**

To fulfill the religious, charitable and educational purposes stated above, the Church adopts the following goals and objectives:

- A. To seek out the lost and lead them to Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior (Luke 14:23, 19:10; John 20:21).
- B. To provide comprehensive training to students of all ages in the Word of God, the Holy Bible, in each and all the doctrines found therein, including training for those who express an interest in Pastoral ministry and have been so gifted by God to serve in that office (Matthew 28:19-20; Ephesians 4:11-14; Colossians 3:16; 2 Timothy 3:15; Titus 2:15; Hebrews 5:14-6:1-3; 1 Peter 3:15).
- C. To provide an opportunity for each person, whosoever will (Matthew 16:24-25; Luke 9:23), to engage in a worldwide effort to carry forth the Gospel message to every person of every nation

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<sup>1</sup> All Scripture references are to *The New American Standard Bible*, (La Habra, California: The Lockman Foundation) 1977.

(Mark 16:15; Acts 1:8-9).

- D. To foster Christian culture in terms of refinement, appreciation, social attitudes, skills, and to thereby develop a compassionate response to the needs of society as commanded in the Word of God (Matthew 22:39; John 13:35; Galatians 2:10; James 1:27, 2:15-16).

#### **ARTICLE IV - CONFESSION OF FAITH.**

- A. We believe there is only one living and true God<sup>2</sup>, the Creator of all things<sup>3</sup>, and that there are three Persons in the Godhead, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit<sup>4</sup>, and that these three are one true, eternal God, the same in substance, equal in power and glory,<sup>5</sup> although distinguished by their personal properties.<sup>6</sup>
- B. We believe that the Holy Scriptures contained in the Old and New Testaments were breathed out by God<sup>7</sup> to be the rule of faith and practice for all believers.<sup>8</sup>
- C. We believe that God made all things for His own purpose<sup>9</sup>; that all His works were known to Him from the beginning,<sup>10</sup> that He works all things after the counsel of His own will,<sup>11</sup> His purpose will be established,<sup>12</sup> and that His laws, principles and government are perfectly holy, just and good.<sup>13</sup>
- D. We believe that God created man in His own image, without sin,<sup>14</sup> and that man fell from that happy state by transgressing the divine command,<sup>15</sup> and that in consequence of the first apostasy, all men, prior to regeneration, are fully depraved, destitute of holiness, unreconciled to God, and under condemnation.<sup>16</sup>
- E. We believe the Son of God has, by His incarnation,<sup>17</sup> obedience,<sup>18</sup> sufferings,<sup>19</sup> blood,<sup>20</sup> death<sup>21</sup> and bodily resurrection,<sup>22</sup> made an adequate, unlimited atonement for sin,<sup>23</sup> and that all who are saved are wholly indebted to the sovereign grace of God through His atonement.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Deuteronomy 6:4; Jeremiah 10:10

<sup>3</sup> Genesis 1:1; John 1:3

<sup>4</sup> Matthew 28:19; Luke 3:21-22

<sup>5</sup> John 1:1; Hebrews 1:8, 10; Acts 5:3-4

<sup>6</sup> Matthew 28:19; 2 Corinthians 13:14

<sup>7</sup> 2 Timothy 3:16; 2 Peter 1:20-21

<sup>8</sup> Psalm 19:7-11; 119:11; Acts 17:11

<sup>9</sup> Proverbs 16:4; Isaiah 43:7

<sup>10</sup> Isaiah 25:1; 46:10; Acts 15:18

<sup>11</sup> Daniel 4:35; Romans 8:28; Ephesians 1:11; 3:11

<sup>12</sup> Isaiah 46:10; 14:24; Psalm 33:11; Proverbs 19:21

<sup>13</sup> Psalms 19:7-8; 97:2; 89:14; 45:6; 99:4; Romans 7:12

<sup>14</sup> Genesis 1:26-27; Ecclesiastes 7:29

<sup>15</sup> Genesis 3:1-6

<sup>16</sup> John 3:18; Romans 5:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:21-22

<sup>17</sup> John 1:14

<sup>18</sup> Romans 5:19; Philippians 2:8; Hebrews 5:8

<sup>19</sup> Hebrews 5:8; 13:12; 1 Peter 2:21; 4:1

<sup>20</sup> Hebrews 9:14, 22; 1 Peter 1:18-19; Revelation 1:5

<sup>21</sup> Romans 5:10; 6:10; Colossians 1:22

<sup>22</sup> Acts 4:33; 1 Corinthians 15:3-8

<sup>23</sup> John 3:16; Romans 8:3; 1 John 2:2; 4:14

<sup>24</sup> Ephesians 2:5, 8; Titus 2:11

- F. We believe that such provision is made in the Gospel, that whoever will, may take of the water of life freely,<sup>25</sup> yet, that sinners will not come to Jesus Christ<sup>26</sup> except they are made willing by the special regenerating influences of God the Holy Spirit.<sup>27</sup>
- G. We believe, that for those who are appointed to eternal life,<sup>28</sup> who alone believe in Jesus Christ,<sup>29</sup> there is no condemnation; but they will be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.<sup>30</sup>
- H. We believe the evidence of salvation is, in the sight of God, real piety,<sup>31</sup> and in the sight of man apparent piety,<sup>32</sup> and that all who are in right standing with God have a right to the two divine ordinances: the Lord's Table and Baptism.<sup>33</sup>
- I. We believe that every local Church is autonomous and has the authority and responsibility from her Head<sup>34</sup> to administer censure upon members who walk disorderly in order that the testimony of Jesus Christ and the Church not be injured and that the doctrine of Christ be not blasphemed, and that it is not required to refer their decisions to any other earthly tribunal.<sup>35</sup>
- J. We believe in the forgiveness of sins<sup>36</sup> and that the Church as Christ's body is to be a community of forgiving people who model the Lord's own heart of forgiveness to a lost world.<sup>37</sup>
- K. We believe that private and family prayer,<sup>38</sup> the reading of the Scriptures,<sup>39</sup> punctual attendance to the public worship of God and gathering together of His people,<sup>40</sup> and special appointments for the purpose of corporate prayer,<sup>41</sup> Bible study<sup>42</sup> and Christian fellowship<sup>43</sup> are in accordance with the Scriptures, and are important privileges and duties of professed Christians,<sup>44</sup> and that obedience is the best evidence we can give of genuine love for the Lord.<sup>45</sup>
- L. We believe that, at the rapture of the Church, all believers of this present age shall be bodily resurrected and caught up into the clouds to meet with the Lord in the air and so shall we ever be with the Lord.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Matthew 11:28; John 7:37-38

<sup>26</sup> Matthew 22:3; John 3:19, 5:40; Romans 3:11

<sup>27</sup> John 1:13; 1 Corinthians 2:14

<sup>28</sup> Acts 13:48; Romans 8:28-30, 33; 11:5, 7

<sup>29</sup> Ephesians 1:11; Romans 11:7

<sup>30</sup> 1 Peter 1:5; Romans 8:1

<sup>31</sup> Piety is having or expressing *reverence for God*; Luke 12:5; Romans 11:20; 2 Corinthians 5:11; Philippians 2:12-13; 1 Peter 1:17

<sup>32</sup> Luke 23:40; Acts 9:31; 2 Corinthians 7:1; Ephesians 5:21; James 2:24; 1 Peter 1:14-15

<sup>33</sup> Matthew 28:19; Luke 22:17-19; 1 Corinthians 11:23-30; Romans 6:3-4

<sup>34</sup> Ephesians 1:22; 4:15; Colossians 1:18

<sup>35</sup> Matthew 18:15-18; 1 Corinthians 5:1-5, 7, 9-13; 6:4

<sup>36</sup> John 8:1-11; 1 John 1:9

<sup>37</sup> Ephesians 4:32; Colossians 3:13; Matthew 18:21-35

<sup>38</sup> Matthew 6:6; 14:23; 26:36; 1 Corinthians 7:5

<sup>39</sup> John 5:39; Acts 17:11; 1 Timothy 4:13

<sup>40</sup> Nehemiah 8:1-8; Psalm 40:9-10; Matthew 18:20; Acts 2:42; 11:26; Ephesians 2:19-22; 1 Timothy 4:13; Hebrews 10:25

<sup>41</sup> Acts 1:14; 2:42; 12:5; Colossians 4:2

<sup>42</sup> Acts 17:2, 11; Romans 15:4; 1 Timothy 4:13, 16; 5:17; 2 Timothy 3:16

<sup>43</sup> Acts 2:42; Philippians 2:1-2; Hebrews 10:25

<sup>44</sup> Hebrews 10:25; Acts 20:7

<sup>45</sup> Psalm 81:15; John 14:15, 21, 23-24; 15:10, 14; Romans 16:19; 2 Corinthians 10:5-6; 1 Peter 1:22

<sup>46</sup> 1 Corinthians 15:51-52; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 5:9-11; Revelation 4:1

- M. We believe that, following a period of Tribulation,<sup>47</sup> the Lord Jesus Christ shall return to make war with His enemies,<sup>48</sup> separate believers from unbelievers, consign the damned to Torments, and welcome the saved into His one-thousand-year earthly kingdom.<sup>49</sup>
- N. We believe that at the end of the kingdom age, the Lord will judge the reprobate living and dead before His great white throne and commit them to the eternal Lake of Fire,<sup>50</sup> while the saved of all the ages shall live with God in His eternal kingdom in a blessed state.<sup>51</sup>

#### **ARTICLE V – GOVERNMENT.**

- A. This Church shall be managed by a Board of Elders and Deacons [or, ‘the Board’], which shall have full authority and control over the affairs of the Church (Hebrews 13:17), excluding the Overseeing Pastor’s sole authority in doctrinal matters (Ephesians 4:11; 2 Timothy 4:2-5), in accordance with these By-laws and the Church’s Confession of Faith, and those matters upon which the Membership of the Church votes.
- B. The Board of Elders and Deacons shall consist of not less than ten (10) nor more than twenty (20) members. ‘Elders’ are defined as Pastors holding active ordination with the Church, or with a church of like faith (1 Corinthians 1:12-13) as approved by the Board of Elders of the Church. ‘Deacons’ are defined as those men nominated, elected and installed as Deacons in accordance with the procedures set forth in these By-laws.
- C. In exercising authority over and managing the Church, the functions of the Board of Elders and Deacons shall be to establish policy and directives, to determine budget limitations, to review all fiscal policies and financial matters, to approve contractual obligations, to review and approve the activities, projects, and programs of the Church, and generally to provide leadership and guidance in keeping with the purposes, goals, and objectives as set forth herein (1 Tim 3:4-5).
- D. The Board of Elders and Deacons shall consist of all sitting Elders and Deacons, as well as the following Officers: Senior Pastor, Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer. An ordained minister shall fill the offices of Chairman and Vice-Chairman.
- E. The Board of Elders and Deacons may, by a majority vote of the Board of Elders and a majority vote of the Deacons appoint a non-elder or non-deacon to serve as a voting member of the Board of Elders and Deacons for a one-year period for any reason it deems profitable to the Church (Acts 15:2, 22). Such appointees will hold the title of ‘Director.’ The vote of any Director shall be counted as the vote of a Deacon.
- F. An ordained Elder of Harvest Community Church *is not* a member of the governing Board of Elders of Harvest Community Church simply by virtue of their office as Elder. Members of the “Board of Elders” shall consist only of ordained Elders who have been (1) nominated by a current member of the Board of Elders and (2) approved by a 2/3 vote of the entire Board of Elders. Duly ordained Elders who are not members of the governing Board of Elders shall have no administrative authority at Harvest Community Church except that which may from time to time be granted them by the Board of Elders.
- G. All duly nominated, elected and installed Deacons of Harvest Community Church are, by virtue of their office, members of the Board of Deacons for the duration of their term as deacon.

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<sup>47</sup> Jeremiah 30:7; Daniel 9:26-27; Matthew 24:24, 29; Mark 13:19; Revelation 7:17

<sup>48</sup> Zechariah 14:3-7; Matthew 24:29-30; Acts 1:11; Revelation 19:11-16

<sup>49</sup> Ezekiel 20:33-38; Matthew 13:37-43; 16:27; 24:31; 25:31-46

<sup>50</sup> Revelation 20:11-15

<sup>51</sup> Revelation 21:1-22:8

## **ARTICLE VI - BOARD OF ELDERS AND DEACONS.**

### **A. Qualifications for Membership on the Board of Elders and Deacons.**

1. Members of the Board of Elders and Deacons shall show evidence of being dedicated, born-again Christians (John 3:3) with a deep sense of spirituality (1 Corinthians 2:14-15, 3:1-3; 1 Timothy 4:8) and an active love (1 John 4:19-21) for the service of Jesus Christ and the saints (Luke 9:23-24, 14:27).
2. Members of the Board of Elders and Deacons shall be at least twenty-five (25) years of age upon commencing office (Luke 3:23; 1 Timothy 3:6), and shall be of sound mind (2 Timothy 1:7) and body (1 Timothy 4:8) and able to serve in the capacity as herein defined (1 Thessalonians 5:23).
3. Members of the Board of Elders and Deacons shall:
  - a) Be in full accord and agreement with the purposes, goals, and objectives of this Church as stated herein and in the Church's constitution (John 17:21).
  - b) Show active interest in its operations (Matthew 16:24).
  - c) Maintain faithful attention to their responsibilities as Members of the Board of Elders and Deacons (Matthew 25:21; Luke 16:10-12).
4. Members of the Board of Elders and Deacons shall freely subscribe to the Church's published Doctrinal Statement, believing without reservation in the infallibility and authority of the Scriptures, the Holy Bible, in their autographs (2 Timothy 3:16-17; 2 Peter 1:20-21).

### **B. Appointment of Additional Members to the Board of Elders and Deacons (Directors).**

1. Directors may be nominated for appointment to the Board of Elders and Deacons by any existing member of the Board of Elders and Deacons at any scheduled meeting.
2. If the nomination is approved by a majority vote of the Board of Elders and a majority vote of the Deacons, the Members of the Church shall then be given at least two weeks to communicate any reservations about the appointment of the candidate, unless the nominee had held the position during the previous year.
3. Any Director(s) so nominated shall assume office upon election and installation. They shall serve for a one-year period.

### **C. Duration, Removal and/or Resignation of Elders, Deacons or Directors.**

1. The offices of Chairman and Vice-Chairman shall be held by ordained ministers. These offices shall be filled by a majority vote of the Board of Elders and a majority vote of the Deacons which make up the sitting Board of Elders and Deacons. Both the office of Chairman and Vice-Chairman shall be subject to annual renewal.
2. Members to the Board of Elders are to serve in perpetuity until they resign, retire, or are removed.
3. Deacons serve for the duration of the two-year term to which they were elected and installed by the Members of the Church.
4. Directors serve for a period of one year.
5. The offices of Treasurer and Secretary shall be subject to annual renewal. They are elected by a majority vote of the Board of Elders and a majority vote of the Deacons. Reelection shall be by a majority vote of the Board of Elders and a majority vote of the Deacons, which make up the sitting Board of Elders and Deacons. The offices of Treasurer and Secretary may be filled by qualified members of the congregation who are neither Elders or Deacons. These offices may be held by males or females. The Treasurer and Secretary - if they are not Elders or Deacons - shall be non-voting members of the

- Board.
6. Deacons or Directors may be removed from office by a two-thirds vote of the Board of Elders and a two-thirds vote of the Deacons (with the exception of the accused) for any of the following reasons:
    - a) Failure to perform the responsibilities of their office as herein defined; and/or
    - b) Failure to embrace and maintain agreement with the Doctrinal Statement adopted and approved by the Members of the Board of Elders and Deacons.
    - c) Failure to support and/or agree with the approved purposes, goals, and objectives of the Church, or the directives and policies established by the Members of the Board of Elders and Deacons.
    - d) Sexual impurity (Ephesians 5:3).
    - e) Engaging in behavior that would, in the judgment of the Senior Pastor and the Board of Elders of the Church, bring disgrace to the Lord Jesus Christ or would in any way injure the testimony of the Church, universal or local (1 Corinthians 5:1, 12-13).
  7. In addition to the above, the Senior Pastor or any Elder may be (1) removed from the Board of Elders and/or (2) removed from his office as Elder and/or (3) stripped of his ordination by a two-thirds vote of the Board of Elders (with the exception of the accused) for any of the following reasons:
    - a) Violation of any of the required characteristics of an Elder as listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.
    - b) Conduct which would be considered by the members (or remaining members) of the Board of Elders to be inappropriate or unbecoming an Elder or a representative of the Gospel of Jesus Christ or of Harvest Community Church, according to the principles found in the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Galatians 5:16-21; 1 Peter 4:15).
    - c) Departure from the published Doctrinal Statement of the Church (1 Timothy 1:18-20, 6:3-5).
    - d) Adhering to and/or promoting apostate or unbiblical doctrines as interpreted by the members (or remaining members) of the Board of Elders (1 Timothy 6:20-21; 1 Peter 2:1-2; 2 John 8-11).
    - e) Inability or unwillingness to perform the duties and responsibilities of an Elder due to illness, absence, or other action which may impair an Elder's capacity to serve (1 Timothy 4:15-16; 2 Timothy 3:14, 4:5).
    - f) Demonstrated or announced departure from the purposes, goals and objectives of the Church as adopted by the Members of the Board of Elders and Deacons (2 Timothy 4:9-10, 14-15).
    - g) Leaving the Church to serve elsewhere.
  8. Any accusation against an Elder must be substantiated by at least two credible witnesses: "Do not receive an accusation against an Elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses." (1 Timothy 5:19) The credibility of a witness will be determined by the Board of Elders of the Church, excepting, if applicable, the Elder who is the subject of the accusation.
  9. All members of the Board of Elders, including, if applicable, the Elder(s) in question, shall be notified at least ten (10) days prior to the action of removal being considered. The accused Elder shall be provided an opportunity to appear before the remaining members of the Board of Elders and present a defense regarding the cause for such action

(John 7:50-51; Acts 25:2-5, 8-11). The decision of the Board of Elders of the Church on any action of removal shall be by a two-thirds vote. All decisions shall be final, not subject to further appeal (1 Corinthians 5:12-13). Only the accused, the members of the Board of Elders and a recording secretary approved by the Board of Elders may be present at the hearing(s) where such removal is considered.

10. Any Member of the Board of Elders and Deacons may resign his office at any time by submitting a letter of resignation to the Board of Elders and Deacons.
11. In the event that a deacon is removed or is otherwise unable to fulfill the duties of his office, he may be replaced by the unanimous vote of the elders and a 2/3 affirmative vote of the remaining deacons. A period of at least twelve days shall be allowed during which Church Members may express any reservations regarding a Deacon candidate to any of the Elders. If there are no disqualifying objections, the new Deacon shall be installed by the laying on of hands of the Elders (Acts 6:6). Upon installation, he will serve out the remaining term of the deacon whom he is replacing.

#### D. Meetings of the Board of Elders and Deacons.

1. Regularly scheduled meetings of the Board of Elders and Deacons shall be held at least four times per year, at a time and place to be determined in advance. The Annual Meeting shall be held in January. Additional regular meetings may be scheduled by the Board of Elders and Deacons at such times and places as may be convenient.
2. Special meetings of the Board of Elders and Deacons may be called by the Chairman or the Vice Chairman, or at the request of at least three (3) Members of the Board of Elders and Deacons setting forth the objectives of the meeting and providing for at least five (5) days advance notice. Only items of business set forth in the notice of special meeting may be transacted at such a meeting.
3. One-half of the Board of Elders shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business unless otherwise provided for in these By-laws. One-half of the Board of Deacons shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business unless otherwise provided for in these By-laws. In order for a resolution to carry, those in favor must represent a minimum of 50% of the full Board of Deacons and 50% of the full Board of Elders. In meetings where the purchase of property, changes to the by-laws, approval of the annual church budget or hiring of staff will be voted upon, two-thirds of the Board of Deacons and two-thirds of the Board of Elders shall constitute a quorum. In meetings where the purchase of property or approval of the annual church budget will be voted upon, all Directors must be notified and shall be counted as a part of the Board of Deacons. In any case, in order for a resolution to carry, those in favor must represent a minimum of 50% of the full Board of Deacons and 50% of the full Board of Elders.
4. Resolutions shall be passed by a majority vote of the Board of Elders and a majority vote of the Deacons, except in those matters that require a different margin of approval as defined by these By-laws.
5. All meetings of the Members of the Board of Elders and Deacons shall begin and close in prayer.

### **ARTICLE VII - OFFICERS.**

#### A. Senior Pastor.

The Church finds its headship in the Lord Jesus Christ (Ephesians 5:23; Colossians 1:18), and in its Senior Pastor as His under-shepherd (Acts 20:17). The Senior Pastor is a voting

member of the Board of Elders and Deacons and represents the Church. He shall be a continuing member of the Board of Elders and Deacons. He shall have the responsibility of communicating and directing the spiritual vision of the Church and its ministries. He shall have sole authority in matters of doctrine. No person shall be invited to speak, teach or minister in the Church without his approval.

B. Chairman.

The Chairman shall preside at all meetings of the Board of Elders and Deacons and see to it that all orders and resolutions of the board are carried into effect, subject, however, to his ability to delegate any specific powers, other than those that may be conferred only upon the Senior Pastor. In order to serve as Chairman he must be (1) an ordained Elder and (2) a duly nominated and approved member of the Board of Elders. He shall be responsible for the general supervision of the other Members of the Board of Elders and Deacons. He shall be responsible to advise the Board of Elders and Deacons so that harmony is maintained between the practical/financial responsibilities of the Church and the spiritual/ministerial vision of the Church. In this way, the Chairman shall endeavor to see that a unity of purpose is maintained between the spiritual and pragmatic aspects of the Church's work in order that all things are done in a decent and orderly manner. He shall have the responsibility of directing the general management of the Church. He shall execute in the name of the Church all deeds, bonds, mortgages, contracts and other documents authorized by the Board of Elders and Deacons and, if necessary in accordance with these by-laws, the Members of the Church. He shall be an ex-officio member of all standing committees and shall have the general powers and duties of supervision and management usually vested in the office of chairman of a corporation. He shall be designated attorney-in-fact for the Church by virtue of his office.

C. Vice Chairman.

The Vice Chairman shall perform the duties and exercise the powers of the Chairman in case of his temporary absence from the office of the Church (1 Corinthians 14:33, 40), and shall perform such other duties as may from time to time be granted or imposed by the Board of Elders and Deacons. In order to serve as Chairman he must be (1) an ordained Elder and (2) a duly nominated and approved member of the Board of Elders.

D. Secretary.

The Secretary shall attend all sessions of the Board of Elders and Deacons and act as clerk thereof and record all votes and minutes of the proceedings in a book to be kept for that purpose. He/she shall give, or cause to be given, proper notice of all meetings of the Board of Elders and Deacons; and in general perform the duties usually incident to the office of Secretary, and such further duties as shall from time to time be prescribed by the Board of Elders and Deacons or the Overseeing Pastor. It will be his/her responsibility to continually remind the Board of Elders and Deacons as to the provisions and procedures of these by-laws in order that proper procedure is followed. The Church's Secretary (who may or may not be the Secretary to the Board of Elders and Deacons)<sup>52</sup> shall be responsible to keep the membership roll and the official records of the Church, as well as the Church Seal. The Secretary - if he or she is not a sitting Elder or Deacon - shall be a non-voting member of the Board.

E. Treasurer.

The Treasurer shall be the Chief Financial Officer of this Church and of the Corporation. He/she

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<sup>52</sup> These positions are the same in the board's current make up.

shall see that full and accurate accounts are maintained of all financial affairs of this Church and shall report regularly to the Board of Elders and Deacons on the financial condition of this Church. The Treasurer shall ascertain that all funds are disbursed appropriately and within the confines of the budgetary limitations established by the Board of Elders and Deacons, and shall report any adjustment recommendations that may be necessary or desirable, as well as any errors or deviations from budget appropriations. The Treasurer shall be responsible to make a full and accurate accounting of the churches finances to any Church Member that so requests (John 3:19-21; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8:18-21). The Treasurer - if he or she is not a sitting Elder or Deacon - shall be a non-voting member of the Board.

F. Delegating Powers to Other Officers.

In the event that any officer of the Church is not available or otherwise fails to perform his or her duties, or for any other reason that may seem sufficient, the Board of Elders and Deacons may delegate his or her duties and powers for the time being to any other officer or to any Member of the Board of Elders and Deacons (Acts 15:22).

### **ARTICLE VIII - MINISTRIES.**

- A. There may be such ministries as the Board of Elders and Deacons, from time to time, establish for the discharge of particular duties, and said ministries shall have only such authority and powers as the Board of Elders and Deacons may specifically assign.
- B. The head of all ministries, except as otherwise herein provided, shall be appointed by the Senior Pastor. They must be members of the Church. The Senior Pastor shall also serve as ex-officio member of any and all ministries. Ministry members may exercise only those powers and that authority specifically allocated by the Senior Pastor. All ministry heads are responsible for providing reports requested by the Board of Elders and Deacons.
- C. All ministry heads and workers shall be in agreement with the Confession of Faith and shall not defend, teach or promote any doctrine or opinion contrary to the Confession of Faith.
- D. The Senior Pastor may, at any time, discontinue any ministry or remove any ministry head for such time as he may determine.
- E. Specific ministries:
  1. Finance Ministry (1 Corinthians 16:1-4, *for the principle of financial management*). The Board of Elders and Deacons shall initially fulfill the function of a Finance Ministry. The Finance Ministry shall annually review the operating and capital budgets of the Church, propose a budget for the upcoming year, regularly inspect the books of the Church to insure that all taxes and financial obligations are met in a timely and orderly manner, and shall appoint a capable and independent auditing firm to review the Church's accounts at least once every two years.
  2. Ordination Ministry (Titus 1:5-9). The Ordination Ministry shall be made up of the Church's Board of Elders and any other ordained minister serving with a Church of like faith approved by the Senior Pastor. Service on the Ordination Ministry is subject to the sole decision of the Senior Pastor. The Ordination Ministry shall be responsible for the development and maintenance of an ordination program for the Church and develop policies and procedures for ordinations. No man shall be ordained as a Minister of the Gospel without the approval of the Senior Pastor.
  3. Planning and Development Ministry (2 Timothy 4:5). The Board of Elders and Deacons shall initially fulfill the function of a Planning and Development Ministry, which shall review and develop plans for the Church's projects, programs and activities, as well as

develop and maintain a long-range plan for the growth and development of the Church.

#### **ARTICLE IX - ELDERS.**

- A. The Elders of the Church are ordained Pastors who shall assist the Senior Pastor in promoting the spiritual welfare of the Church (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11; Hebrews 13:7, 17). The Board of Elders, which may or may not include all of the Church's ordained Elders, shall advise, assist, and consult with the Senior Pastor, and shall review and oversee all activities and programs of the Church, under the supervision of the Senior Pastor, to insure that such activities and programs are conducted to the glory of the Lord, in harmony with the Scriptures, and are directed by the Holy Spirit.
- B. An Elder shall serve in perpetuity unless removed by a two-thirds vote of the Board of Elders, in accordance with Article VI, Section C.7 above.
- C. A person shall be eligible for appointment to the office of Elder if he is at least twenty-nine (29) years of age, is male, has demonstrated maturity (1 Timothy 4:15) in his Christian walk, and is a confessed (Romans 10:8-10), dedicated (Titus 3:8, 14), born-again Christian (John 3:3) evidencing deep spirituality (1 Corinthians 2:10-15) and active love for the work of Christ and for the brethren (3 John 8). They shall accept the Bible as the infallible Word of God, inspired by God through man and hold to a literal historical-grammatical system of hermeneutics.
- F. All Elders shall be in full agreement with the Church's published Doctrinal Statement and shall not defend, teach or promote any doctrine or opinion contrary it.

#### **ARTICLE X - DEACONS.**

- A. The Deacons shall consist of competent, mature persons who are born-again Christians walking in the Spirit and in God's Love. They shall accept the Bible as the infallible Word of God, inspired by God through man and hold to a literal historical-grammatical system of hermeneutics.
- B. All Deacons shall be in agreement with the Church's published Doctrinal Statement and shall not defend, teach or promote any doctrine or opinion contrary to it.
- C. The Deacons shall be elected by the Members of the Church with the approval of the Board of Elders and shall serve for a period of two years according to the following procedure:
  - 1. The Members shall nominate men from among themselves for consideration as Deacon candidates (Acts 6:2-6). Nominations shall be made in writing to the Secretary of the Church. Ballots will be available on the first Sunday in February of each election year.
  - 2. The Church Secretary must receive all ballots by the second Sunday in February of the election year.
  - 3. The votes shall be counted by the Church's Secretary and the results made known to the Board of Elders.
  - 4. The Board of Elders shall review the nominees to insure that they meet the qualifications of 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
  - 5. Each nominee shall be interviewed by an Elder of the Church.
  - 6. All interested and qualified nominees will attend a three-part orientation on the duties and responsibilities of a Deacon led by an Elder of the Church.
  - 7. Upon completion of the orientation, the nominees who have received the most votes shall be placed before the congregation. A period of at least twelve days shall be allowed during which Church Members may express any reservations regarding a Deacon

- candidate to any of the Elders.
8. If there are no disqualifying objections, the new Deacons shall be installed to the office of Deacon by the laying on of hands of the Elders on the first Sunday in April of the election year (Acts 6:6).
  9. New Deacons shall serve for a period of two years unless they resign or are removed.
- D. The Church shall elect as many Deacons as the Board of Elders, with the counsel of the current Head of Deacons, determines necessary to properly meet the Church's needs.
  - E. To qualify for the office of Deacon, the candidate must be or become a member of the Church prior to installation. He must be twenty five 25 years of age, meet the qualifications for a Deacon set forth in 1 Timothy 3:8-13, be *willing and able* to fulfill the duties of a Deacon as defined by the Elders, and be male.
  - F. Each year, the Senior Pastor of the Church shall appoint a Head of Deacons either from among the Elders or from among those Deacons elected by the Church Members. He shall coordinate the activities of the Deacons and the needs to be handled by them in accordance with Church policy. He shall likewise conduct regular formal or informal meetings of the Deacons for the purpose of fellowship, information, leadership and direction in the dissemination of the duties and responsibilities involved in the care of the worshippers in the Church.
  - G. Deacons shall serve under the Head of Deacons and shall (1) be available to lead at least one spiritual ministry of the Church as appointed by the Board of Elders, (2) serve as a voting Member of the Board of Elders and Deacons, and (3) attend to the physical operation of the Church as directed by the Board of Elders and Deacons.

#### **ARTICLE XI - STAFF MEMBERS.**

- A. All staff members must be Members of the Church, with the exception of those who may be under contractual agreement. They shall function within the confines of their job descriptions as approved by the Board of Elders and Deacons, and shall, at all times, exhibit a Christ-like attitude in all matters (Ephesians 5:3-4) pertaining to their position.
- B. Staff positions may include, but need not be limited to, the following: Administrator, Comptroller, Missions Director, Outreach Director, Minister of Youth, Minister of Music, Business Manager, Audio/Visual Director, Broadcast Director, Maintenance Personnel or such other departments or positions as the Senior Pastor may, from time to time, establish in order to pursue the purposes, goals, and objectives of this Church. Staff positions are subject to all qualifications, rules, regulations, and procedures established by the Senior Pastor in accordance with these By-laws, whether the staff positions in question involve paid or non-paid personnel.

#### **ARTICLE XII - CHURCH MEMBERSHIP/THE CHURCH ROLL.**

- A. Harvest Community Church shall be open to all persons wishing to participate in its worship services, Bible studies, evangelistic outreach and other programs (Isaiah 55:3; John 1:46; 1 Corinthians 14:24-25). Those who voluntarily desire to be included on the Church's roll may apply for membership.
- B. The Process of Becoming a Member of the Church. Any person interested in becoming a Member of the Church may apply by written request to the secretary of the Church on a form approved by the Board of Elders and Deacons. The Membership Committee, made up of the Church's Board of Elders, shall approve or disapprove all applications for membership within thirty (30) days of receipt of the application. The authority to approve or disapprove

membership lies solely with the Membership Committee, which may request to meet with the applicant. The Membership Committee reserves the right to deny any application for membership into the Church.

- C. Requirements for Membership. In order to be eligible for membership in the Church, the applicant must:
1. Have been attending Harvest Community Church for six months or more (Hebrews 10:25);
  2. Have experienced a new spiritual birth by putting faith in the Person and Work of our Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:3-8; 2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 2:20; Ephesians 2:8-9);
  3. Have read and be in satisfactory agreement with the Church's Confession of Faith and By-laws (Hebrews 13:7, 17);
  4. Be maintaining a consistent Christian testimony (Romans 12:1-2, Hebrews 12:14, 1 Peter 1:14-16); and
  5. Apply to the secretary of the Church on a form approved by the Board of Elders and Deacons.
- D. Reason for Requirements for Membership. We believe that the above requirements are in keeping with all things being done in a manner which is pleasing to the Lord:
1. Having attended Harvest Community Church for six months or more insures that the applicant and the Church have had sufficient time to become properly acquainted;
  2. The new birth makes the believer a part of the universal body of Christ (1 Corinthians 12:13);
  3. Being in agreement with the Church's Confession of Faith insures that this particular local assembly's doctrinal position is compatible with the applicant's understanding of the Scriptures (1 John 4:1). Being in agreement with the Church's By-laws insures that the applicant is satisfied that the Church is being governed "properly and in an orderly manner" (1 Corinthians 14:40); and
  4. Maintaining a consistent Christian testimony insures "that the name of God and *his* doctrine be not blasphemed" by the unbelieving world (1 Timothy 6:1b; Titus 2:5b, *King James Version*).
- E. Responsibility of Membership. Membership identifies a believer as being one with the vision and teaching of the Church (John 17:11; Ephesians 4:3; 1 Peter 3:8). Each member of the Church is not only an ambassador of the Lord Jesus Christ, but also represents Harvest Community Church. Each Member therefore has the great responsibility of representing the Lord and this local assembly in a way that is pleasing and acceptable to God. All ministry leaders and staff members must be Members of the Church.
- F. Benefits of Membership. The benefits of Membership are:
1. The right to speak freely to any Member of the Board of Elders and Deacons about any concern or question and be assured that it will be addressed (1 Corinthians 6:1). If possible, the Board Member will resolve the matter immediately (Philippians 4:2-3, *in principle*). If the matter cannot be resolved, it will be brought up for discussion at the next meeting of the Board of Elders and Deacons (Galatians 2:1-2, *in principle*). Members may, if they so desire, be present when their concern is addressed by the leadership. In this way, the leadership shall remain both accessible and accountable to the Church's Members (1 Thessalonians 2:10; Hebrews 4:13, 13:17).
  2. The right to vote for the Church's Deacons (Acts 6:1-4).
  3. The right to voice reservations about the appointment of a new Deacon or Director to the Board of Elders and Deacons.

4. The right to vote on any purchase of property by the Church.
  5. The right to vote on any purchase that exceeds \$10,000.
  6. The right to vote on the approval of the annual budget.
  7. The right to all services of the Church (counseling, marriage and funeral services, etc.). Membership is not required of those seeking marriage within the Church. Any couple wishing to be married by Harvest Community Church must first complete the Church's pre-marital counseling program to the satisfaction of the assigned Elder. The couple must regularly attend services at Harvest for six months prior to beginning pre-marital counseling.
  8. The right to a full and accurate accounting of the churches finances by the Church's Treasurer (John 3:19-21; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8:18-21).
- G. Responsibilities of the Church to its Members. The Elders and Deacons of the Church shall be responsible to:
1. Preserve and communicate accurately the whole counsel of God (Isaiah 28:10; 2 Timothy 1:14, 2:2).
  2. Defend the tenets of the Orthodox Christian faith as defined in the Doctrinal Statement (Philippians 1:16; 1 Peter 3:15).
  3. Govern the Church with integrity and in accordance with the Scriptures and the Church's By-laws and Constitution (Acts 24:16; 1 Corinthians 14:40).
  4. Provide and maintain an environment conducive to worship and study of God's Word (John 2:16-17; 1 Corinthians 14:32-33, 40).
  5. Provide an environment that encourages the family structure (Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 7:10-13; Ephesians 5:25-6:4; 1 Timothy 5:4, 8).
  6. Provide an up-front and transparent accountability of the Church's finances (Luke 16:10-12).
  7. Model the character of our Lord Jesus Christ and honorably and diligently fulfill its responsibilities as Officers of the Church (Mark 10:42-45; Romans 12:8; Phil. 2:5-9).
  8. Provide confidentiality in its counseling of Church members (Proverbs 10:19; James 1:19).
  9. Provide the Church's services (counseling, marriage, and funerals) in a way that is pleasing to the Lord (Colossians 3:23-24).
  10. Maintain a positive Christian testimony both within and without the Church (1 Thessalonians 4:11; 1 Timothy 3:2, 7; 1 Peter 3:16).
- H. Terminating a Member. The Board of Elders, by a majority affirmative vote, may suspend or expel a member of the congregation for cause after a hearing deemed appropriate by the Board of Elders is called.
- I. Member's Code of Discipline.
1. Cooperative Action. The Members of the congregation of the Church shall give consent to its form of government (Hebrews 13:17) and to its policy of fundamental unity (Ephesians 4:3-6) and agreement, alike in doctrine (1 Corinthians 1:10), conduct and action (Ephesians 5:3), and shall conform to the Scriptural injunctions that there be no division in the body (1 Corinthians 1:13). They shall be subject to the Word of God, the Board of Elders of the Church, and the Board of Elders and Deacons concerning matters of Christian fellowship (1 Corinthians 12:27-28; Ephesians 5:11-13).
  2. Attitude Toward Strife. Inasmuch as no Christian institution can comply with the plain teaching of Scripture unless unity and harmony predominate within its circle, no member of the congregation may use any means to incite or engender strife (Proverbs 6:16, 19; 2

Thessalonians 3:11; 1 Timothy 5:13), but shall work in harmony with the other members of the congregation (Psalm 133:1, 3; Ephesians 4:3) and the Church's leadership (Acts 2:42). If there is cause for dissatisfaction, it shall be called to the attention of the Overseeing Pastor or any Member of the Board of Elders (Acts 6:1; 1 Corinthians 1:11, 5:1). At their discretion, necessary adjustments shall be made (Acts 6:1-7; Matthew 18:15-18).

3. Discipline. The responsibility of administering discipline in the Church is that of the Senior Pastor and Board of Elders (1 Corinthians 5:12). The following are grounds for exercising discipline; suspension, or expulsion from membership.
  - a) Any member of the congregation who shall without reasonable cause willfully absent himself from the regular services (Hebrews 10:25) for a period of six (6) consecutive months shall be temporarily removed from active membership in the congregation and placed on the inactive list. The Board of Elders may inquire, under appropriate circumstances, whether the temporarily removed member is desirous of continuing membership in the congregation, and committing to the responsibilities of Church membership.
  - b) Unscriptural conduct. Failure to maintain membership requirements or doctrinal departure from the Confession of Faith shall be considered sufficient grounds for rescinding membership. Such discipline shall be prayerfully administered by Board of Elders according to Scripture (Matthew 18:15-17; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:9-13; 2 Thessalonians 3:6).
  - c) The Board of Elders shall be empowered to place on the inactive list those who have disqualified themselves for membership as provided for in these By-laws. The Board of Elders shall also have the authority to restore to active membership those who in the opinion of the Board of Elders are not at fault and those who, although at fault; have through repentance requalified for membership in the Church (2 Corinthians 2:6-7).
  - d) The Board of Elders shall recognize its duty to interview and encourage a proper attitude on the part of those who have been placed on the inactive list (Romans 13:8, 10; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, 13). It shall proceed carefully to press for final decision in each case. The decision of the Board of Elders shall be final and is not subject to appeal by the affected member.
- J. Neither the Church, nor the Board of Elders and Deacons, nor the Heads of any Board or Ministry created herein shall be accountable or responsible for any actions of any persons, individually or congregate (Romans 14:2, 4; 2 Corinthians 5:10), who may, of their own volition (1 Corinthians 4:5), choose to participate, worship, affiliate, or associate with the activities of this Church in the principle of fellowship, except for the specific powers and authority which may herein be granted to officers, directors, boards, ministries, staff members, or other specific authority.
- K. This Church shall not be held accountable for the actions or representations of any person participating, worshipping, affiliating or associating with this Church at any time (Romans 14:12; 1 Corinthians 3:10, 13-15), except as may be specifically provided and authorized by the Board of Elders and Deacons.
- L. This Church believes that Christians are prohibited from bringing lawsuits against other Christians or against the Church to resolve *personal disputes*, and that such lawsuits are unbiblical. It is the position of the Church, however, that a Christian may seek compensation

from another Christian's insurance company for injuries which result in clear physical and/or material disadvantage, as long as the claim is pursued without malice or slander. (1 Corinthians 6:1-8; Ephesians 4:31-32). Every believer is, however, to be subject to the secular laws and authorities, as long as in doing so they do not break conscience with God or violate the Scriptures.

- M. This Church functions, not as a pure democracy, but as a body under the Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 1:18), the spiritual headship of its Senior Pastor and the Board of Elders, and the administrative leadership of its Board of Elders and Deacons. Membership in this Church does not afford an individual with any property, contract, or civil rights based on principles of democratic government (Acts 5:4), with the exception of any such rights given herein. Decisions regarding the internal affairs of this Church are ecclesiastical matters and shall be determined exclusively by the Holy Bible, and the Church's own By-laws, Constitution, Confession of Faith, and procedures (1 Corinthians 5:12).
- N. Voting of Members. The Board of Elders and Deacons shall bring proposals on those matters on which the Church's Members may vote as defined in Article XII, section F above before the Members at a scheduled meeting of Members. Each Member in good standing shall either vote by hand count or shall be given one ballot and shall vote. Active Deacons within the Church shall count the ballots. The proposal shall be approved by a majority vote in favor.

#### **ARTICLE XIII - DISCIPLINE OF A MEMBER.**

- A. There shall be a Discipline Ministry consisting of the Senior Pastor and the Board of Elders of the Church. These men shall have sole authority in determining heretical deviations from the Church's Confession of Faith or behavior that is inappropriate for a Member of the Church (Romans 16:17; Ephesians 5:7). If the Senior Pastor or an Elder is the subject of a disciplinary matter, he shall not sit as a member of the Discipline Ministry. He shall be entitled, however, to the same rights as other Church members and shall be subject to the same discipline.
- B. Members are expected to operate in accordance with the principle of Christian love (John 13:34-35) and genuine concern for other believers (Philippians 2:3). When a member becomes aware of an offense of such magnitude that it hinders spiritual growth and testimony, he is to go alone to the offending party and seek to restore his brother (Matthew 18:15). Before he goes, he should first examine himself (2 Corinthians 10:12). He should go in a spirit of humility (Romans 14:10; Philippians 2:5) and have the goal of restoration (Galatians 6:1-5).
- C. If reconciliation is not reached, the one seeking to resolve the matter shall take one or two others with him/her so that the truth of the matter may be established with witnesses (Matthew 18:16). This second step should also be preceded by careful self-examination (2 Corinthians 13:5) and exercised in a spirit of humility with the goal of restoration (Galatians 6:2).
- D. If the matter is still unresolved - after the steps outlined in subsections B and C above have been taken - the Discipline Ministry, as the Church's representatives biblically responsible for putting down murmuring (1 Corinthians 10:10; Philippians 2:14) and strife (1 Timothy 6:4; James 4:1), shall hear the matter (Matthew 18:17).
- E. If the matter is still unresolved - after the steps outlined in subsections B, C and D above have been taken - such members who refuse to repent and be restored are to be removed from the membership of the Church upon a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Board of Elders at a meeting called for the purpose of considering disciplinary action (Romans 16:17). In its most extreme case, the Member's error shall be made public when the church body is assembled together in accordance with 1 Corinthians 5:2-5, 12-13.

- F. No matter may be heard by the Board of Elders unless the steps outlined in subsections B and C above have been taken, except in the case of a public offense, as defined by the Elders.

#### **ARTICLE XIV- INDEMNIFICATION.**

Each member of the Board of Elders and Deacons, and each Officer or staff person shall be indemnified by the Church against all expenses actual and necessary incurred by such person in connection with the defense of any action, suit, or proceeding to which he or she has been made a party by reason of his being or having held such position, except in relation to matters as to which such person shall have been adjudicated in such action, suit, or proceeding to have been guilty of gross negligence or willful misconduct in the performance of duty.

#### **ARTICLE XV - AMENDMENTS.**

These By-laws may be amended or changed at any meeting of the Board of Elders and Deacons by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Board of Elders and a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the Deacons. Written notice of any such proposed change must be hand-delivered or mailed, certified mail, to each Member of the Board of Elders and Deacons not less than fifteen (15) days prior to the scheduled meeting at which such action is to be taken. The standing Board of Elders and Deacons reserves the right to interpret these By-laws.

#### **ARTICLE XVI - MISCELLANEOUS PROVISIONS.**

A. Execution of Papers.

All deeds, leases, transfers, contracts, bonds, notes, releases, checks, drafts and other obligations authorized to be executed on behalf of this Church shall be signed by the Chairman and the Treasurer except as the Board of Elders and Deacons may generally or in particular cases otherwise determine.

B. Corporate Seal.

The seal of this Church shall be a circular die with the name of the Corporation, the words "Rhode Island", and the year of its incorporation cut or engraved thereon, or shall be in such other form as the Board of Elders and Deacons may from time to time determine.

C. Corporate Records.

The original or attested copies of the Articles of Incorporation, By-laws, Official Records, and minutes of all meetings of the Board of Elders and Deacons, shall be kept in Rhode Island at the principal place of the Church, or at an office of its legal representative, or of its Secretary, or of its resident agent. Said copies and records need not all be kept in the same office. They shall be available at all reasonable times for inspection by any member of the Church.

D. Evidence of Authority.

A certificate by the Secretary or an Assistant, or Temporary Secretary, as to any matter relative to the Articles of Incorporation, By-laws, Official Records, records of the proceedings of the incorporators, Board of Elders and Deacons, or as to any action taken by any person or persons as an officer or agent of the Church, shall as to all persons who rely thereon in good faith be conclusive evidence of the matters so certified.