

Church Discipline and Restoration Policy

Bonavista Baptist Church Fellowship

February 21, 2010

This policy must be approved by BBCF membership.

Approved by BBCF Members: <date>

This document describes the church dispute resolution and discipline and restoration policy of Bonavista Baptist Church Fellowship (the "Church").

The purpose of this Policy is to define the current practice of the Church regarding

- The resolution of disputes among Church members, and
- The discipline and restoration of Church members.

The intent of this policy is to provide fairness to all parties, and to enable the full restoration of the member into the life of the Church.

In the case of any inconsistency between this Policy and the By-Laws, the By-Laws shall prevail. Similarly, in the case of any inconsistency between this Policy and Board or Staff policies, this Policy shall prevail.

1 Resolution of Disputes Among Members

1.1 Biblical Basis for Resolution of Disputes (The Relational Covenant)

- (a) In obedience to the Biblical requirement that we "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace," members of the Church agree and commit before God to:
- (i) Pursue reconciliation and, when possible, resolution in my conflicts with others, seeking and offering forgiveness. (Matthew 5:23-24; 6:14; Luke 6:37; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Ephesians 4:32)
 - (ii) To talk directly to those with whom we experience conflict rather than talking about them to others – "to talk to people, not about people." This means we will not share with others that which we should say but have not said directly to another person. (Leviticus 19:16; Proverbs 26:20-22; Matthew 18:15-16; James 4:1-2; 2 Corinthians 12:20)
 - (iii) Be edifying in our discussions about others. (Romans 14:19; Romans 15:2; Ephesians 4:29, 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; James 5:9)
 - (iv) Practice forbearance and overlook minor offenses. (Proverbs 17:9; 19:11; Romans 15:7; Ephesians 4:2-3; Colossians 3:13)
 - (v) Hold each other accountable whenever we violate this commitment. This means we will direct others to the person they have spoken about, and we will follow-up until completed. (Proverbs 25:11-12; 27:5-6; Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20)
- (b) Disputes among members should, as much as possible, be resolved in accordance with principles set out in section (a). Without limiting the generality of the passages of Scripture referenced section (a), the following procedure should be adopted as a dispute occurs among members of the Church.

1.2 Procedure for Resolution of Disputes

- (a) A member who believes that he or she has been wronged by another member for whatever reason shall go to that member, explain the wrong which is alleged to have occurred, and attempt to resolve the matter.
- (b) If the member who is alleged to have caused the wrong does not listen to the complaint, or if the matter is not resolved, then the two members shall meet again in the presence of one or two other members of the Church, and attempt to resolve the matter.
- (c) If the member who is alleged to have caused the wrong still does not listen to the complaint, or if the matter is not resolved, then the member who is alleged to have been wronged shall refer the matter to the Senior Pastor, or in his or her absence or conflict of interest, to a member of the Board.

- (d) The Senior Pastor, or in his absence or conflict of interest, a member of the Board, shall then meet with the member who is alleged to have caused the wrong, either on his own or in conjunction with a Christian mediator, in an attempt to resolve the dispute. If this approach fails, the matter shall be referred to the Board pursuant to the procedure for the discipline of members as set out herein.

2 Church Discipline

2.1 Restoration Through Discipline

- (a) Christ's exhortation to watch over one another and to bear one another's burdens in the spirit of meekness and love shall be foremost in the minds of the Elders, who are charged with the responsibility for the discipline of the members. The primary aim of discipline shall be the restoration of the offender to fellowship with God and with the Church. The Church maintains not only the right but the duty to practice such discipline in a Christian manner. In administering discipline, care shall be taken to ensure that the members of the Church maintain a worthy witness of their faith before the world both for the sake of the spiritual life of each member and for the testimony of the Church.

2.2 Circumstances Giving Cause for Discipline

- (a) A member of the Church shall be deemed to be under the discipline of the Church if any of the following circumstances occur:
- (i) A member has evidenced unethical or immoral conduct or behaviour that, in the opinion of the Board, is unbecoming of a Christian, contrary to Biblical principles; or
 - (ii) A member's conduct, in the opinion of the Board, evidences an unwillingness to either comply with, or adhere to or submit to the authority or procedures as set out in the By-Laws or Policies of the Church.
 - (iii) A member has wronged another member and has not resolved such wrong through the mechanism for dispute resolution as set out in Article 1.1 above.

2.3 Procedure for Discipline

- (a) No allegation giving rise to disciplinary action against a member pursuant to the preceding Article shall be considered by the Church unless such allegation is first set out in a signed written statement given to the Board indicating the nature of the allegation and providing an explanation of the basis upon which the allegation is made.
- (b) If the Board determines on a preliminary basis that the written allegation is without merit, then the allegation shall be deemed to be invalid and will proceed with no further disciplinary action against the member.
- (c) If the Board determines on a preliminary basis that the written allegation warrants further investigation, then the allegation shall be referred to the Board for a hearing and the member against whom the allegation is made (the "subject member") shall be deemed to be under the discipline of the Church.
- (d) To ensure that the remedial ministry of the Church discipline to the subject member and to the Church is completed, any request or notice of withdrawal from membership in the Church while the subject member is under discipline proceedings shall not become effective until after the discipline proceedings provided for herein have been finalized.
- (e) The Board shall as soon as possible convene a hearing to further consider the allegation. The subject member shall be given 14 days written notice (which period shall include the date of mailing but shall exclude the date of the hearing noted in Paragraph (c)) by registered and regular mail, at his or her last known address, detailing the date, time and place the hearing will be held as well as his or her right to attend such hearing and be heard. The notice shall briefly explain the nature of the allegation and advise the subject member that the allegation will be considered by the Board at that hearing.
- (f) The subject member may, at his/her own choosing, elect to be represented by or with legal counsel.
- (i) If such an election is chosen, the Board shall meet to hire legal counsel for the Church in this matter.
 - (ii) The Board shall then issue a notice to the member and his or her counsel that the Board

- has taken this step; and
- (iii) The Board shall give notice to the member and his or her counsel to the effect that the meeting outlined in (e) above shall be postponed until proper consultations with legal counsel have occurred.
 - (g) The subject member shall be entitled to attend before the hearing to listen to the details of the allegation made and to respond thereto. The hearing shall be conducted as an inquiry by the Board and the chairman of the Board shall act as the chairman of the hearing. The hearing shall not be open to the public nor to members nor adherents of the Church. However, the subject member shall be entitled to be accompanied at the hearing by two members of the Church, who may speak on the subject member's behalf.
 - (h) Both the subject member and the Board may call any witnesses or evidence that is relevant to the allegation being made.
 - (i) There shall be an equal allocation of time for presentations by both the Board and the subject member. The Board may designate a time limitation on the hearing, provided that that such time limitation is provided equally to both the Board and subject member and provided further that notice of such time limitation is given to the subject member in writing in the original notice given under Paragraph (e) hereto.
 - (j) All evidence presented before the hearing shall be kept confidential, except such summary facts that the Board determines needs to be given to the members of the Church at a subsequent business meeting.
 - (k) At the end of the hearing, the Board shall convene in private to deliberate on the evidence presented at the hearing. A 2/3rds majority vote by the members of the Board present at the hearing shall be required to conclude that the allegation is true, failing which the allegation will be deemed not to be proven and the subject member shall no longer be subject to disciplinary proceedings by the Church. The subject member shall thereafter in a timely fashion be reinstated as a member in good standing with the Church.
 - (l) In the event that the Board convenes in private following the hearing to deliberate on the evidence presented at the hearing, and a 2/3rds majority vote by the members of the Board present at the hearing determines that the allegation is true, then disciplinary action shall be determined and implemented with the intent of both protecting the integrity of the ministry of the Church and restoring the subject member into fellowship pursuant to the principles set out in Luke 17:3 and in Galatians 6:1. At the Board's discretion, this disciplinary action may include a suspension of voting privileges at Church meetings.
 - (m) The Board may implement any disciplinary action in relation to the subject member that it deems appropriate, including but not limited to the removal of the subject member from positions of leadership or teaching in the Church, the prohibition of offending conduct or behaviour, the requirement that an apology be given, the requirement that the subject member exhibit an attitude of submission to the authority of the Church or a spirit of contrition or the termination of Church membership. Termination of Church membership will be deemed appropriate, in the opinion of the Board, only where no other reasonable alternative action is available.
 - (n) The chairman of the Board shall send written notification to the subject member of the decision made by the Board by registered and regular mail addressed to the subject member at his or her last known address within 10 days of a decision being rendered by the Board, together with a succinct summary of the reasons therefore.
 - (o) The decision by the Board on all matters of discipline shall be binding and final, subject to membership termination provisions in the By-Laws (180-day period to conduct a Church meeting and vote). In the event that the decision of the Board is to terminate Church membership, and in accordance with the By-Laws, no notice is deemed received by the Church from the subject member, then the subject member shall cease to be a Church member effective upon the date that the Board renders its decision.
 - (p) No pronouncement on matters of discipline shall be made unless given orally from a prepared text at a Church business meeting and only after a careful, sober, and timely consideration has been made by the Board to avoid, as much as possible, undue or unnecessary embarrassment to the subject member or any other prejudicial consequences to either the subject member or to the Church as a whole, or both.
 - (q) A member of the Church who has been disciplined or whose Church membership has been terminated shall not be barred from public worship services unless his or her presence is disruptive to the peaceful proceedings of the public worship service(s) as determined in the sole

opinion of the Board in which event such individual agrees that he or she may be removed from such public worship service without the necessity of legal action, whether or not such individual is at that time a member of the Church.

(End of policy.)