

# Constitution & Bylaws of Reformed Heritage Church

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Adapted with permission from Reformed Baptist exemplars:  
*The Kabwata Baptist Church and Pastor Conrad Mbewe in Zambia*  
*Reformed Baptist Church of Riverside and Pastor Robert Briggs in California*  
*Harbor Reformed Baptist Church and Pastor Mark Chanski in Michigan*

**Adopted by Reformed Heritage Church in \_\_ 2023**

## **ARTICLE 1: NAME**

1.1 The name of this church shall be "Reformed Heritage Church" (here-after referred to as "The church").

## **ARTICLE 2: PURPOSE**

The purpose of this church shall be:

2.1 To glorify and enjoy God by providing a place for the corporate worship of God in praise, prayer, and in proclaiming His law and gospel from the sixty-six (66) books of the Holy Bible as God's complete revelation to man.

2.2 To glorify and enjoy God by proclaiming the holy triune God of the Bible as the eternal, immutable, infinite, all-powerful, all-present, all-knowing Creator and sovereign LORD; and His Son, Jesus Christ, as the only virgin-born Savior of sinners; and the Holy Spirit as the divine Person of the Godhead who convicts and convinces men of sin, righteousness and judgment. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit are not three separate Gods, but three persons of the Godhead. There is only one true and living God.

2.3 To glorify and enjoy God by building up, strengthening, confirming and equipping in the faith those who are saved.

2.4 To glorify and enjoy God by earnestly endeavoring to win others to Christ through biblical New Testament evangelism, missions and church planting – bidding sinners, as did our forefathers, to "Come and welcome to Jesus Christ."

2.5 To glorify and enjoy God by upholding sound doctrine and holy living.

## **ARTICLE 3: ARTICLES OF FAITH**

3.1 *Scripture.* The Holy Bible is the final and only authority in all matters of faith and practice.

3.2. *Confession of Faith.* We fully subscribe to the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689, as the most accurate expression of that system of doctrine taught in the Bible. We do not hold this Confession of Faith to be above or equal to the Holy Scriptures. Rather we accept it as an assistance in controversy, a confirmation in faith, and an instrument of edification and instruction. This Confession provides every member with a compact systematic theology, and by means of the scriptural proofs, each one can be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in him.

3.3 In this historic Baptist document we find an assistance in controversy, a confirmation in faith and a means of edification in righteousness. Here we have a body of divinity in small compass and by means of the Scriptural proofs will be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in us (1 Peter 3:15).

3.4 We leave to the opinion of individual members the two issues (a) of the regeneration of infants and the mentally handicapped and (b) the identity of the antiChrist (referred to in Chapter 10, paragraph 3, and Chapter 26, paragraph 4 of The 1689 Confession of Faith).

3.5 *Statement of Faith.* Our Statement of Faith shall be the New Hampshire Baptist Confession of 1833, set forth as an abstract of Our Confession of Faith, the Second London Confession of 1689. When any part of this Statement of Faith needs further clarification, the Our Confession of Faith, the Second London Confession of 1689, will be utilized to clarify the intended and fuller meaning

3.6 *Doctrinal Standards for Teaching.* As further theological tools and safeguards against heresy, Reformed Heritage Church affirms and will teach (listed in chronological order).

- The Apostles' Creed
- The Nicene Creed
- The Chalcedonian Creed
- The Athanasian Creed
- The Canons of Dort (excluding 1:17 that states that "children of believers are holy")
- An Orthodox Catechism: Being the Sum of Christian Religion, Contained in the Law and Gospel (1680) by Hercules Collins
- The Second London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689
- Benjamin Keach's Catechism of 1693
- The New Hampshire Confession of Faith of 1853
- Chicago Statements: International Council on Biblical Inerrancy
- The Cambridge Declaration: The Five Solas of the Reformation

**3.7 Ministerial Guides.** The credo-baptistic adapted versions of the below documents originally drafted by the Westminster Divines (which shall be available on the church website and/or by request of an elder), are to be regarded as further guides and guardrails for the health and vitality of this Church.

- Biblical Foundation
- Calling a Teaching Elder or Associate Pastor
- The Book of Discipline
- The Directory For The Public Worship of God
- Suggested Forms For Use in Connections With The Book of Discipline
- The Recommend Curriculum For Ministerial Preparation in this Church

**3.8 Further Biblical Clarity On the Holy Spirit.** In view of the relatively small amount of teaching in The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith on the Holy Spirit's presence and work in the believer's life, we add the following:

(a) The God of all comfort, who dwells in heaven and is always present everywhere on earth (1 Kings 8:27, Psalm 139:7 -10), graciously granted, to all those that are justified, in and for the sake of his only Son, Jesus Christ (John 14:16 -18, 2 Corinthians 1:4 -5), the additional privilege of abiding in his special presence, by sending his Holy Spirit, the Spirit of his Son, as the Spirit of adoption, into each of their hearts (Galatians 4:6), upon their repentance from sin and faith in Christ (Acts 2:38 -39), whereby they are comforted and encouraged in their afflictions (2 Corinthians 1:4 -5, Philippians 1:19 -20), strengthened in their love, hope and faith (Romans 15:13), assured of their sonship and eternal life (Romans 8:14 -16), assisted in their prayers (Romans 8:26 -27), instructed in the words and ways of Christ (John 14:26, 16:13 -14), given access to and filial communion with God (Ephesians 3:18, Galatians 4:16), liberated from spiritual bondage (Romans 8:2, 2 Corinthians 3:17), enabled to mortify sin and please the Lord (Ezekiel 36:27, Romans 8:13), united to Christ and each other (1 Corinthians 6:17, 12:12 -13), and sealed until the day of redemption (Ephesians 1:13 -14).

(b) This personal indwelling of the Holy Spirit is not now manifested by the ability to accomplish miraculous feats, or by hearing heavenly voices, receiving direct revelation, foretelling the future or speaking in tongues (1 Corinthians 12:4 -11), since these special apostolic endowments and signs, bound to the founding of the church, ceased when the apostles finished their unique work (Acts 8:18 -19, 19:6, 1 Corinthians 13:8 -10,

15:7 -8, 2 Corinthians 12:12, Ephesians 2:20, 3:5), but rather is manifested throughout this age, by the fruits of the Spirit, which are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22 -23).

(c) Unlike the regenerating work of the Holy Spirit, which is the root and cause of saving faith (John 3:3), this gift of the Holy Spirit results from the exercise of saving faith and is conditioned upon it (Acts 2:38), nevertheless the Spirit is not received subsequent to conversion as a second blessing, but immediately upon the exercise of saving faith, so that no true believer is devoid of the Spirit of God, nor is this gift of the Spirit, patiently tarried for, or carnally peddled (Romans 8:8 - 9, 1 Corinthians 12:13, Galatians 3:2 -3).

(d) Although the Holy Spirit resides irrevocably in the hearts of all true Christians from the moment of their conversion, being received once and for all (Ephesians 1:13 -14), nevertheless the same Spirit continues to be supplied to them throughout their lives, so that it is the duty of those already indwelt by God's Spirit both to request further supplies and larger measures of the Holy Spirit and to be filled with the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13, Ephesians 5:18).

(e) The gift of the Holy Spirit is never completely taken away from true Christians, but he can be so grieved by their rebellions and backslidings (Isaiah 63:10) that for a season his presence is greatly withdrawn and his influences largely withheld (Psalm 51:8 -17), therefore, it is the duty of all believers neither to grieve nor to quench the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:30, 1 Thessalonians 5:19).

(f) All true believers in every era had the Holy Spirit in their hearts and enjoyed the benefits of his special presence with them (Numbers 27:18, 1 Peter 1:11), but subsequent to the session of Christ and the outpouring of the Spirit at Pentecost (Acts 2:33), in the era of God's New Covenant with Israel, the people of God (Hebrews 8:10 -12), not merely individually but now also corporately, are the temple of God, the place of his special habitation (1 Corinthians 6:19, Ephesians 2:19 -20), their distinguishing trait now being this gift of the Holy Spirit, so that unless a person is indwelt by the Holy Spirit he has neither inheritance among God's people under the New Covenant nor any right to membership in the church of Christ (Romans 8:8-9).

#### **ARTICLE 4: AFFILIATION**

3.1 *Authority.* We acknowledge no ecclesiastical authority other than our Lord Jesus Christ, who is Head of the Church (Eph. 5:23) and who directs the affairs of the church through Elders chosen and ordained according to the precepts of Holy Scripture (Acts 14:21-23; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). The Elders themselves at all times and in all their activities stand under the authority of Holy Scripture.

3.2 *Cooperation.* The church may and does cooperate with other like-minded churches in matters of mutual interest and concern (2 Cor.1:11; 8:18-24; Phil.4:15-19). We may seek the assistance and counsel (Prov. 11:14; 18:1) of other churches in matters of special concern to us, but the decision of no other church or group of churches shall at any time be acknowledged as binding on this church (Acts 14: 21-23).

3.3 *Associations.* One special kind of fellowship and cooperation with other churches is formal membership in an association of churches. Upon recommendation of the Elders, such affiliations may be entered with the

expressed consent and approval of the congregation (Acts 15:22, 2 Cor. 8:19). Withdrawal from such associations may be effected by the same.

## **ARTICLE 5: COVENANT**

5.1 *Introductory Statement.* God has graciously entered into a covenant relationship with His believing people (Jer 31:31-34; 32:40; Heb. 8:7-13; 10:16, 17; 13:20,21). Jesus Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant (Heb. 8:6). His blood is the blood of the New Covenant, which infallibly secures all the benefits of the covenant for all of God's people (Matt. 26:26-28; Heb. 13:20-21). God has in this New Covenant made us members one of another (Rom. 12:4; 5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph.4:25). Therefore, we have covenant responsibilities to each other, as well as to God. God has promised in this covenant to write His laws in our hearts and to cause us to walk in His ways (that is, to enable us to keep our covenant responsibilities). The motivation and ability to obey God's laws spring from the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who, by His death, satisfied the holy wrath of God that was against us due to our sins, and by His resurrection has begotten us again to a living hope (1 Pet.1:3). It is by the enablement of the Holy Spirit that we obey, in loving gratitude for Christ's righteousness before God. We obey with the confidence that the end of Christ's death will be realized in us (that is, "that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us" [Rom. 8:4a], and that we should be a people "zealous for good works" [Titus 2:14]). The following paragraphs are a summary of what we believe to be our covenant responsibilities toward God and toward one another. This summary forms the basis for our giving and receiving instruction for ourselves and for our families.

### 5.2 *Summary of Our Covenant Responsibilities (God's moral law written in our hearts):*

With God's help we shall joyfully strive out of gratitude to our Lord Jesus Christ...

5.2.1 to worship only the one true and living God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who has revealed Himself to us in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. We shall strive to declare His glory to the nations. We shall have no other gods before Him. (Exodus 20:3)

5.2.2 to worship God in His appointed way and to exclude from our worship anything that He has not appointed. (Exodus 20:4-6)

5.2.3 to use the name of our God emptily or to take it upon ourselves carelessly, but to walk in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake. (Exodus 20:7)

5.2.4 to cease from our own works on the Lord's Day, if they are not works of mercy, piety, or necessity, and to positively sanctify the day by special exercises of public and private worship. (Exodus 20:8-11)

5.2.5 to honor and obey, within the bounds of Scripture, all our superiors, whether in family, church, state, or business; and, if we be superiors, to deal reasonably and lovingly with our subordinates and thus to teach them by word and example to fear God and keep His commandments. (Exodus 20:12)

5.2.6 to avoid whatever tends to destroy us or our neighbors and to engage vigorously in all lawful endeavors to preserve our own lives and the lives of others, especially by ready reconciliation and faithful exhortation in the church. (Exodus 20:13)

5.2.7 to possess our bodies in holiness as vessels joined to Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit and to avoid all uncleanness of thought, speech, or action. (Exodus 20:14)

4.2.8 to be diligent in our vocations, that we may provide for our own households, avoid theft of time, money, or goods, and that we may have to give to him who has need. (Exodus 20:15)

5.2.9 to earnestly promote truth among men and to avoid anything that would prejudice the truth or injure our neighbors. (Exodus 20:16)

5.2.10 to be fully content with our own condition in life, to rejoice in the advancement of our neighbor, and to avoid envying him or coveting anything that is his. (Exodus 20:17)

## **ARTICLE 6: CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

### *6.1. Justification for Membership*

The New Testament calls all Christians to formal, open, solemn, voluntary, and enduring commitment to Jesus Christ, to His truth, and to His people. Such a commitment to Christ, His truth, and His people ordinarily calls for a formal, open, solemn, voluntary and enduring commitment of church membership in a local church for the following reasons:

6.1.1 Fulfillment of Christ's Great Commission calls for church membership. According to the Great Commission of Christ (Matt. 28:18-20) there is an inseparable connection between making disciples, baptizing them, and teaching them. The Apostles implemented this commission by gathering baptized disciples into local churches. Therefore, it was in local churches that baptized disciples were taught all that Christ commanded (Acts 2:38 -42; 1 Cor. 4:17). With the uncertain exception of the Ethiopian eunuch, the New Testament is unfamiliar with the status of believing men and women who are not members of local churches.

6.1.2 Participation in the Lord's Table assumes church membership. Since all believing men and women are commanded by Christ to observe the Lord's Table (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:23-25), and since the Lord's Table is clearly a local church ordinance (1 Cor. 11:17, 18, 33, 34; cp. 1 Cor. 1:1, 2), it follows that all Christians should belong to a local New Testament church.

6.1.3 The New Testament presents the local church as a distinct group of individuals which could:

- a. be counted (Acts 2:41-42; 4:4)
- b. be added to (Acts 2:47; 5:14)
- c. be called upon to select leaders and representatives from among itself (Acts 6:1-6; 2 Cor. 8:19, 23; Acts 15:22)
- d. be officially gathered together (Acts 14:27; 15:22)
- e. to enforce church discipline (Matt. 18:17; 1 Cor. 5:4, 13; 2 Cor. 2:6)
- f. observe the Lord's Table as a wholly present corporate assembly (1 Cor. 11:17-20, 33-34)

6.1.4 There is, therefore, clear biblical justification for the existence and careful maintenance of local church membership involving formal, open, solemn, and voluntary commitment. This biblical justification compels us to use great care in maintaining a biblically-ordered church membership.

### 6.2 Member Ordinances:

6.2.1 *Baptism*. Believer's baptism by immersion is normative. Only confessed disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ are proper candidates for baptism, and all such persons should be baptized and joined to a local

church (Acts 2:38, 41, 47; 5:13, 14). Believing that baptism in water is the God-ordained sign of one's personal union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and the door of entrance into the visible community of the people of God, we shall normally receive into the membership of the church only those who have been baptized as believers "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19). Immersion in water is the biblical mode of baptism, is necessary for its proper administration, and is the only mode to be administered by this church.

*6.2.1.1 Conscience exception to immersion.* Occasionally, a genuine believer in the Lord Jesus Christ whose baptism is marked by irregularities of mode may apply for membership in this church. It is according to sound biblical principle that a believer who was baptized by a mode other than immersion should be immersed as a believer (Acts 19:1-5). Occasionally, however, such a believer may be prevented by his conscience from doing this. Therefore, should this be the case, the Elders may at their discretion admit such a person if they believe that it is in the best interests of the person and this church. Before such a person is admitted, he must be submissive to instruction on the subject and prove to have a teachable and peaceable spirit regarding the standards of this church respecting baptism. Should such a member come to agreement with the convictions of this church, he should, then, be immersed.

*6.2.1.2 Infant baptism exceptions to immersion.* Occasionally, a genuine believer in the Lord Jesus Christ whose baptism was of the infant-baptism perspective may apply for membership in this church. Such applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

a. *Infant baptism exception in case of marriage* It is according to sound biblical principle that born-again married partners be joined to the same local church, and that the infant-baptistic spouse of a believer-baptist be a member with his/her spouse in the same congregation (Matt. 18:15- 17; 19:4-6; Acts 2:47; Rom 14:22-23; 1 Pet. 3:7).

b. *Infant baptism exception in case of conscience* It may also be according to sound biblical principle for this church to receive into its membership certain infant-baptistic born-again saints who for good and wise reasons, petition this local church for membership (Mark 9:40; Acts 9:26-27; 18:24 -26).

c. *Infant baptism membership notes* In either case as previously described, should such an infant-baptistic person petition the church for membership, the Elders may at their discretion admit such a person if they believe that it is in the best interests of the person and this church. However, the infant-baptistic member would not be privileged to hold office in the church. Before such a person is admitted, he must be submissive to instruction on the subject and prove to have a teachable and peaceable spirit regarding the standards of this church respecting baptism. Should such a member come to agreement with the convictions of this church, he should, then, be baptized by immersion (Acts 19:1-5).

*6.2.1.3 Baptism of young people.* Regarding the baptism of young people, the Elders will prayerfully discern, on a case-by-case basis, the level of spiritual maturity in any given candidate. Any baptized member must be at least 18 years old to vote on church business. The membership of any young person under the age of 18 includes all the rights, privileges, obligations, and accountability of any other member, except for that of voting on church business.

6.3 *The Lord's Supper* is also an ordinance of Jesus Christ, instituted by Him for His churches so that a remembrance of His sufferings and death may be kept by all His true and loving disciples, until He shall come again (I Corinthians 11:17-34). It is a means of grace to strengthen the believer and to show communion between the church and the triune God and the members with one another. The Lord's Supper will be observed at least monthly or as often as the Elders deem beneficial.

6.3.1 According to the Scriptures, there are four biblical qualifications or requirements prescribed by God in order for an individual to partake of the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:17-30; Mark 14:16-26; Luke 22:13-23; John 13:21-31; Acts 2:41, 42, 47, 20:7; I Corinthians 10:14-22; 11:17-34; also bearing on this subject is I Corinthians 5:9-13).

The four requirements are:

1. Public profession of faith in Jesus Christ.
2. Baptism in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.
3. A life of obedience and repentance.
4. Membership in a local church.

In cases of weak or uninstructed believers, or in the case of believers who come from churches that do not have an official membership roll, certain exceptions may be made, only as deemed reasonable by the Elders.

6.4 *Privileges of Membership*. In God's order, commitment normally constitutes the pathway to the possession of privileges. Therefore, membership in this church includes the following privileges:

1. Participation in the Lord's Supper (Acts 2:41-42; 1 Cor. 11:18-26, 33);
2. Attendance at, appropriate participation in, and voting during church business meetings (Acts 6:1-6 [cp. Acts 2:41; 4:4; 5:13-14]; 1 Cor. 5:4-7; 13 [cp. 1 Cor. 1:2]);
3. Laboring to extend God's Kingdom in ministries of the church (as one's gifts, graces, and calling make appropriate) (1 Cor. 12:4-27 [cp. 1 Cor. 1:2]; Eph. 4:7; 11-12; 16; 1 Pet. 4:10-11);
4. Reception of the committed oversight, shepherding, and care of the pastors of the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2-3);
5. Reception of the committed care and discipline (as needed) of the membership of the church (Acts 6:1-2 [cp. Acts 2:41; 5:13-14; 9:26]; 1 Cor. 5:4-5 [cp. 1 Cor. 1:2]; Gal. 6:10).

6.5 *Eligibility For Membership*. To be eligible for membership, a man or woman (Acts 5:14; 8:3, 12) must display repentance (Acts 26:20), and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21) which produces godly works (Eph. 2:8-10; James 2:18, 22). He must be baptized as a believer and share substantial agreement with the purpose, covenant, confession, and government of this church. Also, he must not be under the biblically justified (Matt. 18:17, 18; 1 Cor. 5:11-13; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14, 15; 3 John 9, 10; 2 Cor. 2:6-8) corrective discipline of a genuine church.

6.5.1 Church members must be in submission to the established rule of the church to which they belong (Heb. 13:17). He who cannot intelligently and freely submit to a church's government should not belong to that church.



6.5.3. Anyone who is in substantial disagreement with the constitution or confessions of the church could not consistently submit to the church's teaching ministry. Therefore, to admit such a person to membership in this church would be unwise (Eph. 4:3) and unscriptural.

6.5.4. Mastery of church confessions is not required of any new disciple before the church admits him into membership. Such a requirement would violate the order of Matt. 28:19, 20, which instructs us to disciple, to baptize, and then to teach the baptized disciple to observe all things Christ has commanded. It is necessary, however, that any disciple applying for membership display a willingness to be taught and substantial agreement with what he already knows concerning the church's doctrine and government.

6.5.5. If one who is already a member of the church at any time concludes that he no longer satisfies the requirements for membership, he is obliged to inform the elders of that fact.

6.5.6 Requests for membership shall be made to the Elders. Any person who meets the above mentioned requirements shall:

1. Complete an application form for membership, including a brief testimony of their faith in Christ.
2. Take the membership class, which will be offered periodically, on an as-needed basis. The Elders may make exceptions to this for applicants desiring a transfer from a church of like faith and practice.
3. Read and agree with our Statement of Faith, desire to be taught from our Confession of Faith as the doctrinal standard of this church, and agree to this Constitution as the practical standard of this church's government.
4. Interview with an Elder to review the previous steps and ensure the applicant is ready to proceed. When these steps are complete, the Elders shall announce the applicant's desire to join this church and distribute their written testimony to the congregation. It shall then be the responsibility of the membership to become acquainted with the applicant in order to be prepared to give their 'for' or 'against' on the appointed Lord's Day.

6.6 When the Elders are satisfied that the applicant has met the above requirements for membership, the applicant shall be brought before the congregation at a regular Sunday meeting and shall be asked the following publicly, in the presence of God and the congregation.

6.6.1 Membership Questions:

- (1) Do you believe the Bible, consisting of the Old and New Testaments, to be the Word of God, and its doctrine of salvation to be the perfect and only true doctrine of salvation?
- (2) Do you believe in one living and true God, in whom eternally there are three distinct persons—God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit—who are the same in being and equal in power and glory, and that Jesus Christ is God the Son, come in the flesh?
- (3) Do you confess that because of your sinfulness you abhor and humble yourself before God, that you repent of your sin, and that you trust for salvation not in yourself but in Jesus Christ alone?

(4) Do you acknowledge Jesus Christ as your sovereign Lord, and do you promise that, in reliance on the grace of God, you will serve him with all that is in you, forsake the world, resist the devil, put to death your sinful deeds and desires, and lead a godly life?

(5) With God's help will you joyfully strive out of gratitude to our Lord Jesus Christ to participate faithfully in this church's worship and service, to submit in the Lord to its government, and to heed its discipline, even in case you should be found delinquent in doctrine or life?

6.6.2 If each answer is affirmative, the congregation shall then receive the applicant into membership by a majority 'yea and amen' from the members present. By answering the above questions in the affirmative, the applicant covenants to be subject to the government and discipline of this church, under the Lord Jesus Christ and His infallible Word.

6.7 Any person who is a member in good standing in a church of like faith and practice can become an associate member. Eligible candidates include students, military personnel, and business people who are temporarily transferred into our area. Other candidates may be determined by the Elders. Candidates must provide a letter of recommendation and approval from their home Church. They shall be subject to the government and discipline of this church. As associate members they shall possess all the rights and privileges of membership, except that they will not be able to voice their 'for' or 'against' when such a congregational response is called for. Once their business is completed and they leave this geographical area, their associate membership is dissolved. No formal resignation will be required.

6.8 All members eighteen (18) years of age or older in good standing shall be eligible to give their 'for' or 'against' in congregational decisions.

6.9 Members are not to absent themselves from the stated meetings of the church (which include the Lord's Day worship services, the Annual Business Meeting, the annual Day of Prayer and Fasting, and any service that involves congregational assent), unless when providentially hindered, or for other exceptional reasons that fall within the Biblical guidelines expressed in our confession (viz., LBCF of 1689, Chapter 22, Paragraph 8) (Hebrews 10:25).

6.10 The following shall be expected of all members: to seek to engage in the daily reading of the Bible, and in private and family prayers; to endeavor to give tithes and offerings systematically toward the financial support of this church as the Lord has prospered them; and to engage in some form of Christian service in connection with this church (Romans 12:1-8; I Peter 4:7-11).

6.11 A member desiring to transfer membership to another biblical church shall request a letter of dismissal from the Elders. Such letter shall be granted provided the member is in good standing and is not under church discipline at the time of the request. When such letter is granted, membership in this church shall be considered terminated. Anyone leaving the membership of this church shall provide a written explanation

concerning his or her reason for leaving or by verbally notifying the Elders, who in turn shall make the resignation known to the congregation.

6.12 Although not every person will fully understand or agree with every word in the Confession, it is to be substantially received by all who come into membership, and not publicly contradicted or opposed. Any member finding that he or she is unable to subscribe to the Confession and Constitution of this church must inform the Elders. The Elders will confer with the member to see what the problem may be and will then take proper scriptural action.

## **ARTICLE 7: CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

**7.1 Formative discipline:** The church will reform and discipline itself continually by the diligent application of the word (Revelation 2,3), by mutual care and exhortation of the members (Ephesians 4:7-16), by the orderly utilization of the gifts Christ has bestowed upon each member (Romans 12:3- 8), and by the watchfulness of the elders over the flock (Hebrews 13:17).

**7.2 Corrective discipline:** The church will apply corrective discipline when a member stubbornly holds on to heretical doctrines or conducts himself in a disorderly, immoral or scandalous manner. This will be done for the purpose of, among other things, restoring the offender, maintaining the health and purity of the church, and upholding the honor of God (Galatians 6:1, James 5:19-20, 1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

*(a) Offences liable for corrective discipline:* These are stubborn private offenses (Matthew 18:15-17), divisive teaching or behavior (Titus 3:10), disorderly behavior (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15), scandalous sin (1 Corinthians 5:1- 13), and contempt of church discipline (Matthew 18:17).

*(b) Means of corrective discipline:* These are public reproof or censure (1 Timothy 5:20), dissociation (Romans 16:17-20), and excommunication (1 Corinthians 5:1-5).

*(c) Procedure for corrective discipline:* As a general rule and whenever feasible, effort must be made to resolve difficulties, correct error, and remove offense through counsel and admonition before formal corrective discipline is taken (Matthew 18:15-16, Titus 3:10). Where this fails to bear the desired fruit, the elders shall determine as to which means of corrective discipline shall be applied (1 Corinthians 5:3). All the members of the church will be obligated to submit to and enforce the corrective discipline (1 Corinthians 5:4).

*(d) Restoration from corrective discipline:* In the case where a member has been excommunicated, and gives satisfactory evidence of his repentance, the church shall forgive and restore such a person to full membership (2 Corinthians 2:6- 8).

## **8.0 Officers**

8.1 Jesus Christ alone is the Head of His Church (Col. 1:18). He has ordained that individual churches should be governed by Himself through officers whom He appoints (Acts 20:28), who are endowed by His Spirit with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work (Ephesians 4:7-13).

**8.2 Offices:** Christ has ordained that local churches are to be administered by Elders and Deacons. Beside these two offices the Scriptures acknowledge no office which continues in the church today (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-13).

**8.3 Appointment:** The existing elders of the church shall determine the need for extra elders and deacons in the church, present to the church the necessary qualifications for persons to be appointed into these offices, and request the church for nominations. When the church membership has expressed its mind by common suffrage, the elders shall confirm the persons thus nominated and set them apart for office by prayer and the laying on of hands (Acts 1:15-26, 6:1 -6, 14:23, Titus 1:5). The elders reserve the right to appoint any persons thus nominated to any office in the church (1 Timothy 5:22).

**8.4 Discipline and Removal:** Church officers are subject not only to the same rules of discipline as the other members but in addition are subject to removal from office if they no longer are qualified for their office or capable of fulfilling its functions or if their behavior is disorderly or scandalous, thereby bringing reproach to Christ and the church and setting a bad example before the brethren (1 Timothy 5:19-21, Titus 1:7).

**8.5 Installation:** All church officers thus chosen will not begin to function until they are publicly installed into their office at a regular worship service by the laying on of the hands of the existing elders.

**8.6 Evaluation and Termination:** The members shall express and discuss their evaluation of each of their officers during oversight meetings with elders. The fruit of these discussions will be made known to the individual officers specifically during oversight meetings and generally to all the officers during their annual retreats.

(a) Where it becomes apparent to the elders that an officer is unable to meet the qualifications and demands of his office, the elders will ask him to step down and he will have no choice in the matter.

(b) An officer may also step down from his office without prejudice if for good and valid reasons he finds he is no longer able to discharge the duties of his office.

(c) The members reserve the right to vote on whether any or all of the officers should continue in office at the written request of one-fourth of its membership. To continue in office, such an officer or officers being voted on must have the minimum votes they needed to enter into office initially.

**8.7 Chairmen:** The elders and deacons shall choose one of their number to be their chairman in their respective bodies. They shall also select a vice chairman, to serve as chairman in the chairman's absence. As a general rule, the pastor shall chair the meetings of the elders. But there might be circumstances in which an elder other than the pastor may be asked to chair.

## **8.8 Elders:**

**8.8.1 Terminology.** Those who have been called of God to rule and teach in the church are called Elders, Pastors, or Overseers (sometimes translated "bishops"). These three titles are interchangeable and designate one and the same office in a New Testament church (Acts 20:17, 28; Eph. 4:11,12; Titus 1:5, 7).

8.8.2 *Functions*: The duty of the elders is that of overseeing the work of God in the local church (Titus 1:7).

This includes:

- (1) The preaching and teaching of God's word, both publicly and privately. This is to be done side-by-side with prayer (Acts 6:2-4, 1 Timothy 5:17).
- (2) The governing and management of the church (1 Timothy 3:4).
- (3) The spiritual care of individual members (Hebrews 13:17).
- (4) The formative and corrective discipline of the church (Matthew 16:19).
- (5) The provision of role-models by the example of their godly lives (1 Peter 5:3).

8.8.3 *Authority*: The rule of elders only goes as far as authoritatively declaring and implementing in the church the faith and practice stipulated in the Scriptures (1 Corinthians 14:36-38, 1 Timothy 3:14-15, 4:11).

8.8.3.1 *Specifics of*. Because the authority of the Elders of the church is human authority exercised in the house of God, it has both high prerogatives and important limitations:

- (a) *It is Limited Authority*. The authority of the Elders does not include the right to make certain decisions unilaterally. Elders must provide leadership to the congregation regarding major decisions of church life. (Acts 6:2-6; 9:26; 1 Cor. 5:4-5; 13; 2 Cor. 2:6).
- (b) *It is Local Authority*. The authority of the Elders is limited to the sphere of the local church. Thus, they will not require punishments for sin beyond those of biblical church discipline, will not invade the biblically-defined spheres of other divinely-ordained human authorities (husbands, fathers, civil rulers, and employers), and will not command God's people regarding matters not specified in Scripture except to order the house of God by the application of His Word (Matt. 22:21; Luke 12:13-14; Acts 20:28; Rom. 13: 1-7; 1 Cor. 7:25-28, 35-40; Eph. 5:22-6:9; 1 Pet. 5:2-3).
- (c) *It is Accountable Authority*. The authority of Elders is conditioned by the fact that they are themselves members of the local church. While Elders are shepherds over the flock, they are also members of the flock. Therefore, each individual Elder is entitled to the same privileges, is obligated by the same responsibilities, and is subject to the same discipline as are all the other members of the church. Thus, each individual Elder is both under the oversight of his fellow Elders and accountable to the church as a whole (Matt. 18:15-17; 23:8-9; Gal. 2:11; 3 John 1, 9-10).
- (d) *It is a Responsible Authority*. The responsibility of every Elder to exercise biblical authority is the same. (Acts 20:17, 28; Gal. 2:11; 1 Pet. 5:1-2; 1 Tim. 5:17). Decisions shall be reached with prayerful consideration, in a spirit of humility, with each Elder regarding one another before himself. Elders will strive for unanimity on all votes. In the rare event of a split vote among an even number of elders, the pastor or primary preaching Elder, who generally steers the congregation from the pulpit, shall have the tie-breaking vote or may opt to table the decision until another meeting.
- (e) *It is Real Authority*. The Scriptures designate the Elders as those who "rule" in the church (1 Tim. 5:17; Heb. 13:17; note also the scriptural titles and functions of the office). God's people are, therefore, required to submit when such authority is biblically exercised.
- (f) *A Unity-Protecting Authority*. (Acts 15:22) The elders are accountable to Christ, and this congregation, which also has a responsibility unto Christ to ensure that major church decisions are in

line with God's Word and this congregation's purpose. Specifically, the church requires congregational ascent for the following decisions:

1. At the written request of one-fourth of membership, the congregation will then vote on whether any or all of the officers should continue in office.
2. The admission of new members requires a majority member vote.
3. The proposed annual budget overview requires a majority member vote.
4. Elder remuneration requires a majority member vote.
5. The appointment or removal of a deacon requires a two-thirds vote.
6. Temporary guidance in the absence of an elder requires a two-thirds vote.
7. The purchase or sale of property requires a three-fourths member vote.
8. The appointment or removal of an elder requires a three-fourths member vote.
9. Changes to this constitution requires a three-fourths member vote.

**8.8.4 Remuneration:** The material necessities of elders will be maintained so as to keep them disentangled from the cares of another vocation according to their gifts and the needs and capability of the church. This will be especially the case with "the pastor," i.e. the elder whose work is preaching and teaching (1 Timothy 5:17-18, 1 Corinthians 9:14).

**8.8.5 Pastoral Visits.** One crucial aspect of the Elders' duties is personally overseeing the flock of God. Fulfillment of this duty shall include regularly and systematically meeting with each member of the church on at least an annual basis, except when physically impossible due to distance.

**8.8.6 Absence of.** Should the office of Elder be vacant, the Deacons shall call a church meeting over which one of their members shall preside. At this meeting the church, supported by two thirds member vote, shall place herself under the temporary guidance of the Elders of a like-minded Reformed Baptist church. This guidance shall remain in effect until removed by congregational vote.

**8.8.7 Plurality.** Though a plurality of Elders is a New Testament norm for every church, the New Testament does not specify the number of Elders each church should have, nor does it dictate the length of an Elder's term of office. One truly called to this office is usually called to it for life. He is a gift of Christ to the church, and the gifts of God are without repentance. Only when an Elder fails to meet the necessary scriptural qualifications for his office does he disqualify himself from being an Elder. An Elder may honorably resign from his office for a time if he is providentially hindered from properly discharging his pastoral duties. He may, at the discretion of the Elders, without re-examination by the congregation, re-assume office when those hindrances have been removed.

**8.8.5 Procedure for calling an elder (including a pastor):**

(a) The church shall set aside times for prayer and fasting exclusively for the purpose of seeking God's guidance as to the right man to function as an elder (or a pastor) in its midst.

(b) The elders shall set before the church the qualifications necessary for the person who is to occupy this position. (In the case of a pastor, emphasis will be made on his preaching/teaching gifts and his doctrinal soundness). The members shall be asked to submit names of individuals they deem to be thus qualified. (In the case of a pastor, these names may be from within or outside the church).

(c) The elders shall screen these names according to the qualifications they gave the members. Where they deem it fit to repeat the sounding out process, they will do so until they are satisfied. All the necessary information about the person shall be obtained for the purpose of arriving at the most suitable man for the work. This may also necessitate a meeting between the elders and the prospective candidate.

(d) Once it has been decided to recommend a name (in the case of a pastor, only one name shall be recommended at any one time) to the church, the recommended name shall be made known to the members at least 6 months prior to the date at which the members will be required to make their mind known on the person by a formal vote. During this period the members will be asked to be in earnest prayer and to bring any information that may be useful to the elders for the purpose of commending or disqualifying the prospective candidate for the work.

(e) The formal vote will be by secret ballot, and will need to be at least three-fourths for it to be carried through as a decision by the church.

## **8.9 Deacons:**

8.9.1 *Purpose and function.* The office of Deacon was ordained by the Apostles to enable the ministers of the Word to concentrate on the specific functions of their office, namely preaching, teaching, counseling and prayer (Acts 6:1-6; 20:20, 31; Eph. 4:11-13). Deacons are primarily responsible to administer the benevolent and business affairs of the church. Scripture indicates that Elders have authority over diaconal concerns (Acts 6:2-4; 11:30). The Deacons, therefore, must fulfill the duties of their office in cooperation with, and in subjection to, the Elders.

### **8.9.2 Procedure for calling deacons:**

(a) The church shall be much in prayer for the purpose of seeking God's guidance as to the right persons to occupy the office of deacon.

(b) The elders shall set before the church the qualifications necessary for the persons who are to occupy this position and the specific functions they expect those persons to fulfill. The members shall submit names of individuals they deem to be thus qualified.

(c) The elders shall seek to discover from this process the individuals that the church members are inclining to for the purpose of serving them in the office of deacon. Where they deem it fit to repeat the sounding out process, they will do so until a level of consistency is achieved and they are satisfied.

(d) Once it has been decided to recommend certain names to the church, the recommended names shall be made known to the members at least 6 months prior to the date at which the members will be required to make their mind known on the persons by a formal vote. During this period the members will be asked to be in earnest prayer and to bring any information that may be useful to the elders for the purpose of commending or disqualifying the prospective candidates.

(e) The formal vote will be by secret ballot, and will need to be at least two-thirds for it to be carried through as a decision by the church.

## 8.10 REVIEW OF OFFICERS

8.10.1 *Regular Review.* There shall be a review of each officer's qualifications for office four years after his ordination into the church and every fourth year thereafter for as long as he occupies the office in this church. The procedure for review is outlined in Section 8.10.3.

8.10.2 *Untimely Review.* There may arise reasons that would require an officer to be reviewed before the regularly scheduled time. Such a review meeting may be called by a majority of the Elders (or a majority of the other Elders in the case of an Elder). The members may also request such a meeting. This request can only be made after two or three witnesses (1 Tim. 5:19) have met with the officer in an attempt to resolve the issues of concern. The request must be set forth in writing with the signatures of one-third of the voting members in good standing. It must be presented to the Elders, who shall, in turn, make the proper announcement of the meeting. Such a review meeting would also follow the procedure of Section 8.10.3.

8.10.3 *Procedure for Review.* Any meeting for the review of an officer shall be announced on four consecutive Lord's Days prior to its being held. There shall be discussion and a vote by written ballot regarding the office under review. During the discussion the officer under consideration and members of his immediate family shall leave the presence of the assembly. The scriptural qualifications shall be read and expounded, and the officer's qualifications openly discussed in the fear of God and with due respect for the reputation of the officer. Any member who publicly suggests in such a meeting that the officer being reviewed is unqualified for his office must have previously spoken with the officer himself and informed the Elders of the church of his concerns (1 Tim. 5:19). He must also present biblical and factual warrant for his concerns at the review meeting. Just as it is wrong for a church to retain an officer who is not biblically qualified, so also it is rebellion against the Head of the church to reject an officer for any but biblical grounds. Additionally, any officer about whom such concerns are raised must be permitted, if he wishes, to return to the meeting and defend himself. Concerning the vote, the church should seek unity of mind, but should such unity not be fully realized, no fewer than three-fourths of those ballots cast shall be required for the confirmation of an officer in his office. Any officer failing of confirmation no longer holds office in the church.

8.10.4 *Resignation.* An officer may resign his office without prejudice if he does so in an orderly fashion and for good and valid reasons. This resignation together with its reasons and the date upon which he wishes his resignation to be effective shall be submitted in writing to the Elders of the church.

## **ARTICLE 9: CHURCH ADMINISTRATION**

9.1 All congregational meetings shall be called and conducted by the Elders. There will be one scheduled business meeting at the beginning of each year. The purpose of this meeting will be to give an accounting for and a review of the previous year. The annual business meeting will also fulfill our state's nonprofit



corporation requirements, will address our current financial situation, present reports related to our purpose, and facilitate member voting as needed.

9.2 Other congregational meetings necessary for church business will be announced at least one week prior to the meeting. However, in the case of unusual circumstances, a church meeting may be called by the Elders without the one-week notice. In such cases, the Elders will make every reasonable attempt to notify all members of such a meeting. All members should regard their presence at a duly called business meeting with the same seriousness with which they would regard their attendance at a worship service.

9.3 *Quorum*. Sixty-six percent (66%) of the members qualified to give their 'for' or 'against' at official church meetings shall constitute a quorum. This quorum is required in all official church meetings where congregational assent is necessary.

9.4 It shall be our goal to prayerfully discern the mind of God so that in all matters of church business it may be said of us what was said of that church business meeting recorded in Acts 6, "the saying pleased the whole multitude." However, in such a situation where this unanimity is not realized, a majority 'yea and amen' of the members present will make a resolution valid.

9.5 Suggestions for changes to the Constitution can be made to the Elders by any member. However, only the Elders can submit amendments to the Constitution to the congregation for their examination and approval. If, after three weeks examination and discussion, no scriptural reasons are given that would veto the proposed amendments, they will be considered adopted and the Constitution appropriately changed.

9.6 The church shall retain liability insurance coverage for church-related activities.

## **ARTICLE 10: FINANCES**

10.1 The finances of the church, including those of all the ministries, will be under the oversight of the elders (Acts 11:27-30).

10.2 The normal means of raising the necessary funds for the work of the Lord Jesus Christ will be through the tithes and offerings of the members (1 Corinthians 9:13-14, 16:1-2).

10.3 The elders shall ensure that one of them (excluding the primary preaching pastor) or a deacon (or where that is not possible, someone else who is capable) is appointed to keep the books of the church's finances. This person is to properly account for all the church's money.

10.4 Quarterly financial reports shall be made available to the elders, while annual financial statements shall be made available to the members by the person appointed to handle the accounts.

10.5 Each ministry shall submit their monthly and quarterly returns to the person appointed by the elders to handle the church's finances. From time to time, each ministry's books will be subject to inspection and the elders shall be kept informed of the status of ministry accounts.

#### **ARTICLE 11: MARRIAGE & SEXUAL IMMORALITY**

11.1 We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, trans-genderism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance or behavior. (Genesis 2:24; 19:5, 13; 26:8-9; Leviticus 18:1-30; Romans 1:26-29; 1 Corinthians 5:1; 6:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4)

11.2 We believe that the only legitimate marriage is the joining of one biologically-born man who has remained a biological man and one biologically-born woman who has remained a biological woman. (Genesis 2:24; Romans 7:2; 1 Corinthians 7:10; Ephesians 5:22-23).

#### **ARTICLE 12: INCORPORATION IN THE STATE OF COLORADO**

12.1 In order to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," it is necessary that this church be incorporated under the laws of the State of Colorado. This Constitution expresses our church's bylaws and incorporation articles for all matters related to our corporate identity before the state.

#### **ARTICLE 13: DISSOLUTION**

13.1 No donor, member, officer of the church, or private individual shall be entitled to share in the distribution of any assets of the church upon dissolution. The assets shall be given only to another church of like faith and practice, whose Constitution and Bylaws state that the receiving church subscribes to The 1689 Baptist Confession of Faith.