

The Constitution of the Berean Reformed Baptist Church

Preamble

We, the members of the Berean Reformed Baptist Church do ordain and establish the following articles, to which we voluntarily submit ourselves

Article I

The name of this church shall be Berean Reformed Baptist Church

Article II

Affiliation

Section 1. We acknowledge no ecclesiastical authority other than our Lord Jesus Christ, who is head of the Church (Ephesians 5:23) and who directs the affairs of the church through elders chosen and ordained according to the precepts of Holy Scripture.

Section 2. The church may cooperate with other likeminded churches in matters of mutual interest and concern. We may seek the assistance and counsel 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.

Article III

Purpose

This church exists by the grace of God, for the glory of God, which shall be the ultimate purpose in all its activities. This will be achieved by maintaining and promoting His worship by the individual, the family and the local body, by evangelizing sinners and edifying His saints. Therefore, we are committed to the proclamation of God's perfect law and of the glorious gospel of His grace through all the world, to the defense of that "faith which was once delivered unto all the saints" (Jude 3), and to the pure and faithful celebration of the ordinances of the new covenant.

Article IV

Articles of Faith

We hereby adopt as a reasonable expression of our faith the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith. This confession of faith gives a concise statement of biblical doctrine. In no way is it equal to the infallible authority of the Word of God. Nevertheless, it is an assistance to us in controversy, a confirmation in faith, and a means of edification in righteousness. In this confession the members of our church will have a body of Divinity in small compass and by means of scriptural proofs will be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in them (1 Peter 3:15)

Article V

Government

General Statement. Jesus Christ alone is the Head of His church. As the Head, He has ordained that individual churches should be blessed with the spiritual rule and ministry of special office bearers. This church recognizes the offices of elder and deacon exclusively as the offices ordained by Christ Himself.

Description:

Elder/Bishop/Overseer/Pastor. (Acts 11:30; 14:23; 15:2, 4, 6, 22, 23; 20:17, 28; Ephesians 4:11; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-2; 4:14; 5:17, 19; Titus 1:5, 7; James 5:14; 1 Peter 5:1-5)

- Qualifications. (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Peter 5:1-5) and full agreement with this constitution and the 1689 London Baptist Confession.
- Number. The scriptures indicate that the local church ought to have a plurality of elders. (Acts 20:28; Phil 1:1; 1 Peter 5:1-5) Though a church may exist and function with one elder, because of the normative precedent set in the New Testament, prayer for a plurality of elders ought to be rendered by the church.
- Responsibilities. Preaching and teaching. (1 Timothy 3:2; 5:17). Ruling. (1 Timothy 5:17; Hebrews 13:17). Shepherding/overseeing. (1 Peter 5:2-3)
- Loss of a plurality of elders. This constitution assumes, and the norms of biblical church order require, that a plurality of elders oversee this local church. Therefore, if at any period in the life of the church, there no longer exists a plurality of elders in office; and this lack cannot in a timely way be supplied, the remaining elder (or the church, if there are no elders) shall seek the counsel of the pastors of a trusted sister church holding as its doctrinal standard the London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689. The purposes of such an arrangement are to provide collective wisdom and encouragement during such a period. The counsel received from such an arrangement is counsel only and is not binding on the remaining elder or this church. The church ought to be continually in prayer, waiting on the Lord to add elders as a gift to his local church.

Deacon. (Acts 6:3-4; Phil 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-13)

- Qualifications. (1 Timothy 3:8-13) and full agreement with this constitution and the 1689 London Baptist Confession.
- Number. The scriptures indicate that the local church ought to have a plurality of deacons. (Acts 6:3-4; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-13) Though a church may exist and function with one deacon, because of the normative precedent set in the New Testament, prayer for a plurality of deacons ought to be rendered by the church.
- Responsibilities. General service to the church – this includes the upkeep of the public place of worship and the administration of service by the members. Collection of worship tithes and offerings and disbursement of benevolence monies, all under the oversight of the elders. Miscellaneous – anything that aids the elders in focusing on praying, studying and teaching/preaching.

**Appointment:
Elder.**

1. **Candidate is identified**
 - a. Candidate approaches elders with desire to become an elder. Or
 - b. Congregant or elder(s) approach possible candidate and encourage him to consider becoming an elder.

2. **Candidate is asked to pray and consider the call to the office of elder.**
 - a. Candidate is given written questionnaire and given a deadline to report back with answers.

3. **If candidate desires to move forward, an interview with elders is scheduled**
 - a. The elders will go over written questionnaire with candidate.
 - b. The elders will unanimously approve or disapprove candidate.
 1. If approved, an elder will be assigned as mentor and the candidate will continue the process.
 2. If disapproved, candidate will be given reasons why and recommendations for future reconsideration.
 - c. Elders ought to respond to candidate in a timely manner.

4. **The candidate is presented to the congregation as an elder candidate.**
 - a. The elder candidate will address the congregation on why he desires the office of elder.
 - b. The congregation is asked to enter into a season of prayer and fasting for and examination of the candidate to see if he meets the qualifications as spelled out in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1.
 - c. Any negative feedback concerning candidate must be presented to elders within the allotted time frame.

5. **Candidate begins training and examination by the elders.**
 - a. Candidate is given reading and study assignments
 - b. Candidate and mentor elder meet regularly to pray, discuss assignments and evaluate progress.
 - c. Mentor elder will include candidate in participating in pastoral functions such as hospital visits, home visits, elder meetings, etc.
 - d. The candidate will be observed/examined by elder(s) in a teaching and/or preaching environment.

6. **A date is set for examination by the elders and a select group of like-minded pastors.**
 - a. Elders will call a group of pastors together.
 - b. Elders will give group topics to be covered in examination.
 - c. An elder of this church will moderate the examination.
 - d. The group will be asked if they can recommend the candidate for ordination.

7. **Candidate is presented back to congregation for vote of confidence.**
 - a. The congregation is told that the candidate has completed all training and examination by the elder(s).
 - b. The congregation is also told that the elders are unanimously recommending this candidate for the office of elder.
 - c. A two-thirds majority of the members present and voting shall be necessary to confirm an elder candidate.
 - d.
8. **Upon congregational approval, a date is set for ordination.**
9. **Candidate is ordained to the office of elder by the laying on of hands by the elders.**

Deacon.

1. **Candidate is identified**
 - a. Candidate approaches elders with desire to become a deacon. Or
 - b. Congregant or elder(s) approach possible candidate and encourage him to consider becoming a deacon.
2. **Candidate is asked to pray and consider the call to the office of deacon**
 - a. Candidate is given written questionnaire and given a deadline to report back to the elders with answer.
3. **If candidate desires to move forward, an interview with elders is scheduled**
 - a. The elders will go over written questionnaire with candidate.
 - b. The elders will unanimously approve or disapprove candidate.
 - c. If disapproved candidate will be given reasons why and recommendations for future reconsideration
 - d. Elders ought to respond to candidate in a timely manner.
4. **The Candidate is presented to the congregation as a deacon candidate.**
 - a. The deacon candidate will address the congregation on why he desires the office of deacon.
 - b. The congregation is asked to pray for and examine candidate to see if he meets the qualifications as spelled out in 1 Timothy 3.
 - c. Any negative feedback concerning candidate must be presented to the elders within the allotted time frame.
5. **Candidate is given numerous opportunities to serve alongside current deacons.**
6. **Elders will meet with candidate to evaluate candidate's knowledge of the scriptures and the doctrines as outlined in the 1689 Confession of Faith.**

7. **Candidate is presented back to congregation for vote of confidence.**
 - a. The congregation is told that the candidate has completed all training and examination by the elder(s).
 - a. The congregation will be informed that the elders have unanimously approved the candidate for the office of deacon.
 - b. A two-thirds majority of the members present and voting shall be necessary to confirm a deacon candidate.

8. **A date will be set for the candidate to be ordained to the office of deacon.**

Dismissal

Elder. Should an elder be found not meeting the qualifications outlined in scripture (1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1), he should willingly and humbly, for the good of the church and the namesake of the gospel, remove himself from the office of elder. If an elder is found to be lacking the said qualifications or involved in open, unrepentant sin, and unwilling to voluntarily remove himself from office, the remaining elders may and ought, by unanimous decision and only after a thorough investigation of the facts and counsel received from other like-minded pastors, remove the individual from the office of elder. This ought to be done in a gentle manner that seeks the well-being of the family of the dismissed elder as well as the church body at large. This individual ought to be carried through the biblical process of church discipline as any other member of the church with the ultimate goal being restoration between the individual and God as well as the individual and the church. If repentance is not received and restoration not accomplished, the individual will be removed from the fellowship of the church. Should the Lord bless by granting repentance to the dismissed elder the individual will be restored to the fellowship of the church but not necessarily to the office of elder.

Deacon. Should a deacon be found not meeting the qualifications outlined in scripture (1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1), he should willingly and humbly, for the good of the church and the namesake of the gospel, remove himself from the office of deacon. If a deacon is found to be lacking the said qualifications or involved in open, unrepentant sin, and unwilling to voluntarily remove himself from office, the elders may and ought, by unanimous decision and only after a thorough investigation of the facts, remove the individual from the office of deacon. This ought to be done in a gentle manner that seeks the well-being of the family of the dismissed deacon as well as the church body at large. This individual ought to be carried through the biblical process of church discipline as any other member of the church with the ultimate goal being restoration between the individual and God as well as the individual and the church. If repentance is not received and restoration not accomplished, the individual will be removed from the fellowship of the church. Should the Lord bless by granting repentance to the dismissed deacon the individual will be restored to the fellowship of the church but not necessarily to the office of deacon.

Article VI

Membership

Qualifications. To qualify for membership in this church, a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration, who has been baptized in obedience to Christ following his/her regeneration, and who whole-heartedly believes in the Christian faith as revealed in Holy Scripture. Each member must agree to submit to the teaching of the Scripture as expressed in the Articles of Faith and must commit himself or herself, through the power of the Holy Spirit, to fulfill the commitments expressed in the church covenant. The elders shall be responsible for determining each person's qualification for membership.

If a person is not a new convert, and has previously been attending another church, inquiry will be made by the elders of the previous church as to the individual's standing upon their departure. Any person, who has left a previous church under any negative circumstances, will not be admitted into membership at this church until restoration is made or satisfactorily attempted. The definition of satisfactory attempts is at the discretion of the elders.

Admission. The names of persons applying for church membership will be announced to the congregation during a Sunday morning worship service at which time those persons will enter into a two-week season of watch care under the elders. During this two-week period, church members will be allowed to bring any concerns or objections against the membership of such persons to be shared privately with the elders. If, at the conclusion of the watch care period, the elders are satisfied that an applicant has met the qualifications for membership, they shall then present the applicant(s) to the congregation at a regular Sunday Service, at which time the church will then express their desire with regard to the reception of the applicant(s) by reciting, along with the applicant(s), the abbreviated church covenant. This will be followed, at the end of the service, by the receiving of the right hand of fellowship by each member of the congregation.

Dismissal of Member. Refer to Article VII.

Article VII

Church Discipline

The church will submit to the biblical process of church discipline as found in Matthew 18. We will do this as our commitment to our brothers and sisters in Christ in order to maintain the purity of Christ's bride. We recognize that the goal in each and every step of church discipline is the restoration of the believer first to God and then to the local body. We also recognize, however, not every individual who undergoes church discipline as outlined above will repent and be restored. In these cases, the individual will then be related to as an unbeliever as prescribed also in Matthew 18. This will be realized through the excommunication of the individual from the church by the discontinuation of fellowship.

Article VIII

Church Ordinances – Baptism and The Lord’s Supper

Baptism. The sacrament of baptism will be practiced as clearly stated in scripture, mainly as prescribed in Acts 2:41 and as described in the 1689 London Baptist Confession. Those who are part of the New Covenant as stated in Jeremiah 31, specifically those who have repented of their sin trusting in the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of their sin, are to be baptized by immersion in water, as a sign of the seal of the Holy Spirit which indwells them as a result of God’s regeneration. Each candidate for baptism will be assessed by a pastor as to their understanding of the purpose of baptism in relation to their salvation and their obedience to Christ. Prior to the administration of baptism each candidate will give a verbal profession of faith and express their desire to follow the Lord to the congregation for the glory of God and the edification of the body. When an individual has followed the Lord in believer’s baptism, he/she will be encouraged to continue in that obedience by becoming a member of this local body and placing themselves under the shepherding of the elders of this church. If the individual desires membership, he/she will begin the membership process as outlined in Article VI.

The Lord’s Supper. The sacrament of the Lord’s Supper or Holy Communion will be practiced as prescribed in Holy Scripture and described in the 1689 London Baptist Confession. It is an ordinance instituted by Christ as a remembrance of His death, which purchased us from damnation and brought us into fellowship with the Father. It is to be practiced only by those who are in the New Covenant, as described above, and who are not living in consistent, unrepentant rebellion toward God in any area of their life and/or currently under church discipline. The soul who makes light of the bread and cup of the Lord shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord and thereby will bring judgment upon himself, as described in 1 Corinthians 11.

These two sacraments, when administered and/or taken properly, will serve as a means for man to be reminded of God’s grace to His people and of our proper reverence for Christ.

Article IX

Non-worship Meetings/Voting

Informative Meetings. The purpose of these meetings is to inform the congregation of any and all concerns and updates pertaining to church life. This is also the time for the elders to share their vision with the church body. Because of the nature and purpose of these meetings, no motions will be brought to the floor for a vote. Congregants will have the opportunity to ask questions of and address the elders on given topics. An informative meeting may also be called when 1/3 of the members make a request for such a meeting. The request must include the specific subject matter to be discussed. These meetings, as with any other church meeting, will be planned and advertised by the elders. Informative meetings will be moderated by an elder.

Business Meetings. The purpose of these meetings is to bring necessary items to a vote in order to ascertain the mind of the body and to determine whether or not they are in agreement with the leadership of the elders on the given items. The elders of this church will not bring any item to a vote that they are not unanimously in support of. These meetings also will be moderated by an elder.

Voting. All members present, except those under the discipline of the church, shall constitute the voting membership of the church. All members should regard their presence at a duly called church business meeting with the same seriousness with which they would regard their attendance at a stated service of worship. 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, as it was said of that church business meeting recorded in Acts 6, that this thing “pleased the whole multitude.” However, in situations in which this unanimity is not realized, no less than a 2/3 majority of those voting will make a resolution valid. The elders shall cancel any previously announced business meeting of the church if, through an act of God, an unusually large proportion of the members of the church cannot be present.

Article X

Finances. The church finances shall be handled as follows:

1. Budget. The elders and deacons shall prepare a budget and submit it to the church for approval. The budget shall include by items, the amount needed and sought for all ministry expenses.
2. Accounting Procedures. All funds for any and all purposes shall pass through the hands of the church financial secretary and be properly recorded on the books of the church. An audit shall be conducted annually.
3. Property. All property, all monies, all equities and the like shall be held and controlled by the church.
4. Obligations. No debt, financial commitment nor other obligation shall be created except by specific authority and expression of the church.
5. Fiscal Year. The fiscal year of the church shall run concurrently with the church year, which begins on October first and ends on September thirtieth.
6. Expenditures. The weekly and monthly administration and expending of the church budget shall be vested with the elders.

Article XI

Amendments. The final approval for amending this constitution will be the church at one of its regular business meetings, provided each amendment has been presented in writing at a previous Informative Meeting and copies of the proposed amendment have been made available to each member present. Amendments shall be by 2/3 vote of the members present and voting.