

CHURCH CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS OF FAITH BAPTIST CHURCH

Article 1: We declare and establish this constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our faith and to govern the body in a decent and orderly manner. The adoption of a constitution by a congregation brings upon each member the weighty responsibility to conduct himself in a manner which upholds the integrity of the constitution and of his commitment to the congregation.

Article 2: Church Name: This body shall be known as Faith Baptist Church, as adopted by church vote on January 18th, 1978.

Article 3: Mission and Purpose Statement: In obedience to God as a Christ centered body of believers, we commit to disciple, enable and encourage one another to love, worship and serve our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. Our mission is to promote worship that is God centered, not man centered, and to promote godliness in one another through the expository teaching and preaching of His Word, promote evangelism as a body and individually locally and abroad, and regularly practice the ordinances of the Lord's Supper and baptism.

Article 4: Articles of Faith and Doctrinal Statement: We adopt as the fullest expression of our faith the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith. The ultimate authority in all matters of faith, order and morals is and must be the Bible alone, which truth is clearly set forth in the opening article of the Confession itself.

Article 5: Church membership:

- 1) Requirements for Membership: Any person shall be eligible for membership in the church who professes repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ and has been scripturally baptized by immersion (Acts 2:37-42; 5:14; 8:12). Also, persons may be accepted into the church by letter from a biblical New Testament church and they have demonstrated good and faithful standing in that body. Such individuals who meet the above requirements shall make known their desire to the elder(s) of the church, either personally or by letter, and a time and place shall be set to sit down with the applicant and be questioned as to his or her basic Christian experience, doctrinal beliefs, and seriousness of intention to support wholeheartedly the ministry of this church. Before membership, the elder(s) shall also sit down regularly with the prospective members and review the Articles of Faith as contained in the 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith, with prospective members agreeing to substantial agreement with those articles. When the Elder(s) are satisfied that an applicant gives a credible profession of faith and meets the requirements for membership, the applicant will be presented for membership to the church. There will be a two week waiting time from the presentation of the applicant for membership to allow for questions or objections from the members of the church regarding the applicant. Upon the completion of the two

week period, if there have been no objections or all questions sufficiently answered, then the Elders admit the applicant for membership to the church.

- 2) Responsibilities of membership: All members of the church are expected to attend all stated meetings of the church unless providentially hindered. Those stated meetings of the church are the Lord's Day meetings, midweek prayer meetings, and other stated meetings of the church (Hebrews 10:24-25). The members are strongly urged at all times to be prayerful in preparation prior to the services, both for themselves and for those serving the Lord in the teaching of the Word and in other capacities on that day.
- 3) Another responsibility of church membership is faithful and regular giving to the church as an expression of one's level of commitment to support the work of the ministry and the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:13-14; Galatians 6:6).
- 4) Promotion of edification and peace: The church is represented in Scripture as a body having many members, each of the members having its particular function and yet having concern for the health and protection of the whole (1 Corinthians 12:12-17; Ephesians 4:4, 11-16), the members of this church must strive for the good of the entire body. Members should prayerfully seek to discover their spiritual gifts and exercise them for the good of the body (Romans 12:3-8). We are to exalt all within the church as better than ourselves, maintaining humility and love for one another (Philippians 2:1-4). We are to love, comfort and encourage one another and help one another materially when as necessity may require (Ephesians 4:25; 1 John 3:16-18). We are to faithfully and regularly encourage and admonish one another (Hebrews 10:24-25) and refrain from all backbiting and gossip (Proverbs 16:28; 26:20-22).
- 5) Support and submission to leadership. Members are expected to support and submit to the leadership of the church. They are to pray for them and their labors in the preaching of the Word of God (Ephesians 6:18-19), esteem them highly for their work's sake (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13), defend rather than damaging their good name and reputation (Acts 23:5; 1 Timothy 5:19). They are to receive their teaching and preaching with all readiness of mind, while at the same time understanding that they themselves are to search and study the Scriptures and make sure that their ultimate allegiance is to the Word of God (Acts 17:11; James 1:19-21). They are to humbly and willingly accept the rebukes and warning of Scripture as they are proclaimed by the Elder(s) of the church (Colossians 1:28; Hebrews 13:17). Also, they are to cheerfully embrace and abide by the decisions regarding the corporate policy in the church without murmuring or gossip (Romans 10:21; Jude 8-10).
- 6) Termination of membership and church discipline. If a member is habitually absent for a period of six months from the stated meetings of the church without just cause or providential hindrance, and all Biblical attempts have been made to reconcile any differences or encourage the member to repent and return to the regular attendance of the church, such member may be excluded from the membership at the discretion of the Elders. Also, members may be excluded from the membership of the church, upon the recommendation of the Elders, who persists in holding false or heretical doctrine; or who obviously lives inconsistently with his profession of faith; or who lives in violation of the law or public morals; or who persists in disturbing the unity of this church (Matthew 18:15ff; 1 Corinthians 5:1ff; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 11, 15; Romans 16:17). Lastly, letters

of dismissal to members who are in good standing and not under or subject to the discipline of the church at the time of making such request known. When such letters have been granted, the relationship to this church as a member shall be considered terminated.

Article 6: Church government

Church authority: Jesus Christ is Lord and Head of the Church. His will as expressed in the Holy Scripture, both Old and New Testaments, is the sole authority in all matters of faith, practice and Christian conduct.

Church polity: Under Christ, the final earthly authority is vested in the assembled congregation. The local church is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body or outside authority, but this church voluntarily complies with the laws of the local, state and federal governments unless any such law contradicts the teachings of the Holy Scriptures.

This church recognizes and welcomes voluntary cooperation with other Christian organizations and churches, which is common practice among Baptist churches. Cooperation and association with any other entity is contingent upon a shared belief in the gospel of Jesus Christ and subject to the consent of the assembled congregation.

The assembled congregation of the church is constituted of all the members of the church, who have been admitted into the church as previously outlined. It is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend member's meetings and vote on election of officers, on decisions regarding member status and church discipline and all other matters brought before the congregation by the elders.

Article 7: Church officers

General statement: Jesus Christ is the head of the Church. However, as head, He has ordained that individual churches should be blessed with the spiritual ministry and rule of those officers revealed in the Scriptures. Therefore, it is the duty of the local church to seek to discover those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the necessary gifts for office bearing. The Lord's appointment is recognized by not only the inward conviction of the individual involved, but also by the approval of the church observing the possession of those gifts and graces required, and by the Scriptural definition of the office. It should be the desire of the congregation to come to one mind regarding those office bearers who demonstrate these gifts. Such officers shall be installed and elected to this ministry by the vote of the church (unanimous?).

Christ has ordained that these two church offices are elders and deacons (Phil. 1:1; Acts 6:1-7; 14:23). Their qualifications and responsibilities shall be accordingly as defined in the Scriptures (1 Timothy 3:1-16; Titus 1:5-9; Acts 6:1-7).

Section 1: The office of Elder/Pastor/Bishop

Qualifications: Anyone desiring the office of an elder must evidence the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications as set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Elders shall be men in full communion with the church, of mature judgment, of unquestioned Christian character, loyal to the authority and truthfulness of the Word of God, able to teach sound doctrine, have demonstrated faithful and consistent teaching of the Word of God, have shown both spiritual and physical empathy for the welfare of fellow members, and devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ and the spiritual welfare of the church (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1:6-9). Anyone called to this office and prior to his election to this position in the church, must be able conscientiously to give full subscription to the Articles of Faith and constitution of the church. If at any time he moves from any of these beliefs and convictions held by the church, he is under moral and spiritual obligation to make this known to the other elders of the church and congregation.

Duties: It shall be the duty of elders to seek to discharge their duties as set forth in the Scripture, particularly such passages as Acts 20:17-28; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Peter 5:1-4; and Hebrews 13:17. It shall also be the duty of the elders to be diligent and faithful in attendance at the Elder's meetings and at the regular services of the Church. They shall be in charge of the pulpit and teaching ministry of the church; however, others qualified and gifted in teaching besides elders may teach under the supervision and guidance of the elders. The elders shall also oversee the observance of the Lord's Supper, choosing those who will serve at the Lord's Supper in the administration of the elements at the monthly observance of this ordinance. It is also the duty of the elders to have general oversight of the church in its ministry and functions, such as determination of missionary support, local outreach and cooperation with other churches.

Resignation or dismissal: If at any time an elder shall make application to be dismissed from his office, he shall make it known to the elders and to the church. If the elders and congregation shall choose to dismiss him by majority vote, then said status as an elder shall be vacated. Also, if at any time an elder shall be removed from membership by church discipline as previously noted, he shall immediately be removed from his office as an elder upon such vote and recommendation of the elders to the church.

Section 2: The Senior Pastor

Qualifications: The senior pastor shall be an Elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder as previously noted (Article 7, Section 1). He shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the vocational ministry of preaching and teaching the church. The senior pastor shall have primary responsibility for oversight of those teaching and serving within the body. The senior pastor shall have no formal authority distinct from the body of elders and shall exercise no discipline or authority not outlined in the constitution of the church or the Scriptures. In the absence or incapacity of the senior pastor the body of elders shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which

may be delegated. Also, the senior pastor is subject to the same dismissal rules or discipline as any other elder.

Section 3: The office of a Deacon

Qualifications: The qualifications for those who would serve in the office of deacon are described in 1 Timothy 3:3-13. The church shall recognize those who already possess these qualifications prior to formally electing them to this office (Acts 6:1-7), who are godly men full of the Holy Spirit and who are giving of themselves in service to the church, and who possess particular gifts of service. Upon recognition of these gifts, those who meet these qualifications will be recommended by the deacons and voted upon by the church for installation into this office. (unanimous, $\frac{2}{3}$, $\frac{3}{4}$).

Duties: In keeping with the principles of Acts 6:1-6, deacons shall not exercise spiritual authority, but shall enable the elders to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word. Deacons shall care for the temporal needs of the church body and attend to the needs of the church facility and grounds. These include: 1) The ministry of mercy and benevolence to those church members in need, and to such others in the community who come to the church in need, both spiritually and physically. 2) The business affairs of the church, including the financial oversight and care of the church grounds and maintenance.

Section 4: Installation of Elders and Deacons

Upon the recommendation of the Elder(s) of Faith Baptist Church, elders and deacons shall be installed for the purposes of the building up of the body of Christ and the aid and edification of the church body. Having demonstrated the qualifications of these offices, and having been presented to the church body, they shall be installed in a regular worship service of the church. They shall be asked these questions prior to their installation as their office;

- A. Do you believe the Scriptures as written in the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and do you accept them as the only infallible rule of all faith and practice?
- B. Have you personally adopted and will you cheerfully submit to and defend the Articles of Faith and Constitution of this Church?
- C. Do you accept the office of Elder/Deacon readily, and do you promise to perform its duties as stated in the Scriptures?

Article 8: Affiliation With Other Churches and Associations

Faith Baptist Church of Longview, Texas is autonomous and maintains the right to govern its own affairs, independent of any denominational control. However, the Bible

teaches that local churches should seek voluntary fellowship with other doctrinally sound churches. This association is to provide help and encouragement while working together as the Lord directs. This is a voluntary association that in no way involves the surrender of the individual church's freedom or dependence on God.

Article 9: Conducting Church Affairs

The conduct of the affairs of Faith Baptist Church in Longview, Texas are to be followed as outlined in this constitution and these bylaws and shall be amended as deemed necessary by Faith Baptist Church.

Article 10: Use of Church Facilities

The use of church facilities, such as weddings and other such celebrations, shall be restricted to members of the body, their families or at the discretion of the elder(s). There shall not be a charge or fee for such usage, but it is the expectation of the church that any cleanup following said celebration will be the responsibility of the members and/or parties using the church facilities. Scheduling of such events is subject to the approval of the elders and deacons.

Article 10: Amendments to Bylaws and Constitution

It is the responsibility of the Senior Pastor, Elder(s) and other church officers to annually review the constitution and bylaws, propose any revisions, and present such revisions to the church for approval.

AMENDMENT CONCERNING MARRIAGE, GENDER AND SEXUALITY

Section 1: We believe that God has wisely and immutably ascribed to each person his or her specific gender, which are either male or female. These two distinct, complementary genders together reflect the image and nature of God (Genesis 1:26-28). We believe, according to the infallible Word of God, that rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the design of God for that person.

Section 2: We believe that the term 'marriage' has only one meaning and that is the uniting of one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union, as presented in Scripture (Genesis 2:18-25). We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to one another (Hebrews 13:4), and that sex outside of marriage, whether in a heterosexual or homosexual relationship, is outside of God's design and therefore is sinful in the eyes of God. We believe that all sexual immorality, including adultery and homosexuality, are contrary to the teaching of Scripture (1 Corinthians 6:9-10, 13, 18). While we believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity (Mark 12:28-31; Luke 6:31), we also believe that to identify sexual immorality in all its forms is not hateful but it is to

act in accordance with the Holy Scriptures and is a genuine expression of love towards our neighbor and God. To call men and women to repent of these sins is what we are called to do in the preaching of the Gospel (Matthew 4:17; Revelation 2:22). To remain in the practice and the state of sin will mean eternal punishment and separation from God (1 Corinthians 6:9-10; Revelation 22:14-15).

Section 3: In accord with what we believe is the clear teaching of the Scriptures, we do not believe in the validity or the sanctioning of so-called same sex unions or marriages. As such, Faith Baptist Church will not allow our church facilities to be used for such ceremonies, and does not sanction the performing of any such unions or ceremonies by its Elder(s).

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