

# Constitution

## Introduction

Texarkana Reformed Baptist Church (TRBC) was organized in April of 1978. After meeting together for a little more than two years prior to constituting the church, and having come to an agreement on a doctrinal foundation for the church and the need of a Reformed Baptist Church in our area, thirteen of our group committed themselves to God and each other to establish Texarkana Reformed Baptist Church of Arkansas/Texas. By the time we were organized we had already spent months drawing up a constitution which was to govern the life of the church. This constitution was adopted on April 16, 1978, and a few minor revisions were completed by September of the same year. The church functioned under this constitution until the adoption of the new constitution on March 8, 2006.

We chose the name “Reformed Baptist” to identify ourselves with mainstream orthodox Christians of the past and present. You may be wondering, “What is a Reformed Baptist?” We use the word “**Reformed**” in our name to identify ourselves with the key ideas of the Protestant Reformation of the 16th century. The “Reformers” of the Reformation period sought to apply the Bible to every area of faith and life. They believed that true Christians must always be striving to bring every area of their lives into conformity with the teaching of the Scriptures. That is what we seek – a continual “reformation” of our churches and our lives according to the apostolic model.

Like those early Reformers, we desire to apply the Word of God to ourselves and the institutions of our culture such as the family, the church, education, government, etc. We especially emphasize the great doctrine of salvation in Christ which was recovered in its purity during the Reformation. This doctrine says that we are not saved by our works or through a human priesthood, but solely by God’s grace (unmerited favor) and solely through faith in Christ, who is our one and only Great High Priest. It is solely by the sacrificial offering of Himself which He made “once for all” on Calvary’s cross that we receive the forgiveness of sins.

In short, we believe as the Reformers

1. That the Bible alone, which is the infallible word of God, is the only authority for our faith and life;
2. That God is absolutely sovereign in creation, providence, and the salvation of sinners; and
3. That salvation is by grace alone through faith alone in the Lord Jesus Christ alone.

We also identify ourselves as “**Baptists**” in the historic sense of that word. We believe that all who come to faith in Christ should be baptized as a public testimony of their faith. The only proper subjects for baptism are believers and the only proper mode is immersion. In short, we believe

1. That the church of Christ is a holy convocation made up only of those who give a credible profession of their faith in Christ as Saviour and Lord and whose lives conform to that profession; and
2. In believers’ baptism by immersion.

We have adopted *The(1689) Second London (Baptist) Confession of Faith* as our own statement of faith. This confession of faith has been the basis of many other Baptist confessions of faith in the United States. (Copies of our confession of faith and our church constitution are available in our church book room.)

Our church is “**independent**,” by which we mean we are free from any outside control. Our own members, under the leadership of our Elders, make decisions on what is to be taught and what literature is to be used in our Sunday School or other authorized Bible studies. We also decide where our offerings are to be spent. No outside agency administers our monetary affairs.

While we are independent, we also work closely with other churches of like faith on various ministry projects such as youth camps, retreats, conferences, missions, literature, speakers, etc.

As our *Confession* delineates what we believe, our *Constitution* lays out the framework of our church practice. We have sought to bring all of our beliefs and practices into conformity to the Word of God, which is the final authority for all our faith and life. We commend this Constitution to all our present and future members and to all others who would know our practices as a church of Jesus Christ. Amen!

### **Covenant of Texarkana Reformed Baptist Church**

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized into the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we do, in the presence of God, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We pledge, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together with this church in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge, holiness, and comfort; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, doctrines, and discipline; and to give it a sacred preeminence over all institutions of human origin.

We pledge to give cheerfully and regularly to the support of this church, that we may in faithfulness to God’s Word carry out the duties and responsibilities incumbent upon us as a church of Jesus Christ – such responsibilities as the support of the local ministry of this church in the preaching and teaching of the word of God, spreading the gospel abroad, and relieving the poor are examples of the church’s ministry.

We also pledge to maintain family and private devotions, to educate our children in the things of God, to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances, to walk circumspectly in the world, to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment, to avoid all gossiping, backbiting, and excessive anger, and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the gospel, kingdom, and glory of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Furthermore, we pledge to walk together with this church in Christian love and watchfulness, giving and receiving admonition with meekness and affection, to remember each other in prayer, to aid the other members in sickness and distress, to cultivate

Christian sympathy and courtesy, and to be always slow to take offense and yet always ready for reconciliation.

Finally, we pledge “to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which we have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, showing forbearance to one another in love, being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace,” which the beloved Apostle Paul, under Divine inspiration, gently enjoins on us as a church of Jesus Christ. (Ephesians 4:1-3)

## **Constitution of Texarkana Reformed Baptist Church**

**PREAMBLE:** We, the members of the Texarkana Reformed Baptist Church (TRBC), do ordain and establish the following ARTICLES, to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

### **ARTICLE I. NAME**

This congregation of believers shall be known as Texarkana Reformed Baptist Church of Texarkana, Arkansas/Texas.

### **ARTICLE II. PURPOSE**

This church exists for the purpose of glorifying the God of the Bible by promoting His worship, by evangelizing sinners, and by building up and establishing saints in the faith. It is to this end that we are committed to the carrying out of the Great Commission, to the defense of the “faith once for all delivered to the saints,” and to all activities related to these goals. (Matthew 28:18-20; Jude 3)

### **ARTICLE III. ARTICLES OF FAITH**

We do hereby adopt, as an expression of our faith, *The 1689 London Baptist Confession of Faith*.<sup>\*</sup> This historic document is a most excellent summary of things most surely believed among us. We accept the same, not as an infallible and authoritative rule or code of faith, whereby we are to be fettered,<sup>\*\*</sup> but as 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. (I Peter 3:15)  
<sup>\*</sup>Appended hereto and hereafter referred to simply as “*Confession*.”

<sup>\*\*</sup>For example, we do not subscribe to every statement of the *Confession*. Neither do we believe that every Article is completely accurate. For a discussion of these examples, see the *Policy Manual*, “Concerning the Lord’s Day,” pages 16-17. The *Confession* does not exhaust the extent of our faith. We do believe, however, that the *Confession* accurately represents the Orthodox, Reformed, Evangelical, and Baptist teachings of the Bible.

### **ARTICLE IV. MEMBERSHIP**

#### **Section IV.01: Requirements for Membership**

**A.** This church shall receive into its membership those, 1) who give a satisfactory profession of their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, 2) who have been scripturally baptized as defined in the *Confession*, and 3) who voluntarily enter into its Covenant.

**B.** This church will hold in its membership those 1) who continue in their covenant commitment, 2) who walk in a way that is morally becoming the Christian calling and profession, and 3) whose lives are free of divisive doctrinal error.

#### **Section IV.02: Procedure for Receiving Members**

**A.** Any person who desires membership in TRBC shall apply through one of the officers (elders or deacons). A time shall be fixed in which at least two members (one must be an elder) shall meet with the applicant.

The applicant will be examined as to the genuineness of his experience in which there must be a satisfactory confession of a true interest in Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour. Having given a credible profession of faith in Christ, the applicant will then be examined as to the scripturality of his baptism. If the applicant has not been baptized, both baptism and his responsibility to be baptized will be explained.

The meaning of church membership – which is required of all Christians – along with its privileges and responsibilities will be delineated.

When the elders are satisfied that the applicant meets the requirements for entrance into the membership of the church, and sincerely desires the same, the elders will announce that the applicant desires membership in our fellowship. The announcement will be made in a regular meeting of the church on Sunday morning. The time between the announcement and the reception of the applicant into the membership of the church will be a minimum of one week and will take place in a regular meeting of the church on Sunday morning. If baptism is required, a convenient time will be arranged for the applicant to be baptized. In a formal reading of the Church Covenant, the applicant will make covenant with the church and the church with him. Upon the covenant commitment, the applicant will become a full member with all the privileges and responsibilities of the church, subject to any exceptions delineated in the constitution.

**B.** Any person desiring to unite with this church upon letter of recommendation from another church shall present such letter to the eldership and shall be examined concerning his Christian profession, baptism, doctrinal beliefs, previous church affiliations, and the seriousness of his intention to enter wholeheartedly into the covenant and support the total ministry of TRBC. (See A above)

#### **Section IV.03: Expectation of Members**

Implicit in the covenant commitment made to this church are the following practices, which are expected of TRBC Members:

**A.** All public and private means of grace, such as regular attendance at the services of the church, the daily systematic reading of the Bible, private and family prayers, personal and public testimony, and witnessing for Christ shall be urged upon our members.

**B.** Proportionate giving is urged upon each member of this church. For his spiritual good and that of the church, each member is encouraged as well as expected to give systematically a portion of his income in keeping with the prosperity with which God has blessed him.

**C.** We shall require of each other in our daily walk and conversation, loyal obedience to all moral precepts laid down in the Word of God. This includes but is not limited to the following:

1. Human Sexuality: We believe that no intimate sexual activity is to be engaged in outside of a marriage between one man and one woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, pornography, or any other form of sexual activity, other than the relationship in marriage between one man and one woman, is sinful perversion of God's gift of sex. We further believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance.

2. Marriage: We believe that the only Scriptural marriage is the joining of one man and one woman.

3. Divorce and Remarriage: We believe that God disapproves of divorce and intends marriage to last until one of the spouses dies. The Lord, however, has allowed exceptions to this rule in cases of 1) sexual immorality and 2) desertion of a believer by his unbelieving spouse. Remarriage is granted by the Scriptures in both cases.

4. Abortion: We believe that human life is sacred, that it begins at conception, and that the unborn child is a living human being. Thus we believe that it is sinful for man to wilfully initiate taking the life of an unborn child. However, in cases where a doctor confirms that the child would not survive, and the mother's life is also threatened, a surgical procedure to save the mother's life would not be contrary to Scripture. (Example: Tubal Pregnancy.) (Exodus 20:13)

5. Euthanasia: We believe that the direct taking of innocent human life, at any age, is a moral evil, regardless of intention.

6. Lawsuits Between Believers: We believe that the Bible prohibits Christians from bringing civil lawsuits against other Christians or the church in order to resolve personal disputes.

**D.** All who become members of TRBC are expected to recognize, respect, and submit to those whom God has placed in the position of Scriptural authority in the church. (Hebrews 13:17) This obligation continues even if the member is offended by one who is in a position of authority. Such offense should be dealt with as described in Section IV.06, C.

#### **Section IV.04: Privileges and Limitations of Membership**

Anyone entering the membership of TRBC has all the Privileges of Membership stated in this Section, Section IV.04, and elsewhere in this Constitution.

**A.** Voting Rights: All members who have reached the age of eighteen years and who have been members for at least six months will have the right to vote on office-bearers and the reception and dismissal of members. On all other matters requiring a vote, only males, who are heads of families – or who, in the judgment of the elders, have evidenced the requisite maturity for sound judgment – and who meet the other two requirements stated above, will have the right to vote.

**B.** The privileges of oversight and watch-care provided specifically by the eldership and by the other members is one of the great privileges of membership in TRBC. This includes, but is not limited to, the preaching and teaching ministry of this church, pastoral oversight and counseling, and the prayers, admonitions, and comfort of others during times of sickness, distress, and death.

**C.** Each member is privileged to share his gifts and special ministries with the other members of this church and the community, as directed by the eldership.

**D.** We count it a privilege for each member to share financially in the support of the ministry of TRBC and the work of spreading the gospel of Jesus Christ locally and to other areas of our country and the world.

**E.** As in all organizations, the church of Christ has limitations on its membership. TRBC has determined to state examples of those limitations in this Section. Limitations of Membership include, but are not limited to, the following:

1. This congregation functions not as a pure democracy, but as a body under the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ and the direction of the elders as the undershepherds. Determinations of the internal affairs of this church are ecclesiastical matters and shall

be determined exclusively by the church's own rules, policies, and procedures. The elders shall oversee and/or conduct all aspects of this church. Deacons shall give counsel and assistance to the elders as requested by them.

2. Membership in this church does not afford the members with any property, contractual, or civil rights based on principles of democratic government. Although the general public is invited to all of the church's worship services, the church property remains private property. The elders (or in their absence, the deacons, or an individual designated by the deacons) have the authority to suspend or revoke the right of any person, including a member, to enter or remain on church property. If after being notified of such a suspension or revocation, the person enters or remains on church property, the person may, in the discretion of the elders (or in their absence, the deacons or an individual designated by the deacons), be treated as a trespasser.

3. A member may inspect or copy the prepared financial statements of the church and the minutes of the proceedings of church meetings and of board meetings, provided he shall have given a written request to the church and the church shall have received the written request at least five business days before the requested inspection date.

a. A member may not, under any circumstances, inspect or copy any record relating to individual contributions to the church, any confidential counseling records, the list of names and addresses of the church members, or the accounting books and financial records of the church.

b. The church may impose a reasonable charge, covering the costs of labor and material, for copies of any documents provided to the member before releasing the copies to the member.

#### **Section IV.05: Transfer of Membership**

This church will grant letters of transfer for members who are transferring their membership to another church, provided they are not under discipline at the time of application. Letters shall not be given to the transferring member. They will be sent to the church, upon the request of the member or the church where membership is being requested. Letters of recommendation will be given to churches that are biblically orthodox and uphold the standards of the Scripture as determined by the elders. See also Section IV.07, A.

#### **Section IV.06: Discipline of Members**

##### **A. Kinds of Discipline:**

1. Formative Discipline is primarily positive through the teaching of God's Word, the example of Christian living, and the mutual ministry of the several members of the body of Christ, and has as its objective the instruction of disciples, the transformation of their lives, and their edification in love. (Ephesians 4:1-13; Romans 12:1-16; I Corinthians 12:4-27) Formative discipline has a sanctifying influence. Every member should be satisfied with his God given ministry, and thus we shall all grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. (I Peter 4:7-12) Formative Discipline utilizes the talents of each church member, whether old or young, for the edification of all. Each who has been redeemed by Christ should live for Him and His church and not for himself.

2. Corrective Discipline implies disorderly conduct or heretical doctrine that is opposed to the church's life and faith. Reasonable efforts shall be made to clear up difficulties and remove offenses before any action is taken. No offense shall be brought before the church until the instructions of Scripture have first been followed. (Matthew 5:23-24; 18:15;

Galatians 6:1-2) Corrective discipline has for its aim the glory of God, the welfare and purity of the church, and the correction and spiritual welfare of the offender.

3. Suspension: If a member has sinned publicly, but shows hopeful signs of repentance, including submission to the admonition of the elders, it could not be proper to cut off such a one completely from membership in the church. Nevertheless, serious offenses must not be overlooked lest occasion be given “to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme” (II Samuel 12:14), lest others be emboldened to sin, and lest the offender himself fail to test his own soul and appreciate the gravity of his offense. The elders may in such cases suspend the offender from all privileges of membership, including participation in the Lord’s Supper, for the period of time which, in their judgment, is necessary to demonstrate the reality of the repentance and reformation of the offender. Such action of the elders must be reported by them to the congregation. That one who humbly submits to the imposed discipline shall afterwards be wholly forgiven and publicly reinstated to all the privileges of membership from which he was suspended. (II Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15)

4. Exceptional or Excisive Discipline, namely Excommunication: We recognize termination of church membership as a disciplinary measure to be a most serious action. However, in order that the purity of the church may be maintained, any member guilty of a serious offense and remaining unrepentant despite repeated admonitions must be removed from the membership of the church. Yet, our zeal for the glory of God must ever be tempered by a loving and prayerful concern for the full restoration of the offender. For the grounds for Exceptional Discipline see Section IV.07, E & F. The procedure to be followed depends upon the nature of the offense. See “C” below and Section IV. 07: Termination of Membership, E & F.

**B. The aim of Exceptional Discipline is the glory of God, the purity, unity, influence, and witness of the church, and the good of the one disciplined.**

**C. Normal Procedure of Discipline – Leading to Restoration or Excommunication**

1. There shall be a discipline committee consisting of the pastors/elders (hereafter referred to as elders) and the deacons. These men shall have sole authority in determining heretical deviations from the *Confession* and violations of the church covenant. If an elder or a deacon is the subject of a disciplinary matter, he shall not sit as a member of the discipline committee. The elders and deacons shall be entitled to the same steps as other church members and be subject to the same discipline.

2. Members are expected to demonstrate special loyalty and concern for one another. When a member becomes aware of an offense of such magnitude that it hinders church unity, spiritual growth, and testimony, he is to go alone to the offending party and seek to restore his brother. Before he goes, he should first examine himself. When he goes, he should go with a spirit of humility and with the goal of restoration and reconciliation.

3. If reconciliation is not reached, a second member, preferably an elder or deacon, is to accompany the one seeking to resolve the matter. This second step should also be preceded by self-examination and exercised in a spirit of humility with the goal of restoration and reconciliation.

4. If the matter is still unresolved after the steps outlined in subsections 2 and 3 have been taken, the discipline committee, as the church representatives biblically responsible for putting down murmuring, shall hear the matter. Both parties involved in the dispute will be requested to appear before the committee and will be allowed to present their case with

a view to a biblical resolution of the problem. If the matter is not resolved during the hearing before the discipline committee, the committee shall recommend to the members of the church, who are so inclined, that they, after self-examination, make an effort personally to go to the offending member and seek that member's restoration. The committee may also recommend binding arbitration, in which case, three arbitrators, chosen from the membership of TRBC and who are agreeable to both parties in the dispute, will hear the case and work with both parties to effect a resolution to the problem. The parties shall waive any legal right to take the dispute to a court of law. The arbitrators will report their judgment on the matter to both parties in the dispute and to the Discipline Committee. If the parties have agreed to be bound by the decision of the arbitrators, then the decision of the arbitrators will be final.

5. If the matter is still unresolved after the steps outlined in subsections 2, 3, and 4 have been taken, the members involved in the dispute, will be notified in writing that the church will meet and that the Discipline Committee will recommend disciplinary action to be taken by the church. Both parties involved in the dispute will be allowed to present their case before the church. Such members who refuse to repent and be restored are to be removed from the membership of the church upon a majority vote of the membership present at a meeting specifically called for the purpose of considering disciplinary action.

6. No matter may be heard by the discipline committee or the church unless the steps outlined in subsections 2 and 3 have been taken, except in the case of a public offense.

7. If an unrepentant offending party is removed from the church membership, all initiated contact with him from that point forward (except by family members and through employment) must be for the sake of restoration.

8. The procedures provided in this section are based on Matthew 18:15-20; Romans 16:17-18; I Corinthians 5:1-13; II Corinthians 2:1-11; Galatians 6:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; II Thessalonians 3:6, 10-15; I Timothy 5:19-20; and Titus 3:10-11.

#### **Section IV.07: Termination of Membership**

**A.** Termination by dismissal due to transfer – Letters of dismissal shall be granted by the eldership to members who apply for them, provided they are not subject to or under discipline at the time of the application. When such letters have been granted, the relationship to this church shall be considered terminated. Letters of recommendation shall be forwarded and given only to other churches of like faith.

**B.** No member of this church may simultaneously hold membership in another church. The membership of any individual member shall automatically terminate without further notice, and the other church notified, when it is determined that the member has united in membership with another church.

**C.** The membership of any individual member shall automatically terminate without notice if the member in question has not attended a regular worship service of the church in the preceding three months. Upon good cause being shown to the elders, this provision for termination may be waived in the case of any individual member at the discretion of the elders.

**D.** Termination by Exclusion due to Default – See “C” above. A letter of commendation will not be given to any member whose membership is terminated due to default.

**E.** Termination by Automatic Excommunication – The membership of any individual member shall automatically terminate without further notice if the member states that he or she is actively involved in any conduct described in Section IV.03, C, 1 and who refuses



to repent and discontinue such conduct, or who files a lawsuit in violation of Section IV.03, C, 6. (See I Corinthians 5:1-13 and 6:1-7)

**F. Termination by Excommunication** due to heresy, immorality, divisiveness, and /or apostasy – It is right and in harmony with the Scriptures for the congregation, upon recommendation of the eldership, to exclude from this fellowship any person who persists in holding false or heretical doctrine; who obviously and persistently lives inconsistently with the Christian profession; who lives in violation of the law of public morals; who walks disorderly; or who persists in disturbing the unity and peace of this church. (Matthew 18:15ff; I Corinthians 5; II Thessalonians 3:6, 11, 15; Romans 16:17)(For Procedure for Excommunication see Section IV.06: Discipline of Members, C & Section IV.07, E & F)

#### **Section IV.08: Restoration to Church Membership**

The right to exclude or excommunicate persons from church membership and the withdrawal of church fellowship is in harmony with the teachings of the New Testament. (Matthew 18:16-17; I Corinthians 5; II Thessalonians 3:6) The Apostolic church also had a right to restore those persons who gave satisfactory evidence of repentance. (II Corinthians 2:6-8) The object of the discipline having been accomplished, the congregation shall have the right to restore the repentant member to full membership, under the recommendation of the eldership and by a majority vote of the members present and voting.

#### **ARTICLE V. ORDINANCES**

This church recognizes but two ordinances instituted by Christ in the New Testament: Baptism and the Lord's Supper.

##### **Section V.01: Baptism**

As a church we practice baptism of believers by immersion and, in accordance with the directions of Scripture, require submission to this ordinance as a prerequisite for church membership. TRBC acknowledges no subject other than a believer, and no mode other than immersion, as scripturally fulfilling the requirements for baptism. Baptism has no saving merit, but is administered to those who, having believed, are saved. It is the initial visible sign to the world that the believer is now identified with Christ, who died, was buried, and rose again. Baptism is to be observed only once as an induction into the Christian Faith and as a testimony to newness of life in Christ. (See Chapters 28 and 29 in our *Confession*.)

Any person professing repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and whose life makes that profession credible, desiring to be baptized, shall make application for membership through an officer of this church. (For procedure see Article IV, Section IV.02.)

##### **Section V.02: The Lord's Supper**

The Lord's Supper is commemorative and will be observed regularly by the assembled church as a memorial to Christ's body given and His blood shed for each of us. (See Chapters 28 and 30 in our *Confession*.)

#### **ARTICLE VI. OFFICE BEARERS**

##### **Section VI.01: General Statement**

Jesus Christ alone is the Head of His church. However, as Head, He has ordained that individual churches should be blessed with the spiritual rule and ministry of special office bearers. Therefore, it is the duty of the church to seek to discover those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the necessary gifts for office-bearing, and having formally recognized such by common suffrage, to set them apart by united prayer and to submit to

their rule and ministry. Christ has ordained that the administration of local churches is to be by elders and deacons.

All elders and deacons must subscribe wholeheartedly to the Covenant, *Confession*, and Constitution of this church. This does not mean that these documents are to be placed on an equality with Scripture nor that minor differences are precluded. The purpose of the above statement is to guarantee, as much as possible, that the office bearers of TRBC are orthodox in the Christian Faith, that they subscribe to the “Doctrines of Grace” (known as “Calvinism”), and that they are committed to the Historic Baptist principles of believers’ baptism and a church that is made up only of those who give a credible profession of their faith in Jesus Christ as Saviour and Lord and whose lives conform to that profession.

If at any time an elder or deacon, serving as an office bearer in this church, calls into question or comes to believe anything contrary to the Orthodox Christian Faith, the Doctrines of Grace, or the Historic Baptist Principles, stated above, he shall immediately resign from the office that he holds, relinquish all his rights as an office bearer in TRBC, and his tenure as office bearer shall be automatically terminated. If however, he has questions about the Covenant, Constitution, or *Confession* of this church he will take this up with the other officers for resolution.

#### **Section VI.02: Eldership**

**A.** Elders – who are also called Bishops and Pastors in the Scriptures – are charged with the spiritual rule and oversight of local churches. Among the functions of this office are the preaching and teaching of the Word of God, the implementation of church discipline, the watch-care of the souls of the church members, and the general oversight of all church activities and functions. (I Timothy 3:2, 4-5; 5:17; Titus 1:9; Hebrews 13:17; Acts 20:17, 28; I Peter 5:1-3)

**B.** One man, though he must have all the qualifications for the office of elder, will most likely never excel in all the gifts requisite to the effectual working of the office. We thus, in accord with Scripture, recognize the requirements for and the need of a plurality of elders in each church. (I Timothy 3:1-2; Titus 1:5-9; Acts 14:23; 20:17, 28) Among the elders, however, are to be found those who are especially qualified and fitted by God to the teaching and congregational preaching of His Word. These should, as far as possible, be adequately maintained in material necessities, so as to be disentangled from the cares of a secular calling, that they might devote themselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word. (Acts 6:1-4; Galatians 6:6; I Timothy 5:17-18)

**C.** We also recognize that the authority to rule and oversee the church is vested in the elders as a body. There is a parity among the elders, and one elder, no matter what his special ministry, amount of monetary support, or time dedicated to the ministry, has no more authority than another. (Acts 20:17-28; I Peter 5:1-3) Each elder is to seek counsel from and submit to the pastoral oversight of the other elder(s).

**D.** Anyone desiring the office of an elder must evidence the personal, domestic, moral, and ministerial qualifications as set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

**E.** While every elder bears spiritual rule and must be “apt to teach,” some will be more engaged in formal and public teaching, while others will be more engaged in the details of ruling. (I Timothy 5:17)

**F.** No man will be appointed to the office of elder in this church who has not been a member of this church for a period of at least six months.

**G.** In exceptional cases, a man from outside the congregation may be asked to come on a provisional basis, for a time not less than six months and not more than twelve months, in view of an appointment to the office of elder. In such a case, the man will be financially compensated for his ministry and will aid the elders in the ministry of the word, as directed by the existing eldership.

### **Section VI.03: Deacons**

**A.** Deacons are responsible for the business and secular affairs of the church, which are to be administered with spiritual grace and in cooperation with and subjection to the eldership. (Acts 6:1-3)

**B.** Deacons must evidence the qualifications of the office as set forth in I Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:3.

### **Section VI.04: Procedure for Nominating and Appointing Office Bearers**

**A.** The appointment of elders and deacons for office within the local church is the responsibility of the local church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. The Lord's appointment is recognized both by the inward conviction of the individual involved and by the approval of the church observing the possession of those gifts and graces required by Scripture for the office concerned.

**B.** Each year, at the annual February Business Meeting, a nominating committee shall be constituted by a vote of the members present and voting. This committee shall consist of the existing Elders and five other members elected by the congregation to serve on this committee. All those serving on the committee must have been members of this church, in good standing, for not less than one year. No person shall serve on the committee for two consecutive years; nor shall members of the same household serve on the same committee. One alternate committee member shall be elected and will serve in the absence of any one of the regular committee members. In order to obtain a more accurate consensus of the congregation's evaluation of the male members, the five members elected by the congregation shall consist of men and women. This committee shall be a standing committee and shall serve for a period of one year from the time of their appointment. Their term shall expire when the new committee is elected at the next annual February Business Meeting.

It shall be the function of this committee to review the Biblical requirements for elders and deacons, and then to go over the list of male members to consider whether or not new names should be presented to the church for election as elders and/or deacons. Any prospective office bearer must be presented to the committee by the first Sunday (four days) after the annual February Business Meeting. All nominations for office bearers shall come through the nominating committee; no nominations from the floor will be considered.

The nominating committee shall meet at least once with each candidate for office prior to their final nominating decision. The purpose of this meeting is to facilitate an open and frank discussion of the candidate's desire and qualifications for the office.

All members of this church are encouraged to discuss their views about specific candidates with the elders and/or the other members of the committee.

A majority vote of the Nominating Committee is necessary to bring a nominee before the church for a vote.

Although elders and deacons are chosen at the annual March Business Meeting, in special cases an office bearer may be nominated and appointed at a time other than the March Meeting. Examples of such circumstances are the death of an elder or the failure of a

nominee to be chosen to serve in the office. In such cases, the procedure for choosing an office bearer will follow the same procedure delineated above in Section VI.04, B, paragraphs 2-5 above.

**C.** The recognition of office bearers is a matter of such importance that it should never be dealt with without much prayerful waiting upon God, an honest perusal of the relevant passages of Scripture, and a frank evaluation of those who are being considered as potential office bearers. Each member of the congregation has a spiritual responsibility to be intelligently informed regarding the above-mentioned matters. It should be the desire of the congregation to come to one mind regarding those office bearers to whom they must submit in the Lord, but should such unanimity not be fully realized, no less than a three-fourths (3/4) majority of the members present and voting shall be required for the election of an office bearer.

After the name of the potential office bearer has been set before the congregation, the potential office bearer and his immediate family will be asked to leave the presence of the congregation during which time the Scriptural qualifications for the given office will be read to the congregation and any items respecting those qualifications shall be freely discussed. Subsequent to a full and free discussion oriented to the relevant Scriptural passages, a written ballot shall be taken. The vote will then stand as it is first given in the written ballot.

**D. Absentee Voting:** Each eligible member (See Section IV.04, A above) shall be permitted to cast an absentee ballot prior to the annual March Business Meeting. Absentee ballots will be made available two Sundays (ten days) before the annual March Business Meeting. Absentee ballots will be the same as the regular ballot. The ballot shall be obtained from one of the elders and shall be returned to one of the elders in a sealed envelope before the March Business Meeting. Availability of absentee ballots shall be subject to the approval of the elders for legitimate reasons, such as necessity of work or illness. Absentee ballots shall be counted with the other ballots at the March Business Meeting.

**E.** No proxy vote will be allowed.

**F.** Any member who plans not to vote for a nominee for either the office of elder or deacon is encouraged, by the eldership, to meet with the nominee before the vote is taken and give his reason for the negative vote.

**G.** Decisions of the local church, which are made under the headship of Christ, are to be submitted to by each member of the body. Therefore, any member who casts a negative vote contrary to the three-fourths (3/4) majority, as required in “C” above, is called upon to recognize the decision as authoritative. Once a nominee has been elected to office, any member who did not vote for that nominee will be expected to support him in his total ministry as an elder or deacon of TRBC. This is to be done, not only because a great majority of the church has recognized him as God’s appointed man, but also out of respect for his office, concern for the peace of the church, and submission to its established order, bearing in mind that the nominee was duly elected to office by a three-fourths (3/4) majority of those who were present and voting at the time of his election.

## **ARTICLE VII. TRUSTEES**

### **Section VII.01: General Statement**

In order to “render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s,” this church has been incorporated under the laws of the State of Arkansas and of the State of Texas.

The Trustees shall be called upon to perform whatever legal and business transactions that are peculiarly designated to them by the laws of the states. The Trustees shall elect from among themselves a president and any other officers required by state law. In the discharge of their duties, they shall act only at the direction of the eldership and of the congregation.

### **Section VII.02: Number and Election**

The Board of Trustees shall consist of three members, of whom one shall be elected by the corporation at each Annual March Business Meeting, for a term of three years, thus providing overlapping terms. Each member shall hold office until his successor shall be elected. A trustee may be elected to succeed himself. Trustees shall be elected from the existing office bearers or from the congregation at large. Should a vacancy occur in the Board of Trustees, due to death, dismissal, or some other reason, the eldership will be authorized to fill the vacancy immediately. Their appointment may then be confirmed at a duly called congregational business meeting, or another person may be elected to fill the unexpired term of the former trustee.

## **ARTICLE VIII. CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS**

### **Section VIII.01: Regular Meetings**

Regular meetings for worship, teaching of the Word of God, prayer, and observance of the ordinances will be established by the eldership of this church.

### **Section VIII.02: Elders' Meetings**

**A.** The elders shall meet each month to discuss and act upon the general business of the church. At the discretion of the elders, the deacons or others may be requested to attend the monthly meetings. At least two-thirds (2/3) of the elders must be present to constitute a quorum.

**B.** The eldership shall not encumber, transfer, sell, or purchase any real estate for the church, except by the express authorization of the congregation. No obligation shall be incurred to spend over \$2,000.00 on any one item without the special approval of the congregation, unless said item appears in a congregationally approved budget. The distribution of the William Carey Missionary Memorial Offering, which is given the last three months of each year, will be an exception to this rule. This money will be distributed at the discretion of the elders.

### **Section VIII.03: Annual Business Meetings**

The church shall hold two annual Business Meetings: one, on the second Wednesday night in February; the other, on the second Wednesday night in March. The first meeting shall serve as a preparatory meeting for the second, and in it the nominating committee shall be constituted, and all necessary arrangements made and business transacted in preparation for the second meeting. At the second meeting, the following matters shall be presented or considered, along with any other items affecting the life and business of the church: the financial report of the treasurer, the deacons' report, the elders' report, report of the nominating committee, reports of any special committees, election of officers, election of trustee, auditor's report, and matters related to membership.

Any member who wishes to place an item on the agenda for the March Business Meeting must communicate this to an elder in writing no later than four days prior to the meeting. No issue will be presented from the floor at the March Meeting that has not been on the agenda for at least four days prior to the meeting.

All church business meetings shall be opened and closed with prayer for divine guidance and blessing.

The moderator shall determine the rules of procedure according to his sense of fairness and common sense, giving members a reasonable opportunity to be heard on a matter. The moderator, who will come from among the elders or deacons, is the final authority on questions of procedure, but must seek the counsel of other officers, present at the meeting, if a question of inequity is raised. In the event that there is not unanimity among the officers on the question, then a majority vote of the officers present will be final and controlling.

For any meeting under this article, the moderator, in his sole discretion, shall have full and unilateral authority to require nonmembers to leave the meeting room and to order the immediate removal of any member or other person present who is deemed by the moderator to be disruptive to the proceedings by act or presence. The moderator shall have full authority to order the removal of all children (ages to be determined by the moderator) if the moderator determines, in his sole discretion, that circumstances so warrant. If the moderator determines that compliance with his order of removal is unsatisfactory, the moderator may, in his sole discretion, revoke the disruptive person's right to remain on the premises in accordance with Section IV.04: E, 2 and treat the person as a trespasser.

#### **Section VIII.04: Special or Called Business Meetings**

Congregational meetings may be called by the elders, or when at least ten members make a written request for such a meeting. This request must be set forth in writing with the signatures of ten members in good standing, and presented to the elders who shall in turn make the proper announcement of the meeting. Every congregational meeting at which business is to be transacted shall be announced at regular services for at least two successive Sundays prior to the meeting. (For an exception to this rule, see Section IV.02: Procedure for Receiving Members, Paragraph 4.) Other congregational meetings, in which there is no business transacted by vote, may be called at the discretion of the elders without a previous notice.

#### **Section VIII.05: Voting Rights**

For Voting Rights of TRBC, see Section IV.04, A, Voting Rights.

#### **Section VIII.06: Voting – Quorum and Majority**

All members should regard their presence at a duly called congregational meeting with the same seriousness with which they would regard their attendance at a stated service of worship. However, no less than 50% of the active voting membership – who have a right to vote on the issue under consideration (See Section IV.04: A, Voting Rights) – shall constitute a quorum. It should be our goal to discern prayerfully the mind of God so that in all matters of church business it may be said of us, as it was said of the church business meeting recorded in Acts 6, “that this thing pleased the whole multitude.” However, in such situations where this unanimity is not realized no less than a two-thirds (2/3) majority of those voting will make a resolution valid. In other matters where the Constitution requires a different proportionate vote, this two-thirds (2/3) figure will be overridden by the express statement of the Constitution regarding those particular matters.

#### **Section V11.07: Fiscal Year**

The fiscal year of the church shall begin January 1st and end December 31st.

### **ARTICLE IX. DESIGNATED CONTRIBUTIONS**

From time to time the church, in the exercise of its religious, educational, and charitable purposes, may establish various funds to accomplish specific goals. Contributors may

suggest uses for their contributions, but all suggestions shall be deemed advisory rather than mandatory in nature. All contributions made to specific funds or otherwise designated shall remain subject to the control and discretion of the elders. No fiduciary obligation shall be created by any designated contribution made to the church other than to use the contribution for the general furtherance of any of the purposes stated in Article II.

#### **ARTICLE X. DISSOLUTION**

Upon the dissolution of the church, the trustees shall, after paying or making provision for payment of all the liabilities of the church, dispose of all of the assets of the church to such organization or organizations formed and operated exclusively for religious purposes, as the trustees and elders shall determine. Assets may be distributed only to tax-exempt organizations of like faith.

#### **ARTICLE XI. AMENDMENTS**

Amendments to this Constitution may be adopted by a two-thirds (2/3) vote of the congregation at any regular congregational meeting or special meeting called for this purpose, provided in either case that such amendment shall be distributed in written form to the membership and announced from the pulpit at least two weeks prior to such meeting. Any proposed amendment to this Constitution shall be submitted in writing to the eldership for review.

This Constitution was adopted by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote of the members present and voting at a duly called meeting of the church in which a quorum was present. This Constitution supercedes any other Constitution or Bylaws of the church.