

Statement of Faith & Order

(Instituted on 8/21/2021)

(Last updated 11/7/2022)

Introduction

We the members of Reformed Baptist Church solemnly declare and affirm the principles contained in this Constitution to be sufficient for the governing of this body in an orderly manner as an autonomous local church. We further declare and affirm that, while we will indeed faithfully and voluntarily submit ourselves to the principles and applications herein, we will only do so insofar as they are in accord with the clearly revealed truth contained in God's Word. In regard to matters not clearly revealed in the word of God, the liberties of each individual church member shall be preserved (Rom 14:1-23; 1 Cor 10:23ff.; 2 Cor 3:17; Gal 2:4) until such time as we are, by God's grace, led into greater knowledge of His truth.

Article I – Name

The name of this church shall be Reformed Baptist Church, located in Coleman, Texas.

Article II – Objectives

The primary purpose of this church is to glorify God through the faithful preaching and teaching of His Word for the edification of His gathered saints and their equipping for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:12ff; Matt 28:19-20; Mark 16:15-16).

Article III – Statement of Faith

i. Of the Scriptures.

We believe that the Holy Bible, consisting of the 39 books of the Old Testament and the 27 books of the New Testament, was written by men divinely inspired (2 Peter 1:20, 2 Timothy 3:16), and is a perfect treasure of heavenly instruction; that it has God for its author (Hebrews 1:1, I John 5:9, Isaiah 55:11, Isaiah 59:21), salvation for its end (John 5:24, Romans 15:4, John 14:6, John 11:26), and truth, without any mixture of error (Psalm 119:172), for its matter; that it reveals the principles by which God will judge us (John 12:48); that it is sufficiently of itself brings forth everything necessary for salvation, faith, holiness and Christian practice (2 Timothy 3:15-17, Psalm 119:81, Psalm 119:105); and therefore is, and shall remain to the end of the world (Matthew 5:18, Matthew 24:35), the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which

all human conduct, creeds, and opinions should be tried (Isaiah 8:20, Revelation 22:18-19).

ii. Of the True God.

We believe that there is one, and only one (Deuteronomy 6:4 Mark 12:29), living and true God, an infinite, intelligent Spirit, whose name is JEHOVAH (Exodus 6:3), the Maker and Supreme Ruler of heaven and earth (Psalm 83:18, Ephesian 4:6); inexpressibly glorious in holiness (Isaiah 6:3), and worthy of all possible honor, confidence, and love (Revelation 5:12, Revelation 15:3-4); that in the unity of the Godhead there are three persons, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matthew 28:19); equal in every divine perfection, and executing distinct and harmonious offices in the great work of redemption.

God the Father

Of none, neither begotten nor proceeding. (I Corinthians 8:6 I Corinthians 15:24, Philippians 2:11, Philippians 4:20)

God the Son

The Son is eternally begotten of the Father (John 1:14, John 3:16). He is the mediator between God and man (I Timothy 2:5); the prophet (Deuteronomy 18:15, priest (Hebrews 4:14, Romans 8:34), and king (Revelation 19:6, I Timothy 6:15); head and savior of the church (Ephesians 5:23, Revelation 5:9), the heir of all things (Hebrews 1:2), and judge of the world (John 5:22, 27); unto whom the Father did from all eternity give a people to be His seed (Ephesians 1:4) and to be by Him in time redeemed, called, justified, sanctified, and glorified (Romans 8:30).

God the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son. (Luke 11:13, I John 4:13, John 6:7, John 14:26)

iii. Of the Fall of Man.

We believe that man was created in holiness, under the law of his Maker; but by voluntary transgression fell from that holy and happy state (Genesis 2:17, Genesis 3:6); in consequence of which all mankind are now sinners, dead in sin (Ephesians 2:5, Colossians 2:13, I Corinthians 15:22), wholly defiled in all the faculties and parts of soul and body (Isaiah 64:6 Psalm 14:3, Mark 10:18), being by nature utterly void of that holiness required by the law of God, positively inclined to evil, and willful in sin, and therefore under just condemnation to eternal ruin, without defense or excuse. (Jeremiah 17:9, Matthew 15:19, Genesis 6:5, John 8:34, John 8:44, Isaiah 1:5-6, Psalm 58:3, Ephesians 2:12)

iv. Of God's Election.

We believe that Election is the eternal purpose of God, according to which he graciously regenerates, sanctifies, and saves His Elect (2 Tim 1:9); that it is a most glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, being infinitely free, wise, holy, and unchangeable; that it utterly excludes boasting, and promotes humility, love, prayer, praise, trust in God, and active imitation of his free mercy (Rom 3:27); that it encourages the use of means in the highest degree; that it is ascertained by its effects in all who truly believe the gospel (2 Cor 5:17); that it is the foundation of Christian assurance (2 Tim 2:19); and that to ascertain it with regard to ourselves demands and deserves our utmost diligence.

v. Of the Way of Salvation.

We believe that salvation of sinners is wholly of grace (Eph 2:8), through the mediatorial offices of the Son of God; who by the appointment of the Father, freely took upon him our nature, yet without sin; honored the divine law by his personal and perfect obedience (Phil 2:8), and by his death made a full atonement (Heb 10:14) for our sins; being risen from the dead, he is now enthroned in heaven; and uniting in his wonderful person the tenderest sympathies with divine perfections, he is every way qualified to be a suitable, a compassionate, and an all-sufficient Savior (Heb 10:12).

vi. Of Grace in Regeneration.

We believe that, in order to be saved, sinners must be regenerated, or born again (John 3:3). This regeneration consists in a new holy creation in the soul. The change produced is so great and impacts the mind, will, and emotions in such a way that the person may truly be called a new man (Eze 36:26). This new birth is "not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." (John 1:13) It is brought about by the power of the Holy Spirit, in connection with the Word of God, and secures our voluntary obedience to the Gospel. Its proper evidence is found in the holy fruits of repentance (Matt 3:8), and faith, and newness of life. (Rom 6:4)

vii. Of Repentance and Faith.

We believe that Repentance and Faith are sacred duties (Mat 4:17; 1 Joh 3:23), and also inseparable graces, wrought in our souls by the regenerating Spirit of God (2 Tim 2:25; Eph 2:8); whereby being deeply convinced of our guilt, danger, and helplessness (Rom 3:12), and of the way of salvation in Christ (Joh 14:6), we turn to God with unfeigned [genuine] contrition, confession, and supplication for mercy; at the same time heartily receiving the Lord Jesus as our Prophet, Priest, and King, and relying on Him alone as the only and all-sufficient Savior (Rom 10:9).

viii. Of Justification.

Those whom God effectually calls, he also freely justifies (Rom 3:24, 8:30), not by infusing righteousness into them, but by pardoning their sins (Rom 4:5-8; Eph 1:7), and by accounting and accepting their persons as righteous (1 Cor 1:30-31; Rom 5:17-19) not for anything wrought in them, or done by them, but for Christ's sake alone. They are not justified because God reckons as their righteousness either their faith, their believing, or

any other act of evangelical obedience (Phi 3:8-9; Eph 2:8-10). They are justified wholly and solely because God imputes to them Christ's righteousness. He imputes to them Christ's active obedience to the whole law and His passive obedience in death to them. They receive Christ's righteousness by faith, which is the sole instrument of justification (Rom 3:28), and rest [depend] on Him (John 1:12; Rom 5:17). They do not possess or produce this faith themselves, it is a gift of God (Eph 2:9).

Christ, by his obedience and death, fully discharged the debt of all those that are justified; and by the sacrifice of Himself through the blood of his cross, underwent instead of them the penalty due to them, so making a proper [specific], real, and full satisfaction to God's justice in their behalf (Heb 10:14; 1Pe 1:18-19; Isa 53:5-6). Yet because He was given by the Father for them, and because His obedience and satisfaction was accepted instead of theirs (and both freely, not because of anything in them) (Rom 8:32; 2 Cor 5:21), therefore they are justified entirely and solely by free grace, so that both the exact justice and rich grace of God might be glorified in the justification of sinners (Rom 3:26; Eph 1:6-7, 2:7).

From all eternity God decreed to justify all the elect (Gal 3:8; 1 Pet 1:2; 1 Tim 2:6), and Christ, in the fullness of time, died for their sins, and rose again for their justification (Rom 4:25). Nevertheless, they are not justified personally, until the Holy Spirit, in due time, actually applies Christ unto them (Col 1:21-22; Tit 3:4-7), and they can never fall totally from this state justification (Joh 10:28).

The justification of believers during the Old Testament period was, in all these respects, exactly the same as the justification of New Testament believers (Gal 3:9; Rom 4:22-24).

ix. Of Sanctification.

We believe that Sanctification is the process by which, according to the will of God, we are made partakers of his holiness (Rom 6:5-6); that it is a progressive work; that it is begun in regeneration (Eze 11:19, 36:26); and that it is carried on in the hearts of believers by the presence and power of the Holy Spirit, the Sealer and Comforter, in the continual use of the appointed means—especially the Word of God, self-examination, self-denial, watchfulness and prayer (Gal 5:17; 2 Cor 3:18; 2 Cor 7:1; Phi 2:12; 1 Pet 2:11).

x. Of the Perseverance of the Saints.

Those whom God hath accepted in the Beloved [Christ], and has effectually called and sanctified by his Spirit, and given the precious faith of his elect, can neither totally nor finally fall from the state of grace, but shall certainly persevere in that state to the end and be eternally saved. This is because the gifts and callings of God are without repentance [He will not change His mind], and therefore He continues to beget [create] and nourish in them faith, repentance, love, joy, hope, and all the graces of the Spirit which lead to immortality (Joh 10:28-29; Phi 1:6; 2 Tim 2:19; 1 Joh 2:19).

And though many storms and floods arise and beat against the saints, yet these things shall never be able to sweep them off the foundation and rock which they are fastened upon by faith. Even though, through unbelief [including lack of faith] and the temptations of Satan, the sight and feeling of the light and love of God may for a time be clouded and obscured from them (Psa 89:31-32; 1 Cor 11:32), yet God is still the same, and they are sure to be kept by His power until their salvation is complete, where they shall enjoy the purchased possession which is theirs, for they are engraved upon the palm of His hands, and their names have been written in His Book of Life from all eternity (Mal 3:6).

xi. Of the Harmony of the Law and the Gospel.

We believe that the Law of God is holy, just, and good; and that the inability which the Scriptures ascribe to fallen men to fulfill its precepts arises entirely from their love of sin; to deliver them from which, and restore them through a Mediator to unfeigned obedience to the holy law, is one great end of the Gospel, and of the means of grace connected with the establishment of the visible Church. (Rom 7:7-25; Gal 3:19-25; Rom 3:19-22; Rom 10:4; Heb 9:8-16; Heb 10:1-14)

xii. Of the Gospel Proclamation.

We believe that the offer of salvation is made freely to all by the Gospel; that it is the immediate duty of all to accept it by a cordial, penitent, and obedient faith; and that nothing prevents the salvation of the greatest sinner on earth but his own inherent depravity and voluntary refusal to submit to the Lord Jesus Christ, which refusal will subject him to an aggravated condemnation. Or in other words, God is not actively working to prevent the unregenerate from coming to Him—He only leaves them to themselves, doing no work of grace, whereby they bring condemnation on themselves. However, we do solemnly affirm that an act of God is required to change the person to where they willingly submit to Christ. (Matt 28:16-20; 2 Thess 1:7-8; Mark 16:15-16; Acts 17:30-31; John 3:16-20; Eph 2:8-9; Titus 3:4-7; 2 Pet 3:9-10)

xiii. The institution of Marriage

God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, 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. (Genesis 2:24; Genesis 19:5, 13; Genesis 26:8-9; Leviticus 18:1-30; Romans 1:26-29; I Corinthians 5:1, 6:9; I Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4)

The only legitimate marriage is the joining of one man and one woman. (Genesis 2:24; Romans 7:2; I Corinthians 7:10; Ephesians 5:22-23)

xiv. The Lord's Day.

Sabbath-keeping is an important duty (Ex. 20:8, Deut. 5:15, Neh. 13:22), which the Lord's people consider both solemn and delightful (Is. 58:13).

God "hath particularly appointed one day in seven for a sabbath to be kept holy unto him, which from the beginning of the world to the resurrection of Christ was the last day of the week, and from the resurrection of Christ was changed into the first day of the week, which is called the Lord's Day: and is to be continued to the end of the world as the Christian Sabbath, the observation of the last day of the week being abolished." (Exo. 20:8, 1 Cor. 16:1-2, Acts 20:7, Revs 1:10; London Baptist Confession of Faith 1689, 22.7)

The resurrection of Christ ushered in the change of day for the observance of the sabbath. One might wonder why the first Christians, who were Jews themselves, suddenly began to meet for worship on the first day of the week. The explanation can only be attributed to our Lord's rising from the dead on that first day to signify the finished work of redemption. Thus the principle of the fourth commandment — one day in seven being the Lord's — remained unviolated, while the keeping of that day took on a much fuller meaning that it had in Old Testament times. The Christian Sabbath or the Lord's Day, continues to be not only a memorial of God's finished work at creation, but it is also a memorial of Christ's finished work of redemption.

"The sabbath is then kept holy unto the Lord, when men, after a due preparing of their hearts, and ordering their common affairs aforehand, do not only observe an holy rest all day, from their own works, words and thoughts, about their worldly employment and recreations, but are also taken up the whole time in the public and private exercises of his worship, and in the duties of necessity and mercy." (Isa. 58:13, Neh. 13:15-22, Matt. 12:1-13; London Baptist Confession of Faith 1689, 22.8)

"There remaineth therefore a keeping of sabbath [the literal rendering of the original text] to the people of God..." (Heb. 4:9). We believe therefore that the observing of one day in seven is still binding on mankind. The Lord has graciously given us six days for work and recreation — we are not to rob Him of the other, the sabbath day.

Article IV – Covenant

As a member of Reformed Baptist Church, having been graciously led by the Holy Spirit to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and, on the profession of my faith (Rom

10:9-10), having been baptized by immersion in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Matt 3:16-17; Acts 2:41), do now, in the presence of God and this assembly, enter into a covenant with the members of this church (Eph 5:21; 1 Pet 5:5; Heb 13:17), as one body in Christ (Rom 12:5). I, therefore, agree, by the help of the Holy Spirit and with the Bible, the inspired Word of God, as my guide to walk together in Christian love and unity (1 Cor 13; Eph 4:3); to strive for the advancement of this church; to promote holiness (Eph 4:24); to sustain its worship, discipline and doctrine; to observe the ordinances of believer's baptism (see [Baptism](#)) and the Lord's Supper (1 Cor 11:23-30); to contribute cheerfully and regularly our offerings to the support of both the ministry of this church and to the spread of the gospel to all nations (see [Giving & Finances](#)).

I agree to encourage personal and family devotions; to educate my children according to my faith; to be just in my dealings, reliable in my responsibilities, and an example to those around me, abstaining from every appearance of evil (2 Corinthians 6:3-10; Ephesians 5:15,16; Colossians 3:13-17; 1 Thessalonians 4:11,12, 5:22); to walk in Christian harmony and watchfulness, giving and receiving assistance with meekness and affection; to pray for others; to help them in sickness and sorrow; to be slow to anger; to avoid all tattling, backbiting and unrighteous anger (James 1:26, 3:2-12; Ephesians 4:25, 5:7; Colossians 3:3-17; 1 Timothy 5:5-11; 2 Thessalonians 3:10-15; 1 Peter 4:15; Proverbs 6:16-19, 8:13, 26:20) and to be eager for reconciliation when necessary, and mindful of the commandments of our Savior to secure it without delay (Matthew 18:15-17). I also understand that if I am overtaken in a fault, I will be subject to biblical discipline which seeks my restoration (Galatians 6:1,2; Matthew 18:15-17; Romans 16:17,18; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 2 Corinthians 2:6-11, 7:9-11; 2 Thessalonians 3:11-14).

I further agree that, should I move from this area, I will as soon as possible unite with some other church where I can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's word.

Article V – Privileges and Obligations of Membership

Section 1 – Requirements for Membership

To be eligible for membership, a man or woman or child (Acts 5:14; 8:3,12) must demonstrate repentance toward God and the fruits thereof (Acts 26:20), as well as that faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 20:21) which produces godly works (Eph. 2:8-10; James 2:18, 22). They must be baptized as a believer and profess substantial agreement with the purpose (as stated in Article II), Confessions (as stated in Article III), Covenant (as stated in Article IV), and government of this church. Furthermore, he must not be under the biblically warranted (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 church like-minded in doctrine and practice. Such shall be eligible for membership on the basis of either of the following scenarios:

a. **Confession of faith** -- Any person who meets the above requirements shall make a verbal request for membership to an elder. The elder(s) shall then fix a mutually agreeable time and place for a meeting of the applicant who will subsequently be examined as to his or her Christian experience, doctrinal beliefs, and seriousness of intention to wholeheartedly support the entire ministry of this church (II Corinthians 6:14-18; Colossians 4:12).

b. **By letter** -- Any person desiring to unite with this church upon letter of recommendation from another church like-minded in doctrine and practice shall present such a letter to the elder(s) and shall be examined concerning his or her Christian experience, doctrinal beliefs, and seriousness of intention to wholeheartedly support the entire ministry of this church (Acts 18:27; Romans 16:1,2; II Corinthians 3:1).

Section 2 -- Procedure for Receiving Members

1. Any person desiring to become a member of the church must submit a written testimony to the elders explaining their understanding and experience of the Gospel of Christ. Exceptions to this requirement shall be determined by the elders in cases involving extraordinary circumstances. The written testimony is intended to promote a proper evaluation of the potential member and to encourage knowledgeable fellowship with them. The elders may request further clarification and/or expansion of this written testimony before proceeding with the application process.

2. If the applicant has been a member of another church, the elders will investigate their standing in that church before they are accepted as a member in this church. Where it is possible and appropriate, a letter of transfer will be requested. Reception by transfer does not negate any of the requirements for becoming a member in this assembly.

3. Upon the reception of an acceptable written testimony, the elders may at their discretion ask for a preliminary meeting with the applicant; otherwise, the name of the applicant shall be announced for at least two consecutive Lord's Days at stated meetings of the church. This time period is for the purpose of enabling the members to read their testimony and to raise any questions or objections concerning the applicant's qualifications. Members are expected to consider this a personal duty of the most serious character. They are expected to voice privately to the elders all questions or objections that have not yet been resolved, after personal contact has been made with the applicant (Matt. 18:15ff; Lev. 19:16, 17).

4. Each member of the congregation will then be urged to pray for the applicant and to make any pertinent inquiry of the applicant necessary to satisfy, in his or her own mind, the applicant's qualification for membership. Barring any unforeseen issues, the elder(s) shall subsequently present the applicant to the congregation who will then express its desire with regard to the reception of the candidate by a two thirds majority vote of the members present and voting of at least two thirds of the total membership at a duly called congregational meeting.

Section 3 – Ending of Membership

Membership at Reformed Baptist Church may be terminated for any of the following reasons:*

a. **Transfer** -- Letters of transfer shall be granted to those who apply for them, provided they are in good standing and not subject to or under discipline at the time of application. When such letters have been granted, their membership to this church shall be considered ended. Conscious of our responsibility for the spiritual welfare of our members, letters of transfer shall be forwarded and given only to other churches like-minded in doctrine and practice (Acts 18:27; Romans 16:1,2; II Corinthians 3:1).

b. **Exclusion** -- If a member is habitually absent (see [Section 4](#)) from Lord's Day gatherings of this church without just cause, or is unwilling to settle differences with others in a Scriptural manner, or requests severance of membership, they may be excluded from the membership at the discretion of the elder(s), subject to the approval of the congregation (I Corinthians 12; Ephesians 4:3,14-16; Hebrews 10:23-25).

c. **Excommunication** -- It is right and in harmony with the Scriptures for the congregation, upon recommendation of the elder(s), to exclude from this fellowship any person who persists in holding false or heretical doctrines; or who obviously and persistently lives contrary to Scripture; or who walks disorderly, or any person who persists in disturbing the unity and peace of this church (Matthew 18:15; Romans 16:17; I Corinthians 5; II Thessalonians 3:6,11,14,15).

*Exclusion and excommunication, though very difficult (and, blessedly, infrequent) actions undertaken by the church, may indeed be the necessary ends of church discipline (Matthew 18). Restoration, however, is always the object of discipline. It is the duty of the church to forgive and restore to membership those persons who give satisfactory evidence of true repentance. In such cases, the elder(s) shall recommend to the congregation the restoration of any person who has been either excluded or excommunicated. As with votes concerning membership, a two thirds majority vote of the members present and voting of at least two thirds of the total membership at a duly called congregational meeting shall be sufficient for such restoration.

Section 4 – Active/Inactive Members

If any member is absent from Lord's Day services of the church for a three-month period without good reason known to the elder(s), the elder(s) shall make an enquiry into the matter.

Members should be encouraged not to "give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing." Hebrews 10 verse 25.

Article VI – Church Discipline

Section 1. Formative Discipline.

Every disciple (learner and follower) of Christ must be under His discipline (His instruction and correction), which is administered to each one, both personally (Acts 5:1-11; I Cor. 11:30-32; I Thess. 4:6; Heb. 12:5-11; Rev. 2:22-23) and through the church, (I Corinthians 12:12-27; Eph. 4:11-15; Gal. 6:1; I Thess. 5:14; Heb. 3:12-14; 12:15). Mutual submission to one another and to the overseers whom the Lord has set over His church (Ephesians 5:21; I Peter 5:5) will, under the blessing of God, result in the sanctification of each member individually and of the whole body of the church collectively. There are occasions, however, when formative (private, Matt 18:15) discipline alone is insufficient, and corrective discipline becomes necessary.

Section 2. Corrective Discipline.

Paragraph A.

General Statement. Corrective discipline becomes necessary when heretical doctrine or disorderly, immoral, or scandalous conduct appears among the members of the church. As a general rule and whenever feasible, an effort must be made to resolve difficulty, correct error, and remove offense through counsel and admonition before more drastic steps are taken (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20). The principles given to us in Matthew 18:15-16; Romans 16:17-20, I Corinthians 5:1-13, II Thess. 3:6-15; I Tim. 5:19-20, and Titus 3:10 must be carefully followed and appropriately applied to each and every case of corrective discipline.

In some cases public admonition may be warranted (Matt. 18:17; I Tim. 5:20). In other cases some of the privileges of membership may need to be suspended and appropriate restrictions imposed (Rom. 16:17-20; II Thess. 3:14-15). In the most extreme cases excommunication from the membership of the church may be necessary. (Matt. 18:17; Rom. 16:17-20; I Cor. 5:1-13; I Tim. 1:20; Titus 3:10)

Since the church is a spiritual and religious institution, the punishments inflicted by the church in corrective discipline (II Cor. 2:6-7) are also spiritual. They include public, verbal reproof, (Matt. 18:17; I Tim. 5:20), social avoidance (Rom. 16:17; I Cor. 5:9-11; II Thess. 3:6, 14), and withdrawal of distinctive Christian fellowship (Matt. 18:17; I Cor. 5:13; II John 10), and are intended to effect repentance through a sense of sorrow and shame (II Cor. 2:7; II Thess. 3:14).

The church has no right, however, to confiscate goods, revoke conjugal rights, or inflict corporal punishment of any kind. Nevertheless, a member guilty of criminal actions may be delivered to the civil authorities according to the rule of Scripture (I Pet. 4:15).

The goals of corrective discipline are always the glory of God, the welfare and purity of the church (I Cor. 5:6) and the restoration and spiritual growth of the offender (I Cor. 5:5; II Cor. 2:5-8; I Tim. 1:20).

Paragraph B. Public Reproof or Censure.

Public reproof consists of the elders' effort, before the gathered church, to call an impenitent church member or church members to repentance for sin too serious to be covered with a blanket of love. The elders may administer public censure whenever, in their judgment, either public misconduct (Gal. 2:11-14; I Tim. 5:20), patterns of sin (Titus 1:12-13), or serious doctrinal error (Titus 1:10-13) pose a significant threat to the godliness, unity or testimony of the congregation. Those who humbly receive the word of public reproof, own and confess their sin, and manifest a transformed life (Prov. 28:13) shall afterward be publicly commended for their godly repentance (II Cor. 7:7-11). If the reproof is not heeded, further discipline may be imposed.

Paragraph C. Suspension of Privileges.

Some misconduct on the part of a member is so detrimental to the unity, holiness and testimony of the church that the Lord requires public reproof to be accompanied by the suspension of some or all of the privileges of membership appropriate to the nature and gravity of the offense (Rom. 16:17-20; II Thess. 3:14-15). In all cases of suspension the offending person is still to be regarded as a brother in Christ and as a member of the church, and not as a wicked man cut off from distinctly Christian fellowship (Matt. 18:17-18; II Thess. 3:15). In addition, the Lord wills that this severe reproof be expressed (Matt. 18:17) and enforced (Rom. 16:17-20; II Thess. 3:6-15) by the entire church.

Therefore, in accordance with the procedures outlined below for each of the four major categories of offenses, the elders shall recommend to the congregation, at a regular or specially called congregational meeting, that the offending member be suspended, specifying the grounds for the discipline, the privileges to be revoked and the restrictions to be imposed. A member under suspension shall be treated by the congregation according to the specific applications of the general principle of social avoidance (Rom. 16:17-20; II Thess. 3:14-15) determined by the elders. Those who humbly submit to the imposed discipline [and show real evidence of a change of heart, conduct or belief] shall afterwards be forgiven, have their privileges restored, and be publicly received back into the full fellowship of the church (Matt. 18:15; II Cor. 2:5-11).

The general grounds and generic categories of sin which require suspension are as follows:

1. A Stubborn Private Offender (Matt. 18:15-17). When a private offense remains unresolved even after the method prescribed by our Lord in Matt. 18:15-16 has been graciously and prayerfully followed, it is considered an aggravated offense. The brethren involved shall bring the matter to the elders who, if they judge the matter to be serious enough and cannot persuade the brother to repent, shall report the situation to the church,

and recommend that the stubborn member be suspended. (Matt. 18:17a) If, even after suspension, the person remains adamant in his sin, excommunication shall be enacted according to the procedure outlined in Paragraph D of this article. (Matt. 18:17b).

2. Divisive Teachings or Behavior (Rom. 16:17-20; Titus 3:10). When a member deliberately persists in the propagation of serious doctrinal error contrary to Scripture and our confession, or attempts to sow discord among us, contrary to Scripture and this constitution, he may be suspended as a factious man. Since every member is responsible to help preserve the unity of the Spirit (Eph. 4:1ff), none of us is to conceal such divisive behavior, but rather to reprove it and disclose it to the elders (Deut. 13:6ff; I Cor. 1:10-11).

Whenever the elders become aware of divisive behavior, they are to confront it meekly and patiently according to the Word of God (I Cor. 1:10-4:21; Titus 3:10). If, even after receiving repeated admonition from the elders, a member persists in such behavior, the elders shall report the situation to the church and recommend that the divisive member be suspended. If, even after the suspension, the person remains adamant in sowing discord or in spreading serious doctrinal errors, excommunication shall be enacted according to the procedure outlined in Paragraph D of this article.

3. Disorderly Behavior (II Thess. 3:6-15). When a member deliberately persists in conduct which displays a flagrant or public disregard for either the order appointed by God for all mankind in the creation ordinances, namely, work and Sabbath (Gen. 2:1-3, 15; Ex. 20:8-11; II Thess. 3:6-15) and marriage (Gen. 2:18-24; I Cor. 7:1-17, 39; I Tim. 5:8; Titus 2:5); or for the order established by Christ for his church in Scripture (I Cor. 11:17-34; I Cor. 14:37-40; I Tim. 3:14-15; Titus 1:5) and adapted to our congregation in this constitution, he may be suspended as a disorderly man (II Thess. 3:6).

Whenever the elders become aware that, in spite of the admonitions of formative discipline (I Thess. 5:14), a member is behaving disorderly, they are to confront it meekly and patiently according to the Word of God (II Thess. 3:10-12). If, even after receiving such admonition from the elders, a member persists in this behavior, the elders shall report the situation to the church and recommend that the disorderly brother be suspended (II Thess. 3:14-15). If, even after the suspension, the person remains adamant in disorderliness, excommunication shall be enacted according to the procedure outlined in Paragraph D of this article.

4. A Scandalous Sin. If a member has sinned scandalously but shows signs of repentance, including submission to the admonition of the elders, it would be wrong to excommunicate him. It may still be necessary, however, to suspend him for a time from some of the privileges of membership, lest reproach be brought upon the name of Christ and the church (II Sam. 12:14; Rom. 2:214); lest others be emboldened to sin (I Tim. 5:20); and lest the offender himself fail to test his own soul and realize the gravity of his offense (Heb. 3:12-14).

Paragraph D. Excommunication.

1. For Moral Matters. Some types of conduct must be categorized as "immoral" (I Cor. 5:9-11; 6:9-10). A member blatantly and impenitently guilty of such conduct must be cut off from the fellowship of the church (1 Cor. 5:3-5, 13; Matt. 18:17). In such a case the elders shall make earnest efforts to bring the offender to true repentance and reformation, but if these efforts fail, they shall report the same to the congregation at a regular, specially-called, business meeting of the church and recommend that the offender be excommunicated - which must be done, according to Scripture (Matt. 18:17; I Cor. 5:4), by action of the entire church. To be valid, an act of excommunication must have the approval of at least two thirds majority vote of the members present and voting of at least two thirds of the total membership.

2. For Doctrinal Matters. Likewise, some wrong opinions regarding the doctrines of Scripture are so serious that they must be categorized as "heretical" (Gal. 1:6-9; I Tim. 4:1), and a member who persists in propagating or holding any such opinion, in spite of earnest and patient admonition by the elders, shall be excommunicated in the same manner as an immoral person.

Section 3: Restoration

Since one purpose of church discipline is to restore a fallen brother or sister, it is the duty of the church to forgive and to restore to full membership a suspended or excommunicated member who gives satisfactory evidence of his repentance (2 Cor 2:6-8). This shall be done in a duly convened business meeting of the church by no less than two thirds majority vote of the members present and voting of at least two thirds of the total membership.

Article VII – Officers

Section 1 – General Statement

Jesus Christ alone is the Head of His church (Ephesians 5:29; Colossians 2:19). However, as Head, He has ordained that individual churches should be blessed with the spiritual rule of special office bearers (Ephesians 4:11-16). Therefore, it is the duty of the church to seek to discover those to whom Christ has imparted the necessary gifts for office bearing, and having formally recognized such by congregational vote, to set them apart by united prayer and submit to their rule and ministry. Christ has ordained that the administration of local churches be by Elders and deacons (1 Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9; I Peter 5:1-5; Hebrews 13:7,17). The officers of Reformed Baptist Church, therefore, shall consist of Elders and Deacons (Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-13). Members meeting the Scriptural qualifications for these offices shall have been a visible part of this local body for a period of at least one year before being nominated. Nominations for officers will be submitted to the Elder(s), who will in turn present them to the congregation for a vote. Consent must be secured from a nominee before his name is

placed before the congregation. The corporate recognition of church officers shall commence with their election and ordination.

Specific church policies with regard to Elders and Deacons serving Reformed Baptist Church are as follows:

Section 2 – Elders

- a. The Elders are responsible for the spiritual ministrations of the church, the implementation of church discipline, and watch care over the souls of the members as they who must give an account to God for this responsibility (Acts 20:28-31; Hebrews 13:17). They shall exercise the oversight of the church in all its ministries and functions (I Peter 5:2).
- b. Anyone desiring the office of Elder must evidence the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications as set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.
- c. Elders must seek to discharge their duties as set forth in the Scriptures, particularly such passages as Acts 20:17,20; 1 Peter 5:1; and Hebrews 13:7,17.
- d. Anyone called to the office of Elder must be able to conscientiously affirm their agreement with the articles of faith and constitution of this church. Should they at any time move from his position of substantive agreement, they are under spiritual and moral obligation to make this known to the church (Hebrews 10:23; 1 Timothy 4:16).
- e. It shall be the solemn responsibility, duty, and privilege of the Elders of this church to be diligent and faithful in attendance in regular meetings and at the regular services of the church.
- f. The Elders shall have the responsibility for the serving of the Lord's Table, and for any special programs which they deem useful and edifying to the congregation (Hebrews 10:24,25; Acts 20:28; 1 Corinthians 14:40; 1 Peter 5:2,3).
- g. The unanimous assent of the entire membership will be sought in the appointment of an Elder. When voting for Elders and Deacons, every "no" vote must also be accompanied by the Scriptural reason for the negative vote. If there is any dissent in such a decision, efforts will be made to deal with any problems raised, and to arrive at unanimity of heart and mind. Should such a unanimous decision be impossible, no less than a 90% majority of those members present and voting of at least two thirds of the total membership shall be required for the election of an Elder (Acts 2:46; 1 Corinthians 1:10; Philippians 1:27).
- h. If an Elder's life or preaching should ever violate the standards of Scripture, the services of said Elder may be ended pending approval by a 90% majority of those members present and voting of at least two thirds of the total membership.

- i. If at any time, an Elder shall make application to be released from their office, the relationship between the Elder and church may be ended immediately without the necessity of a formal vote by the congregation.
- j. While the office of Elder is designated in Scripture as a distinct church office, we believe God grants different gifts to the member of the body of Christ (Eph 4:11), including gifts for preaching and teaching. Therefore, while the qualification for an Elder is to be apt to teach (1 Tim 3:2), one or more Elders may be called to be the main Lord's Day preacher(s). Since this is a special duty and has special effect on the membership in that they will sit under the teaching of these Elders, these Elders will be appointed and called forth separately to this responsibility in the same way they were as Elder.

Section 3 – Steps towards Raising Up of Elders

- a. The appointment of Elders for office within the church is the responsibility of the congregation as they are so guided by 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. The congregation should prayerfully consider which man it recognizes as possessing the necessary gifts and graces for Elder (Acts 1:24; 13:2; 6:3,5; Galatians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; Hebrews 5:4).
- b. Individuals should approach these persons privately to ask if they are willing to be nominated for Elder.
- c. The person offering the nomination should subsequently submit to an existing Elder, in written form, the name of the Elder nominee.
- d. A waiting period of not less than one month, and not more than two months, will then be observed by the congregation for the purpose of prayer and fasting. This time should also be utilized as an opportunity for private conversation should any unresolved issues exist between the member and the nominee.
- e. Any unresolved concerns about nominees shall be brought to the congregation prior to the election.

Section 4 – Deacons

- a. Deacons shall be elected by the congregation according to the qualifications mentioned in Acts 6:3 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
- b. Deacons shall have general executive responsibility for the administration of the business affairs and benevolent concerns of the church. Their duties are to be discharged with spiritual grace in cooperation with and in submission to the

- Elders so that the Elders may devote himself without distraction to their spiritual duties (Acts 6:3,4).
- c. Deacons shall have the administrative oversight for the ministries of compassion within our church family, in the community, and around the world. They shall see that the sick, the sorrowing, the aged, and those in difficult providential circumstances receive spiritual and temporal comfort (Acts 6:1-6; 8:26-40).
 - d. It shall be the duty of all deacons to be diligent and faithful in attendance at regular and special Deacons meetings and at the regular services of the church.
 - e. Deacons shall be responsible to alert the Elders of the needs of members of the congregation.
 - f. Deacons shall be nominated and elected by the congregation at any duly called meeting of the church.
 - g. The principle of unanimity shall be sought in the same manner as pertains to the election of an Elder. (See section 2-g.)
 - h. Two considerations shall govern the number of Deacons elected: the number of men who fit the spiritual qualifications for the office and the needs of the congregation (Acts 6:3-6).
 - i. If, at any time, a Deacon's ministry or life is not in full accord with the standards of the Scriptures, and the Elders so recommend, his services as Deacon may be ended immediately following a congregational meeting at which his dismissal has been approved by a 90% vote of those members present and voting of at least two thirds of the total membership.
 - j. If, at any time, a Deacon shall make application to be released from his office, the relationship between Deacon and church may be ended immediately without the necessity of a formal vote by the congregation.

Article VIII – Ordinances

Baptism

We believe that there are two ordinances that Christians are directed to observe: baptism and the Lord's Supper. We believe that baptism has no saving merit, but that following salvation, baptism (by immersion) is the next biblically prescribed step in showing to the world that the professing believer is now identified with Christ, who died, was buried, and rose again. Any person professing repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, whose life lends credibility to that profession, desiring to be baptized shall make application to be so baptized. The Pastor will meet with the applicant who shall be

examined concerning his or her experience and understanding of the ordinance of baptism (Matthew 28:19,20; Acts 10:47). **Baptism is prerequisite to church fellowship, and to participation in the Lord's Supper.**

The Lord's Supper

Whereas baptism is to be observed once and is a sign of identification and a testimony to newness of life, the Lord's Supper is commemorative and declarative and is to be frequently observed as a memorial to the broken body and shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 11:23-26; Matt. 28:19,20; Acts 2:38,41,42). It is a solemn privilege to remember Christ, and as we do so we earnestly crave the manifestation of His glory to the reviving of our souls.

We adhere strictly to what is the historical Protestant view of the ordinance. We repudiate the Romish notion of transubstantiation and Luther's idea of consubstantiation. There is no change in the physical elements. There is no bodily presence of Christ. Neither is the Supper a sacrifice for sin. "Worthy receivers, outwardly partaking of the visible elements, in this sacrament, do then also, inwardly by faith, really and indeed, yet not carnally and corporally but spiritually, receive, and feed upon, Christ crucified, and all benefits of His death: the body and blood of Christ being then, not corporally or carnally, in, with, or under the bread and wine; yet, as really, but spiritually, present to the faith of believers in that ordinance, as the elements themselves are to their outward senses." (1 Cor. 11:28, 1 Cor. 10:16; London Baptist Confession of Faith 1689, 29.7)

"Wherefore, all ignorant and ungodly persons, as they are unfit to enjoy communion with Him, so are they unworthy of the Lord's Table; and cannot, without great sin against Christ, while they remain such, partake of these holy mysteries,1 or be admitted thereunto." (1 Cor. 5:6-7, 13, 2 Thess. 3:6,14-15, Matt. 7:6 ; London Baptist Confession of Faith 1689, 29.8). Since this ordinance is sanctified as participating in mystical union with Christ as His body and therefore for those are part of Christ's body, we believe it is our responsibility to try to maintain this sanctity with all effort by having pre-examined all participants. And since we do not believe this can be done without careful consideration over time, we ask that guests attending services on days the church observes the Lord's Supper refrain from participating. This is not making a judgement on any individual, but allows us to fulfill what we believe is a duty in guarding the table and its sanctity, and aligns closest with how scripture indicates the Lord's Supper should be conducted.

Article IX – Business Meetings

The Elders will call and conduct all business meetings of the church whenever necessary to take care of business matters.

Business meetings will be announced at Sunday services for at least two weeks prior to the meeting but not held on the Lord's Day.

Business meetings will be for the membership, the congregation.

Because it is our concern to provide as much information as possible to the Lord's people to enable their prayerful consideration of the issues to be discussed, every effort will be made to distribute information concerning the agenda prior to the business meeting.

All members have a voice and vote. However, to guard the order of the business meeting, we will observe Biblical order as we do in all of the meetings of the church.

Any routine business requiring a vote by the congregation must be passed by a two thirds majority vote of the members present and voting of at least two thirds of the total membership.

Any children, who are members, must give credible proof to the Elders as to their maturity and wisdom in making sound, Biblical decisions before being allowed to vote.

Article X – Music in Worship

Worshipping God through music is a duty and privilege (Psalm 100:2; Psalm 40:3), and should be service rendered to God by the entire congregation. Singing the praises of God should be the expression of an inward spiritual experience, the expression of a heart affected by truth. The focus of music must be God—His persons, perfections, and works—and be consistent with every other aspect of biblical and spiritual worship. We sing both Psalms and traditional hymns; and we sing acapela, but allow for limited instrumentation as might be necessary to help perform this service to God in the manner due Him, with fear and reverence.

We reject the modern-day notion that says in order to reach the world with the gospel, we need to use the world's music. We therefore refuse to use Contemporary Christian Music (CCM) and any style of music that, in our estimation, not only denigrates Christ and His gospel, but also reflects the spirit of the world, which is given over to entertainment instead of worship of God and edification of the saints.

Article XI – Bible Versions

For preaching, teaching, and evangelism material, this church uses the Authorized (often called the "King James") Version of the Scriptures. There are two fundamental principles behind this:

1. This church believes the **doctrine of verbal inspiration**. This means God immediately inspired every word of the Bible. This truth calls for a word-for-word translation philosophy also known as formal equivalence (as opposed to dynamic equivalence). (Jer 1:9, Rev 22:18-19, 2Ti 3:16, 2Pe 1:20-21, 1Co 14:37, 1Th 2:13, Deu 12:28, 32)

2. We also believe that God preserves His Word through all time. This is also known as the **doctrine of providential preservation**. This doctrine leads us to accept the traditional received texts of Scripture, the Masoretic text in the Old Testament, and the Textus Receptus in the New Testament (as opposed to the modern critical texts). (Psa 12:6-7, Psa 119:89, Isa 40:8, Mat 5:18, 1Pe 1:23-25)

(See also London Baptist Confession 1689, 1.8)

Because other translations today reject at least one of these principles (if not both) we believe the Authorized Version is the most accurate and faithful version of God's Word available in the English language today. We encourage everyone to consider these important doctrines when considering what Bible translation they will use for personal use.

Article XII – Giving & Finances

Worshipping God with giving is both a duty and a privilege. Since God has given us all things richly to enjoy and in our recognition of His bountiful goodness to us, He has ordained this for us to express our submission to His Lordship over all we are and have, and as a way for us to express our gratitude to Him (1 Cor 16:1-2), and help fulfill supporting the minister so that those “which preach the gospel should live of the gospel” (1 Cor 9:13-14; Gal 6:6)

Giving is an act of worship unto the Lord with a genuine spirit of humble thanksgiving and heartfelt joy, and without selfish motive or vainglory (2 Cor 9:7).

The following are how we logistically conduct processing of these gifts:

- A treasurer is chosen by the members to be the one responsible for maintaining the documents and reporting the statements.
- The giving is counted each Lord's Day, noted in a written book, witnessed by two members, and noted in an electronic ledger.
- All expenses have receipts and are noted as line items in the written book and e-ledger.
- A quarterly statement is emailed to the members listing the income, all line-item expenses, and current total.
- Once a quarter, a total accounting of the physical existence of the fund and its matching the ledger will be performed by someone other than the treasurer, and a line item will be added to both the physical and electronic ledgers, and witnessed by two members in the physical ledger.
- We will not participate as a 501c3 entity. Money given to the church becomes the property of the church.
- The church does not maintain receipts of giving for individuals to use on their tax returns.

- Expenses greater than \$500 will require a membership vote by a two thirds majority vote of the members present and voting of at least two thirds of the total membership.

Article XIII – Amendments

This constitution may be amended, modified, or rescinded by a two thirds majority vote of the members present and voting of at least two thirds of the total membership at any regular or special meeting being conducted for business purposes. Any such amendments must be submitted to the church membership at least four weeks prior to the next meeting, and a public and written announcement must be made for at least three Sundays preceding the meeting. Any considerations for by-laws will follow the same procedure.

Article XIV – Dissolution of the Church and Its Properties

In the event of dissolution, any remaining funds and/or assets of Reformed Baptist Church shall be used first to dispose of all church-related liabilities and, to the extent that assets exceed liabilities, the remaining assets shall be donated to another church (of like faith and practice) as designated by the trustees (Elders and Deacons) of this Church.