

Reformation Baptist Church Constitution

Youngsville, NC

May 28, 2015

Purpose of the Church

The first purpose of this church is to glorify God by obeying His Word and spreading the gospel. The means of fulfilling this purpose include an attention to the principles of this constitution of Reformation Baptist Church.

Statement of Faith

Essential Doctrines

The following doctrines constitute the essence of the Christian faith and they are doctrinal requirements for membership. These doctrines detail the dividing line between orthodoxy and heresy.

- 1) We believe the Bible as contained in the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments is the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God, the only rule of faith and obedience.
- 2) There is one and only one God. This God has revealed Himself to us in the Scriptures as a personal being existing eternally in three persons (the divine Trinity): God the Father, God the Son (Jesus Christ), and God the Holy Spirit.
- 3) We believe that the Lord Jesus Christ, begotten of the Father before all worlds, very God of very God, willingly humbled Himself in love for mankind, was born of a virgin, fully human. He led a sinless life, died a substitutionary, atoning death on the cross. Three days later he rose bodily from the dead. He ascended into heaven and now intercedes for His brethren on the right hand of His Father. He will one day return bodily to the earth to rule His Kingdom.
- 4) We believe a person is saved, or justified, by an act of God's free grace and not on any merit of his own. God pardons his sins and accepts him as righteous in His sight, only for the righteousness of Christ imputed to us (through Christ's substitutionary atoning death and bodily resurrection) and received sola fide, by faith alone.
- 5) Those who are justified will live eternally in the presence of God and all the redeemed, and those who are not justified will suffer eternal damnation in hell.

Doctrinal Statement

We hold to the Second London Baptist Confession of 1689. All officers (Elders and Deacons) must uphold and teach these standards. Members are free to take exception to anything not contrary to the five points of orthodoxy listed above, provided they do not promote dissension regarding the items listed in the Second London Baptist Confession of 1689 or in the principles communicated in this the Constitution of Reformation Baptist Church.

We hereby commit ourselves to the following principles and practices.

The Centrality of the Gospel – All activities and messages of the church have their source in the gospel of Christ, that sinners are justified by faith alone, that the righteousness of Christ is imputed to believers by God's decree alone, and that this righteousness is the only righteousness that justifies and that faith that is true faith is evidenced by works. (1 Cor 15:1-4; Rev 14:6-7)

Expository Preaching – We believe that a steady diet of expositional preaching is the most effective way to build up the body of Christ. Preaching and teaching through books of the Bible will be the primary emphasis of this ministry. (Deut 6:4-9; Ezra 7:10; Neh 8:1-12; Matt 4:4; 1 Tim 4:13; 2 Tim 3:14-4:5; Titus 1:3, 9; Heb 4:12; 1 Peter 1:22-2:3)

Fervent Prayer – Every aspect of the church's life and ministry ought to be undergirded with regular, fervent prayer. Elements of a godly prayer life (individually and corporately) include: adoration, confession, thanksgiving, and intercession. (Neh 1; Psalm 51; Matt 6:5-15; Luke 19:46; Phil 1:3-11; Col 1:3-12; James 5:13-18)

Authentic Worship – Authentic worship of the living God is marked by Biblical truth, personal and corporate genuineness and spiritual depth. Elements of corporate worship include prayer, singing, Scripture reading, preaching and the Lord's Supper. (Psalm 24, 33, 42, 95; Isa 6:1-8; Matt 4:10; John 4:24; Rom 12:1-2; Heb 13:15; Rev 4-5; 1 Cor 11:23-34)

Loving Community – We will cultivate Christian love, rejoicing, unity and community in the family of God through mentoring relationships, benevolence and Biblical instruction. (Acts 2:44-47; 6:1-7; Eph 4:1-16; 1 Tim 5:3-8; 2 Tim 2:2; Titus 2:3-5; James 1:27)

Church Discipline – We will exercise Biblical church discipline, administered in a spirit of obedience and humility, and believe that this practice glorifies God, promotes the fear of God in the church, protects the purity of the church and offers restoration to the wayward. (Prov 28:13; Matt 5:23-24; 18:15-20; 1 Cor 5:6-8; 11:17-34; Gal 6:1-5; Eph 5:25-27; 1 Tim 5:20)

Personal Evangelism – We will equip and send the church into the community to bring the message of the cross to our own households, neighborhoods, workplaces and the world. (Matt 28:19-20; John 20:31; Acts 4:12; Rom 10:14-15; 1 Peter 3:15)

Church Planting – We will make intentional efforts to reach the world for Christ by praying, giving, going and planting as we rejoice in God’s plan to be a blessing to the nations. (Matt 28:19-20; Acts 13-14, 16-21)

The Sufficiency of Scripture – We will regard Scripture as sufficient for life and godliness, so it must be consulted for all things. We will use it for reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness to speak into the lives of those in the congregation. (2 Tim 3:16,17)

The Regulative Principle – We will regulate church life by Scripture alone, recognizing that God has instituted in the Scriptures everything He requires for worship in the Church and that everything else is prohibited. Therefore, the only permissible elements of worship are those that are instituted by command, precept, example, or by good and necessary consequence, and that whatever is not warranted by Scripture is forbidden.

This is another way of saying that Christ has authority over His church through the Word of God. (Matt 16:18; Rom 1:16; 10:17)

Church Government

This church will be governed by Jesus Christ, who is always consistent with the revelation of the Scriptures, through Elders elected by the congregation.

We believe that this local body is a visible manifestation of the one holy and apostolic Church, governed by God Almighty. God the Father has given His Son, Jesus Christ, all authority in all things, including the ruling of His people. Therefore, the government of this body must be determined, not by our personal opinions, but by Christ’s commands and the examples revealed in His Word. We believe the Scriptures teach that the Church must be governed by a plurality of elders called by God. Elders shall be approved by the consenting, minimum of two-thirds majority of voting members. This form of government could be called a “covenantal” or “constitutional” republic. Authority for the establishment of doctrine and practices beyond those found in this Constitution and for the daily operation of the church is vested in the local body of Elders, who shall strive to maintain the harmony and collaboration with the congregation seen in the New Testament.

We desire that there be unity in the body of Christ. There is only one bride of Christ to be presented to Him in all holiness and purity. Although we are striving for purity and unity, we realize that the purest of churches under heaven are subject to both mixture and error. As fallen and fallible beings we realize that it is impossible for us to create the perfect church, yet we must strive for purity and oneness.

No other governing bodies may exercise authority over or within this church. Any association of this church with other individuals, churches, or groups of churches will be considered voluntary. Such relationships may be severed at any time if they are considered by the Elders in any way harmful to this body.

Church Officers

Elders

The Elders are called to shepherd God's flock (the church) and as such must meet all the qualifications outlined for them in Scripture. Elders shall be equal in ruling status, authority, and title, though they may fulfill different roles in the local body. The Elder and his family must practice the holiness and purity that befits a Christian elder and his family.

Prospective Elder candidates will be examined, approved and recommended by the Elders and then affirmed by the church by a minimum of two-thirds majority of voting members. His term will be perpetual. An Elder may be terminated only by resignation or removal according to Biblical guidelines.

He must be a member in good standing of this local body for a minimum of one year prior to being nominated for the office (except in the case of founding Elders of the church). This wait will allow him to become familiar with the people, and they with him and his family, along with any peculiar circumstance relating to this church.

Elders must be members in good standing in the church except in the case of a church plant. In that instance, whenever the membership is split, the elders will maintain their eldership in both churches until such time as there is a plurality of elders in both churches, or in the case(s) of resignation or removal according to Biblical guidelines. Each elder's membership will reside in the church he regularly attends.

As shepherds of the congregation, the Biblical duties of an Elder include:

- 1) Protecting the flock from false doctrine and practice (Acts 20:17, 28-31, Titus 1: 5, 9),
- 2) Feeding the flock by preaching and teaching the whole counsel of God from the Scriptures and by the administration of the sacraments (John 21:15-17, 1 Tim 3:2, 4:13, & 5:17),
- 3) Leading the flock by overseeing the growth of the congregation's holiness in knowledge, doctrine, and practice (Luke 6:46-49, Eph 4:11-16, 1 Tim 5:17, 1 Peter 5:1-2),
- 4) Equipping the saints for the work of the ministry in it's various aspects including discipleship, evangelism, and prayer (Matt 28:16-20, Eph 4:7-16),
- 5) Promoting multi-generational faithfulness among all in the body and equipping fathers to lead their homes in worship (Deut 6:1-9, Mal 4:6),

- 6) Visiting with and praying for the flock regularly and especially during time of sickness, weakness, or need (Rom 15:24, 1 Thess 3:9-10, 2 Thess 2:11-12, 1 John 2:12),
- 7) Overseeing the exercise of church discipline (Matt 18:15-20, 1 Cor 5).

Deacons

The Diaconate will oversee the special care of the poor and needy and other duties as assigned by the Elders, in support of the Elders being devoted to the ministry of the Word, prayer, and shepherding.

The Scriptures hold out the office of Deacon as a distinct office in the church with a focus of service to the church, especially benevolence, and with no authority to rule. All Deacons must meet the qualifications outlined for them in the Scriptures. They and their families must practice the holiness and purity that befits their calling.

Prospective Deacon candidates will be nominated by the Elders or the congregation and elected by a two-thirds majority of voting members. Their examination and installation will be overseen by the Elders. This office is perpetual.

Consistent with the Elder selection process, a Deacon must be a member in good standing of this local church for a minimum of one year prior to being nominated for the office.

The duties of Deacon include:

- 1) Ministering to those within the congregation who are needy, sick and any who may be in distress, especially widows and orphans (Acts 6:1-7),
- 2) Devising effective methods of collecting the gifts of the people, and distributing these gifts for the purpose for which they were contributed (Acts 6:1-7),
- 3) Engaging in tasks which support the Biblical requirements for the Elders in their ministry (Acts 6:1-7),
- 4) Setting an example to other members in matters of spirituality, dedication, and character (1 Tim 3:8-13).

Although Deacons may be asked to share in the teaching duties of the church from time to time, the function of the office of Deacon is not to teach, but to serve the church. The Diaconate may draw up the budget under the supervision and approval of the elders. All financial matters are subject to Elder approval. The office of Deacon may be terminated by resignation or the well-considered discretion of the Elders.

Removal of Elders and Deacons

Elders

If anyone believes an Elder may be morally or doctrinally unfit for his office, he is to approach that Elder individually first (Matt. 18:15), and then with one or two others (Matt. 18:16). If the problem remains, then two or three witnesses should come to the other Elder(s) and present the charge(s) (1 Tim. 5:19). In the case of gross doctrinal error or scandalous immorality, two or three witnesses can come directly to the other Elder(s) and present the charge(s).

If a majority of the other Elders decide that the question merits an investigation and/or trial based on Biblical principles as discerned by the Elder(s) who have not been charged, then they will (a) inform the members of the church of the nature of the charge(s), (b) announce the date(s) of the scheduled investigation and/or trial, and (c) encourage the members to attend. The Elder(s), with the accused Elder having a vote, can suspend, by a majority of their votes, the accused Elder from all duties pending the investigation and/or trial once such investigation and/or trial is scheduled.

If the charge(s) are sustained by a majority of the Elder(s) (the accused Elder having a vote), the Elder will be rebuked in the presence of the congregation (1 Tim. 5:20). The other Elder(s) will determine if other discipline, such as removal from office, is appropriate depending on other factors such as the gravity of the charge(s) and the response to correction. In the case of removal, the Elder is still subject to the normal process of church discipline. In the case of a tie vote among the Elders, a two-thirds majority vote of the voting members will be required to discipline the Elder.

In the case when there is only one Elder, the two or three witnesses are permitted to bring the matter to the Deacons. Upon a majority vote of the Deacons, they may call a meeting of the church for an investigation and/or trial based on Biblical principles. If there is only one Deacon, the meeting can be called without the approval of the Deacon.

Deacons

If anyone believes a Deacon may be morally or doctrinally unfit for his office, he is to approach that Deacon individually first (Matt. 18:15), and then with one or two others (Matt. 18:16). If the problem remains, then the two or three witnesses should come to the Elder(s) and present the charges. In the case of gross doctrinal error or scandalous immorality, a witness can come directly to the Elder(s) and present the charge(s). If a majority of the Elder(s) decide that the question merits an investigation and/or trial, then they will (a) inform the members of the church of the nature of the charges, (b) announce the date(s) of the scheduled investigation and/or trial, and (c) encourage the members to attend. If the charge(s) are sustained by a majority of the Elder(s), they will determine if discipline related to the office is appropriate, such as removal from office or rebuke, depending on other factors such as the gravity of the charge(s) and the

response to correction. In the case of removal, the Deacon is still subject to the normal process of church discipline.

The Regulative Principle

The regulative principle states that the activities and worship of the church should be shaped by the Word of God and not by the fruit of her inventions or the patterns of contemporary culture, and that we may worship God only as He has commanded us in Scripture. Here are some examples of the church life issues that are affected by this principle.

Throughout the centuries the primary activities of the church have been the reading Scripture, singing together, preaching the Word, evangelizing and observing the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper. Each of these is verified by commands principles and patterns of Scripture as follows:

Reading Scripture: 1 Tim 4:3

Preaching the Word: 2 Tim 4:2; Rom 10:14; Acts 8:4

Prayer: 1 Tim 2:1; Matt 21:13

Singing: Eph 5:19

The Lord's Supper: 1 Cor 11; Luke 22:19

Baptism: Rom 6:3-4

Evangelism and discipleship: Acts 8:28; Matt 28

Age integrated worship and discipleship: Eph 6:1-4; 1 Cor 12:12-20; Titus 2:2-7

Membership

Any individual professing faith in Christ, having been subsequently baptized may be considered a candidate for communicant membership. For membership purposes, Reformation Baptist Church defines baptism as immersing the subject in water in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit after professing repentance toward God, faith in, and obedience to, our Lord Jesus Christ. The Elder(s) will publicly announce all potential candidates for membership. If any member thinks that a potential candidate may not be qualified for membership, he is urged to inform the Elder(s) of his opinion, preferably after he has sought to address the concern(s) directly with the candidate. Church discipline is an important aspect of church life edifying the saints for the work of the ministry (Eph 4:11-16). One aspect of that discipline is what Hebrews 12 calls

Reformation Baptist Church Constitution, 02-08-15

“chastening” (Heb 12:3-11). The local church dealing with sin in obedience to Scripture is one of many means that the Lord uses to chasten His people to bring them to maturity. This chastening can take multiple forms including, but not limited to, private rebuke from the Elders (Gal 6:1-5, 2 Tim 4:1-5), elimination of any speaking role in the meeting of the church, removal from position (James 3:1), public rebuke (1 Tim 5:20-21), barring from the Lord's Table, not keeping company with the members of the church (1 Cor 5:11-12, 2 Thess 3:6,14-15) and ex-communication (Matt 18:15-20, 1 Cor 5:1-13). The church has no right, however, to confiscate goods, forbid conjugal rights, or inflict corporal punishment of any kind. The jurisdiction of the church is separate from the jurisdiction of the state, with the church having an obligation to honor civil laws, showing honor as to a minister of God (Rom 13:1-7). When in the judgment of the Elders, a member is guilty or suspected of a crime, he may be required to report or be reported to the civil authorities by the Elders (1 Pet 2:13-14).

By joining the Church, the member acknowledges that the Church has the God-given authority and responsibility to chasten the member in the case of willful sin, schismatic or divisive behavior, and/or the teaching and promotion of deviant (unorthodox) doctrine. Some chastening can be done by the Elders with the agreement of the Member, but the Member has the right to appeal for a hearing before the congregation if they believe that they are being treated unjustly. In any case where the congregation needs to participate, such as when they are not to keep company with the person, the congregation must approve the decision (2 Cor 2:6). When the decision is to be made by the congregation or is appealed to the congregation, the Elders will call a meeting for a trial and/or deliberation about the matter. The Member will be expected to be present at all such meetings, which will include a description of the reasons for the proposed action, an opportunity for that Member to speak to the congregation, an opportunity for that Member to call witnesses if the facts are in dispute, and an opportunity for voting Members to ask questions of that Member. Other activities during that meeting shall be determined and directed by the Elders. Additional meetings for further fact-finding or deliberation can be called at the determination of the Elders. After due notice, any votes will be held on a Sunday in association with the normal meeting of the Church and if a quorum is present, a simple majority of those voting Members who are present or are voting by proxy is required for approving any act of chastening.

The Elders have the God-given power and authority to call before them, when necessary, any member of the congregation for the following reasons: to inquire into the knowledge and spiritual estate of the member, to admonish, to rebuke and to exhort. The Church may not accept a transfer of membership into this body for one who is under Biblical discipline in another true and orthodox church.

Voting members shall consist of all members who are male heads of households in good standing. For clarity, adult sons living in their father's household will not be considered heads of households. Since male headship is established in the church by God, it is not Biblically proper for a woman (unmarried, divorced, or widowed) to take leadership, teach men, or vote in the congregation. The church is the family of God, and it must not be imagined that the order for this family will be in contradiction to the order

for the family (1 Tim 2:11-14; 1 Cor 11:3). If a single woman does not have male representation in the membership (e.g., father, grandfather, older brother, or son as approved by the Elders), she and her household shall be represented by the Elders who will vote on her behalf after consulting with her. Members who are not regularly attending church meetings for any reason shall not be considered members in good standing for the purposes of voting. Any debatable instances of whether someone is regularly attending will be decided by the Elders.

It is required that all believers be joined to a local congregation. Any believer regularly attending Reformation Baptist Church is expected to become a member after a reasonable period of time. We do not believe it is appropriate for people to attend a church for long periods of time without making a covenant with those people to fully join with them in unified ministry. Believing children should be under the authority of the church as well as the authority of their parents, so they should join the church. Baptism by the church does not bring the child into membership.

Member Obligation

We require that every member must take an oath to uphold the Membership Covenant which describes our duties to one another.

We affirm that each individual member of the church has liberty of conscience in those matters of faith and practice where the church has not reached agreement or has not expressly defined the boundaries of liberty. Each member, in such cases, is to be convinced in his own mind as to the teaching of Scripture, being careful not to be a stumbling block to others, and is to walk in faith before God. Christian liberty must never be construed as freedom to sin, but as freedom to serve God (Rom 14:1-23; 1 Cor 8:1-13; 10:23-32; Gal 5:1; Rom 6:15-23).

All members are expected to uphold and support this Constitution, endeavor to obey the teachings of the Bible to the best of their ability, faithfully witness to the truth of the Bible to our society in general and the lost in particular, and protect and support the church and its officers.

Members may hold exceptions to the Doctrinal Statement on matters not crucial to the essence of the Christian faith, as defined by the Statement of Faith, so long as they agree to submit to the church's authority and not spread dissension or disturb the peace of the church. All members shall be required to sign a statement signifying that they have read and agree to submit to this Constitution.

The Lord's Supper

This church will practice "open communion," allowing non-members and visitors to participate in the Lord's Supper if they profess faith in Jesus Christ, have been baptized in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit (either as a believer, which is in accordance with the doctrine of this church, or as an infant if it is in accordance with belief of the baptizing church), and are not banned from the Lord's Supper by their true and orthodox church or in unrepentant sin. The Lord's Supper will not be open to those who are banned from the Lord's Supper until they speak with the Elders and the Elders agree that the person in question was subjected to unbiblical church discipline.

Children are not to partake of the Lord's Supper until they do acknowledge and discern the Lord's body, demonstrate true Christian character, confess Christ and are baptized, lest they eat and drink judgment upon themselves and upon the congregation.

Thus the Lord's Supper is:

- 1) A remembrance of Him (Luke 22:19),
- 2) Our communion with Him, in which, in faith, spiritual grace is conferred (John 6:54 & 55, 1 Cor 10:16),
- 3) Our fellowship with the body of Christ and especially the local body (1 Cor 11:18,20),
- 4) A commemoration of His death (1 Cor 11:26).

Concerning the Family

We affirm that the family is to be a vital center of Christian discipleship, and that as a church we will seek to support and strengthen this important institution for the advance of God's kingdom (Gen 1:28; Deut 32:46,47; Psalm 127:1-5).

We affirm that the husband is the head of the home, and that under Christ he is to give godly leadership, seeking to direct his family in the ways of the LORD; that parents are primarily responsible for the spiritual training of their children (this includes discipline and Biblical instruction); and that our goal as parents is to raise up "godly seed" for the LORD (Eph 5:22- 6:4; Deut 6:1-9; Prov 29:15, 17; Mal 2:15)

We affirm that children are a blessing from God. The Church of Jesus Christ forbids the teaching and practice of abortion in any form, including abortion on demand, abortion for incest or rape and abortion by chemicals or devices.

We affirm that a man is to exercise godly dominion over the particular area of life to which God has called him.

- 1) Over his own personal life.

- 2) Over his family, protecting them, providing for them, teaching and guiding them in the ways of God and maintaining a haven of peace and order.
- 3) Over the rest of creation, as God has particularly called and enabled him, in church, community life, or civil government.

The wife is given dominion, under the authority of her husband, to be a keeper at home, bearing children, and instilling into them all the virtues and qualities of life, to be a helpmeet and support to her husband in his dominion calling, and to manage the home in a way that is orderly, peaceful, and blessed (Gen 1:27-28; Prov 31; Titus 2:4-5).

Meetings

The officers of the church are to meet together at convenient and set times, for the well ordering of the affairs of the congregation, each according to his office.

Whenever a member's vote is required, a quorum shall consist of greater than fifty percent of eligible voting members. Notice of any vote will be given at least 7 days in advance, and will be made easily available to the voting members (church bulletin, letter sent to voting members, etc.). Emergency votes may be called if required by the Elders. Proxy votes will be received from absent members in good standing on the approval of the Elders.

Dissolution

This church shall have the right to own, buy, or sell tangible properties both real (via trust or other legal means) and personal in its name and through properly elected and instructed officers.

In the event of the dissolution of this church, all of its tangible assets and holdings shall be distributed to such other existing church(es) or Christian ministries, which would be in agreement with the principles of this Constitution. All decisions in this event will be made by a majority of voting members of this church.

Transfer of Membership

Transfer of membership from Reformation Baptist Church to another Bible-believing church may be affected by simple request from the member. The member seeking transfer should supply the Elders with a reason for leaving Reformation and must prove that the receiving church is indeed a true and orthodox church. Having been satisfied on these conditions, the Elders must issue a letter of transfer to the officers of the prospective church for all members in good standing who wish to depart lawfully, not being under discipline or attempting to avoid issues that could end in church discipline.

Termination of Membership

In the case where a member denounces their belief in Jesus Christ as their Lord and Savior, after meeting with the Elders to be admonished related to the seriousness of denying Christ before men (Matt. 10:33) and given a suitable period for reflection upon the seriousness of the act, the member will be allowed to deny Christ before the congregation and terminate their membership.

Revisions and Amendments

Revisions and/or amendments to this Constitution may be added from time to time as the Elders see necessary. A unanimous vote of the Elders is required to make any changes to this Constitution. These changes shall be ratified by a two-thirds vote of voting members.