

# Constitution

## Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church

### Preamble

Desiring to secure the principles of the faith once for all delivered to the saints, to govern ourselves according to the principles of Scripture, and to do all things in love, we do hereby adopt and establish this constitution as the governing document of Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church.

### Article 1: Name

This body of believers will be known as Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church of Cincinnati, Ohio.

### Article 2: Purpose

Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church is a community of believers dedicated to pursuing the glory of God by resting in all that Jesus is for us, and calling our neighborhood and the nations into that rest. It is our aim that Christ have first place in everything, a goal which we pursue through:

- The passionate study of Scripture
- The pursuit of authentic Christian community
- A persistent focus on the centrality of the gospel
- A prayer-saturated ministry

These, our church values, shape the core of everything we believe a church should strive for, and thus the core of our activity together.

### Article 3: Governance

#### Polity

Recognizing Jesus Christ as the head of the church, the governance of Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church can be described as elder led, deacon served, and congregationally governed. This means that overall leadership (care of souls, direction of program, oversight of teaching, and shaping of doctrine) shall be given by the body of elders. Deacons will serve alongside the elders, managing the temporal affairs of the church (finances, property, and various committees as designated by the elders and congregation). All ministry, however, will take place with the approval of the congregation who will select the elders and deacons and vote on large-scale decisions.

#### Documents

The doctrine of Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church is set forth in the *Articles of Faith*; its expectations for member conduct in the *Membership Covenant*; and its practice in this *Constitution*.

#### Affiliations

Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church ministers in voluntary, autonomous association with the *Ohio Valley Baptist Association*, the *State Convention of Baptists in Ohio*, and the *Southern Baptist Convention*.

### Article 4: Membership

#### Becoming a Member

Each member of Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church will have given ample evidence of repentance toward God, faith in Christ, believer's baptism by immersion, and a serious commitment to follow the Lord Jesus. These

qualities will be discussed and examined through each prospective member's participation in the church's membership class. Upon completion of the class, conscientious signing of the *Church Covenant*, and demonstration of the aforementioned qualities, the prospective member will be recommended by the elders and received into membership by the vote of the congregation.

### **Privileges**

Each member of Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church is entitled to the privileges of voting in all congregational business meetings, of receiving and offering the accountability and discipline that exists between members (see *Removal and Restoration* below), of having their physical needs attended to by the church family, and of participation in the celebration of the Lord's Supper, which may also be celebrated by members-in-good-standing of other evangelical churches.

### **Responsibilities**

Each member of Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church is expected to strive to live according to the terms of the church's *Membership Covenant*.

### **Removal and Restoration**

Members may, upon the vote of the congregation, be removed:

- At their own request.
- Upon their permanent removal to another geographic location.
- By recommendation to another church family.
- According to the principles of church discipline set forth in Matthew 18, as explained below.

Any member guilty of consistent neglect of his responsibilities or of grievous, unrepentant conduct which may dishonor the Lord and damage His church will be subject to the disciplinary measures commanded by the Lord in Matthew 18:15-17, and summarized as follows.

1. The guilty member will first be lovingly and privately admonished by another church member.
2. If this initial step fails to secure repentance and restoration, the admonishing member will then notify the elders. This member, along with at least one elder, will together lovingly and privately admonish the guilty member.
3. If steps 1 and 2 fail to secure repentance and restoration, the elders will, after much prayer, make the situation known to the congregation at the next business meeting. The entire church membership will be encouraged to plead with the guilty member for repentance and restoration, and the guilty member will be put on probation, having all membership privileges, including access to the Lord's Supper, temporarily revoked. If, in due time, the guilty member repents publicly and makes any necessary restitution, he will be wholeheartedly forgiven and fully restored to membership in good standing.
4. If, in due time, these processes do not result in public repentance and restoration, the elders will present to the congregation a motion to remove the guilty member from church membership. Should the guilty former-member, after his removal, publicly repent and make any necessary restitution, he may re-join the church by following the processes described under *Becoming a Member* above.

It should be remembered that the supreme goal of this process is the glory of God, the good of the church, and the spiritual health of the guilty member. Thus all matters of discipline must be dealt with lovingly and gently—with the ultimate goal of full forgiveness and restoration.

In cases not requiring such severity of action, members may yet, under certain sinful circumstances, be admonished by the elders and/or be suspended from certain leadership and ministry positions, although not losing their membership.

## Article 5: Officers

Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church recognizes the biblical offices of elders and deacons. For the sake of order and propriety, our constitution also describes the administrative positions of treasurer, financial secretary, and church clerk. All officers must be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

### Elders

Our goal is that the body of elders will be comprised of at least three men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of elder set forth in I Timothy 3.1–7 and Titus 1.6–9, and that a majority of the active eldership will be composed of church members not in the regular pay of the church. No elder will hold the office of deacon during his tenure as elder.

The church will recognize men gifted and willing to serve in this calling, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections. These men will be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as elders. This recognition shall be reaffirmed by the church triennially (see Article 7: Elections—Elders and Deacons). An elder's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members with reason to believe an elder should be dismissed should express such concern to the elders and, if need be, to the congregation. Any such action will be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in I Timothy 5.17–21, and in accordance with the procedures outlined above under “Article 4: Removal and Restoration.” If an elder remains unrepentant after these disciplinary measures, he may be dismissed by a majority vote of the members present and voting at any business meeting of the church.

Subject to the will of the congregation, the elders shall oversee the ministry and resources of the church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6.1–7 and I Peter 5.1–4, the elders will devote their time to prayer, the ministry of the Word (by teaching and encouraging sound doctrine), and shepherding God's flock. Specifically, this entails:

- Examining and instructing prospective members
- Conducting worship services
- Overseeing and ensuring the biblical soundness of all teaching in the church
- Administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper
- Being available for spiritual counsel and visitation
- Meeting regularly to pray for the membership
- Encouraging and mobilizing the church in the tasks of evangelism and world mission
- Overseeing the process of church discipline
- Overseeing the work of all paid staff
- Serving as the search team for all ministerial staff
- Overseeing the work of the deacons, other officers, and servant ministry teams

The elders will annually elect a chairman of elders' meetings who will serve as moderator of business meetings. For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the State of Ohio, the elders will also elect one of the non-paid elders to serve as the president of the corporation.

### Vocational Elders

Vocational elders (whom we will call *pastors*) may be hired at the recommendation of the elders and approval of the congregation. Vocational elders will perform the same duties as other elders (described above) and will be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching. As paid employees, they will be accountable to the body of elders.

The senior pastor, in particular, will have direct oversight of the worship services of the church—serving as the primary preacher on the Lord's Day, administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and providing servant leadership among the body of elders. He will, however, be equal in authority with the other elders and be subject to their accountability. In the absence or incapacity of the senior pastor, the elders will assume responsibility for his duties; any of these duties may be delegated to qualified individuals.

### **Additional Staff**

The elders may hire additional staff—ministerial, custodial, or administrative—who are not pastoral in function, and therefore, do not serve as elders. All such staff will function under the direction and supervision of the elders.

### **Deacons**

The office of deacon is described in I Timothy 3.8–13 and Acts 6.1–7. The church will recognize, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections, men who are giving of themselves in service to the church, and who possess particular gifts of service. These members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as deacons.

Deacons' responsibilities will include:

- Caring for the temporal needs of members
- Attending to the accommodations for public worship
- Overseeing the church budget
- Overseeing and maintaining the church building and property
- Serving, with the elders, as a nominating committee for other offices and servant ministry roles
- Assisting the elders with the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper

Each year the deacons, with the approval of the elders, will present to the church an itemized budget at least two weeks prior to the yearly business meeting. This budget will be presented for discussion at the yearly business meeting and presented for congregational approval. The deacons, with the approval of the elders, may at any time suggest budget changes to be approved by the congregation. The deacons will also receive, hold, and disburse a fund for benevolence, reporting on its use to the elders at their request, and reporting to the church its total receipts and total disbursements only.

The deacons, with the agreement of the elders, may establish unpaid administrative positions or servant ministry teams of members to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities in the church. The deacons will also annually elect a chairman who will coordinate deacon meetings and, for purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the State of Ohio, will serve as the vice-president of the corporation.

### **Treasurer**

The treasurer will be elected by the congregation to serve a term of one year. The treasurer, who will not be an active elder or paid church staff member, will either be one of the deacons or work under their direct supervision. The treasurer will ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as appropriate. The treasurer will also be responsible for presenting regular reports of the account balances, revenues and expenses of the church at each business meeting. The treasurer will ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church. The treasurer will render to the deacons annually, or whenever they may require it, an account of all transactions as treasurer and of the financial condition of the church.

### **Financial Secretary**

The financial secretary will be elected by the congregation to serve a term of one year. The financial secretary will be charged with keeping a private record of individual giving to the church. These records will not be privy to anyone but the financial secretary and treasurer and will be kept for the sole purpose of providing each member with an accurate annual giving statement.

### **Clerk**

The clerk will be elected by the congregation to serve a term of one year. The clerk will record the minutes of all regular and special business meetings of the church, will render reports as requested by the elders, the deacons, or the church, and will maintain all records pertaining to church business. In the absence or incapacity of the clerk the elders will appoint a member to perform the duties of the church clerk. For purposes

of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the State of Ohio, the clerk will serve as the secretary of the corporation.

### **Servant Ministry Roles**

Each year the elders and deacons will prayerfully examine the needs of the church and the gifts of the individual members and create a roster of servant ministry roles whereby every member has the opportunity to serve directly in the ministry of the church. Servant ministry roles that fall into the areas of teaching, evangelism, missions, and soul-care will be under the direct supervision of the elders. Other roles will fall under the direct supervision of the deacons. Servant ministers will serve a term of one year.

## **Article 6: Meetings**

### **Regular Meetings**

Pleasant Ridge Baptist Church will meet every Lord's Day morning for corporate worship, devoting ourselves to the apostles' teaching, to fellowship, to the breaking of bread, and to prayer. We will also gather for the same purposes on Wednesday evenings, and at other such times as the elders and congregation may see fit.

### **Business Meetings**

Business meetings will be conducted in that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ. In addition, meetings will be conducted decently and in order, moderated by one of the elders designated by the elder body as the moderator.

The second Wednesday of every quarter will be set aside for business. These meetings will be for the purposes of financial update, member recommendations, and other business of the church. New members may also be received by vote of the congregation during the regular Lord's Day meeting on the first Sunday of any month, coinciding with the Lord's Supper. No other business will be conducted on these occasions. In addition, the church will hold an annual business meeting on the first Sunday in December, at which time we will reaffirm elders and deacons (as needed), elect officers and servant ministers, approve the following year's budget, and potentially conduct other church business. Special business meetings may, at any time, be called by the elders, or by written request of at least twenty percent of the members, provided at least two week's notice is given during a regular Lord's Day meeting.

Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those members present. All votes shall be tallied based on the number of votes cast by members present.

## **Article 7: Elections**

### **General Procedures**

Regular elections for elders, deacons, officers, and servant ministers will be held at the annual business meeting on the first Sunday in December. Special elections may be held at any time, provided that at least two week's notice is given during a regular Lord's Day meeting of the church. Though nominations are finally made by the elders and deacons, all church members are encouraged to give input on the process. If concerns about a specific candidate exist, these should be addressed with the elders, if at all possible, before the nomination comes for a public vote.

### **Elders and Deacons**

All prospective elders and deacons will be nominated by the sitting elders and deacons, and will be presented for congregational approval. Election of an elder or deacon will require a three-fourths majority of members present and voting in order to be affirmed. All elders and deacons must also be reaffirmed every three years, beginning with their year of election, by recommendation of the sitting elders and deacons and three fourths majority of members present and voting. Vocational elders will also be examined by the congregation to determine their maturity, calling, and spiritual gifts.

**Non-Elder Staff**

Non-elder church staff will be nominated by the sitting elders and deacons, and will be presented for congregational approval. Election of a staff-member will require a three-fourths majority of members present and voting in order to be affirmed. Such staff members will not need subsequent re-election or reaffirmation, but will operate under the direct supervision of the elders.

**Other Officers**

The treasurer, financial secretary, church clerk, and all other servant ministers will be nominated by the sitting elders and deacons, and will be presented for congregational approval. Election of all such persons will require a two-thirds majority of members present and voting in order to be affirmed. All offices besides that of elder and deacon are one year terms, running from January 1-December 31.

**Article 8: Amendments**

This *Constitution*, the church's *Articles of Faith*, or *Membership Covenant* may be amended by a three-fourths vote of the members present and voting at any annual meeting of the church, or at a meeting specially called for that purpose, the proposed change(s) having been laid before the church in writing not less than one month before the time of the proposed action, and the date and time of the vote on the proposed amendment(s) having been announced verbally during the two regular Lord's Day meetings immediately preceding the date of the proposed action.