

2022



Constitution and By-laws

Adopted July 10, 2022



CONSTITUTION of HOPE REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

TABLE OF CONTENTS

<u>Preamble</u>	3
Article I: <u>Name</u>	3
Article II: <u>Purpose</u>	3
Article III: <u>Articles of Faith</u>	3
Article IV: <u>Membership</u>	4
Section 1: <u>Qualifications for Membership</u>	4
Section 2: <u>Forms of Membership</u>	4
Section 3: <u>Procedure for Receiving New Members</u>	5
Section 4: <u>Termination of Membership</u>	6
Article V: <u>Conduct of Members</u>	8
Section 1: <u>The Means of Grace</u>	8
Section 2: <u>Govern the Home Biblically</u>	8
Section 3: <u>Participate in Missions and Evangelism</u>	8
Section 4: <u>Support the Ministry Financially</u>	8
Section 5: <u>Exercise Christian Liberty</u>	8
Section 6: <u>Support the Church Leaders</u>	9
Section 7: <u>Vote in Congregational Meetings</u>	10
Article VI: <u>Church Discipline</u>	10
Section 1: <u>Formative Discipline</u>	10
Section 2: <u>Corrective Discipline</u>	10
Article VII: <u>Church Officers</u>	12
Section 1: <u>General Statement</u>	12
Section 2: <u>Elders</u>	12
Article VIII: <u>Board of Elders</u>	13
Section 1: <u>Responsibilities of the Board of Elders</u>	13
Section 2: <u>Officers of the Board of Elders</u>	14
Section 3: <u>Membership and Discipline</u>	14
Section 4: <u>Church Officers and Teachers</u>	14
Section 5: <u>Pulpit Supply</u>	14
Section 6: <u>Administration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper</u>	14
Section 7: <u>Grievances and Suggestions</u>	15
Section 8: <u>Miscellaneous Duties</u>	15
Article IX: <u>Deacons</u>	15
Section 1: <u>Ministry of Mercy</u>	15
Section 2: <u>Business Affairs</u>	15
Section 3: <u>Limitation of Powers</u>	15
Article X: <u>Ordinations</u>	16
Section 1: <u>Recognition for Specific Ministries</u>	16
Section 2: <u>Installation of Elders</u>	16

Section 3: <u>Installation of Deacons</u>	16
Article XI: <u>Finances</u>	17
Article XII: <u>Amendments</u>	17

BY-LAWS

Article I: <u>Congregational Meetings</u>	18
Section 1: <u>Notice of Meetings</u>	18
Section 2: <u>Number of Meetings</u>	18
Section 3: <u>Method of Calling Meetings</u>	18
Section 4: <u>Responsibility for Meetings</u>	18
Section 5: <u>Quorum for Transaction of Business</u>	18
Section 6: <u>Voting Age</u>	18
Article II: <u>Membership Roll</u>	19
Article III: <u>Church Officers</u>	19
Section 1: <u>Method and Requirements for Election of Elders and Deacons</u>	19
Section 2: <u>Election of Church Officers</u>	19
Section 3: <u>Termination of Service</u>	20
Section 4: <u>Process for Calling a Teaching Elder from Outside the Church</u>	20
Article IV: <u>Church Boards</u>	21
Section 1: <u>Monthly Meetings</u>	21
Section 2: <u>Quorum and Call for Meetings</u>	21
Section 3: <u>Duties of the Church Clerk</u>	21
Section 4: <u>Duties of the Church Treasurer</u>	21
Article V: <u>Amendments to By-Laws</u>	22
Article VI: <u>Policies</u>	22
Article VII: <u>Dissolution</u>	22

CONSTITUTION

PREAMBLE

We, the members of Hope Reformed Baptist Church, founded in Calhoun County, Texas in 1998, establish and adopt this Constitution/By-Laws as the biblical structure to govern this local Body. We affirm that we are a Baptist church subscribing to the reformed church doctrines as clarified in our Confession of Faith (London Baptist Confession of 1689).

ARTICLE I

Name

The name of this church shall be “Hope Reformed Baptist Church” of Port Lavaca, Texas.

ARTICLE II

Purpose

The purpose of this church is to glorify the God of the Scriptures in promoting His worship, evangelizing sinners, and edifying saints. To this end we are committed to proclaiming God's perfect law and His glorious Gospel of Grace in Jesus Christ throughout the world, and to defending the “faith once delivered unto the saints” (Jude 3).

ARTICLE III

Articles of Faith

We do hereby adopt, as our confession of faith, the London Baptist Confession of 1689. This document is a most excellent summary of things most surely believed among us. We accept the same, not as an authoritative rule or code of faith, whereby we are to be fettered, but as an assistance to us in controversy, a confirmation in faith, and a means of instruction in righteousness. In this Confession the members of our church will have a body of divinity in small compass and by means of Scriptural proofs will be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in them (I Peter 3 : 15).

ARTICLE IV

Membership

Section 1 – Qualifications for Membership

All persons who, in the discernment of the elders, are capable of mature, independent judgment as appears sufficient to obey the Gospel and participate in the broad responsibilities of membership, may apply for membership. Such persons shall be eligible for membership as they profess repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:37-42; 5:14; 8:12; 16:30-34; 20:21), manifest a life transformed by the power of Christ (I Cor. 1:1-2 with 6:11; Gal. 1:1-2 with 4:8-9; I Thes. 1:1-9), are baptized upon professed faith in Christ (Matt. 20:18-20; John. 4:1-2; Acts 2:41; 8:12; 16:31-34; 18:8), express substantial agreement with the Confession and Constitution of this church (i.e. agreement which satisfies the elders that there is like-mindedness in the doctrines essential to orthodox, reformed Christianity and to the biblical order of this church) (I Cor. 1:10; 14:40; II Cor. 8:5; I Thes. 5:12-14; Acts 15:39) and are willing to submit to its government (I Cor. 14:40; Acts 2:42; I Cor. 1:10; 13:17) and discipline (Matt. 18:15-18; Acts 5:13-14).

Section 2 – Forms of Membership

Each member of the church is acknowledged to form a vital part of the body and to have a special function in the life of that body (I Cor. 12:4-27). Practical considerations, however, require that certain distinctions be recognized in the membership of this church.

A. **REGULAR MEMBERS** - All who are received into the membership of the church according to the procedures set forth in Section 3 of this article whose membership has not been terminated in any of the ways specified in Section 4 of this article and who do not come under the corrective discipline of the church as set forth in Article VI, shall be considered regular members in good standing and entitled to all rights and privileges of membership in the church (Acts 2:37-47).

B. **TEMPORARY MEMBERS** - Persons who come to live in our area for a limited period of time (e.g. students, military personnel, persons on special work assignments) may be received into or removed from the membership of the church on the same basis and in the same manner as persons who have permanent residence in our geographical area. If such a person is already a member of a church in his place of permanent residence, he need not be released from the membership of his "home church" but will be regarded as a temporary member while in our midst, enjoying all the privileges and benefits and subject to all the duties and discipline of regular membership. When such a person terminates his period of temporary residence, he will be released to the fellowship of his "home church" and no longer be regarded as a member of this church (compare: Acts 18:27; Rom. 16:1-2; II Cor. 3:1f; Col. 4:10; III John. 5-10).

C. **NON-RESIDENT MEMBERS** - Regular members who move away from our area and who cannot find another local church with which they can conscientiously unite will, at their

request, be retained as non-resident members of this church. Such persons must maintain regular communication with the elders in order to maintain their non-resident membership. Nevertheless, they are urged to seek diligently a church with which they can unite elsewhere. A non-resident member shall not be allowed to vote in any business meeting of the church. At the discretion the elders, non-resident membership may also be granted to invalids and others whose providential situation prevents expected regular attendance at meetings of the church (Acts 8:27-40 general principles).

Section 3 – Procedure for Receiving New Members

The Scriptural pattern for the reception of new members into the church includes not only careful scrutiny, consisting of pastoral examination and investigation, but also congregational suffrage, consisting of their advice and consent.

The requirement of pastoral scrutiny is rooted and grounded in the general Scriptural teachings respecting oversight (Acts 20:28), discernment (I Cor. 3:1-3), and discretion (I Tim. 5:3-16, 22) and in the apostolic pattern of making disciples (Acts 8:14-22). The requirement of congregational advice and consent is rooted and grounded in the general Scriptural teachings respecting proving (I Thes. 5:21; I Tim. 3:10) and congregational unity (I Cor. 1:10; Rom. 16:17) and in the apostolic pattern of congregational suffrage (Acts 14:23; 15:22).

A. PASTORAL EXAMINATION - A person who desires to become a member of the church shall apply to the elders and request to be interviewed by them. During the interview the elders will seek to determine whether that person has a credible profession of faith in Christ, has been Scripturally baptized, is in substantial agreement with the Confession and Constitution of the church, is capable of assuming the responsibilities and liabilities of church membership, intends to give whole-hearted support to its ministry, and is willing to submit to its government and discipline (Acts 9:26-27; 10:47-48 with 11:2-18, 23). Each applicant will be required to affirm in writing his or her commitment to our Confession and Constitution.

B. PASTORAL INVESTIGATION - If the applicant is or has been a member of another church, special effort will be made to determine the person's standing in that church and his reasons for leaving (Acts 15:1-2 with 24:25). A letter of commendation will be requested from that church. If a former church raises an objection which the elders consider valid (III John. 8-12), the applicant may be denied membership at the discretion of the elders.

C. CONGREGATIONAL ADVICE - If the elders are satisfied that the applicant is eligible for membership, they will present the applicant to the congregation at a stated meeting of the church for the purpose of hearing the applicant's testimony of faith in Christ. Following this, a time period of no less than one month will be allowed for objections or questions to be raised privately with the elders by any member concerning the applicant's manner of life or doctrine. The elders shall postpone the reception of a person into membership until any objections are investigated and resolved to the elders' satisfaction (Acts 9:26-28; Rev. 2:2). If there are no unresolved objections, the applicant will be presented before the church for congregational

suffrage. Approval by congregational vote as specified in Article 1 of the By-laws will result in the immediate reception into membership.

Section 4 – Termination of Membership

A. MEANS OF TERMINATION

1. By Physical Death — When a member of the church is removed from our midst by death, his name shall be removed from the membership roll (Heb.12:23).

2. By Removal to Another Church — The New Testament norm for Christians is that they be members of true local churches of Christ, and the spiritual health of believers is endangered when they are not thus committed to a church; therefore, any Christian who leaves the membership of this church should seek to do so by means of removal to another true church of Christ. If a church member in good standing whose conduct does not warrant corrective discipline desires to leave the membership of this church, he is strongly urged to leave in an orderly way by privately indicating that desire to the elders along with his reasons for leaving. When it is so requested, the elders may grant to a departing member in good standing a letter of commendation to another church (Acts 18:27). No such letter may be given to a member who is at the time under the corrective discipline of this church. The elders may refuse to grant a letter of commendation to any church which is in their judgment disloyal to "the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3) or which does not exercise godly care over its members.

3. By Resignation — Membership in Hope Reformed Baptist Church is entered and initiated jointly, by voluntary commitment from the individual applicant and acceptance by the church, expressed in terms of the procedures described in Section 3 of this article. Accordingly, it follows that members cannot terminate their membership unilaterally under some circumstances. As a general rule, a member may voluntarily resign from membership in Hope Reformed Baptist Church. In such cases a member should first consult with the elders. However, a resignation offered by a person guilty of sin which calls for corrective discipline is not valid, and the church may proceed with public censure, imposition of strictures, or excommunication in accordance with the procedures outlined in Article 6 (Acts 15:24; I John 2:18-19 with II John 7-11).

4. By Dismissal — If a member ceases to attend the stated meetings of the church without showing just cause, or if upon relocation ceases to maintain a vital contact with the church, he may be dismissed from the membership at the discretion of the elders (I John 2:19 general principle). In such cases the elders shall try to contact the person and resolve the situation (Ezek. 34:4). If these efforts are ineffective, the elders shall inform that person when feasible and the congregation that he is no longer a member. If a member not guilty of sin which calls for corrective discipline either renounces his public commitment to keep all the requirements of membership listed in Section 1 of this article (Num. 30:2; Deut. 23:21-23; Ps. 15:4; 24:4; Matt. 5:37), or ceases without just cause to practice all of them as a pattern of life (Ps. 76:1

with II Tim. 2:19; Eccl. 5:1-5; Matt. 21:28-31 general principle; 23:3 general principle), and yet refuses to resign voluntarily, he may be dismissed, but only after due admonition from the elders (II Tim. 2:24-26). In such cases the elders, at a regular or specially called congregational meeting, shall recommend to the congregation that the person be dismissed, explain the grounds for their recommendation, and obtain the consent of the congregation. No person shall be dismissed in such cases without this expressed consent of the congregation. The person shall be informed of this action.

5. By Excommunication — According to the teaching of Holy Scripture a congregation must cut off from its fellowship and membership any person who teaches or insists on holding false and heretical doctrine, who blatantly and impenitently conducts himself in a manner inconsistent with his Christian profession, or who persists in disturbing the unity, peace, or purity of the church (Matt. 18:15f; Rom. 16:17-20; I Cor. 5:1 f; Titus 3:10-11). The procedure to be followed in such excommunication is set forth in Section 2 of Article VI of the Constitution.

B. IMPLICATIONS OF TERMINATION

1. Hope Reformed Baptist Church does not exist in isolation from, but is part of the universal church of Christ, composed of all true churches (Gal. 1:13,22; Eph. 3:21). Accordingly, open and forthright communication among the churches is vital for the purity, peace, edification, and unity of the church universal. Therefore, the elders may, at their discretion, disclose to the members of Hope Reformed Baptist Church and to other churches the circumstances under which a person's membership was terminated (Acts 15:4; I Tim. 1:20; II Tim. 2:17; 4:10).

2. In addition, this church does not exist in isolation from society at large. Accordingly, this church has a moral obligation to society both to act with integrity and to maintain its testimony (II Cor. 8:20-21). Therefore, the elders may, at their discretion, disclose to other persons outside the ecclesiastical circles mentioned above the circumstances under which a person's membership was terminated (Lev. 5:1; Prov. 29:24; I Pet. 4:15).

3. Termination of membership does not give license to former members to sow discord, spread false teachings or slanders, or engage in any other behavior which threatens the peace and unity of this church or the church universal. Accordingly, when it is established that a former member is behaving divisively, the elders may issue whatever warnings they deem appropriate to maintain and preserve the peace and harmony of this congregation and the universal church (Acts 15:24; Rom. 16:17-20; I Tim. 1:20; II Tim. 17; 4:14).

ARTICLE V

Conduct of Members

Section 1 – The Means of Grace

All public and private means of grace, such as keeping the Sabbath (*Matt. 12:12; 28:20*), regular attendance at the services of the church (*Heb. 10:25*), daily systematic reading of the Bible, and private and family prayers shall be urged upon our members.

Section 2 – Govern the Home Biblically

The church expects its members to follow the Scriptures in home government. God requires that godliness in the home have a high priority in every life. The home holds a central attention in God's Law and is the object of frequent exhortation in the New Testament. Men are expected to rule their homes with gentleness but firmness. Women must be subject to their husbands in everything as unto the Lord. Parents should train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (*Eph 6:4*) by holy example, consistent education, and firm discipline (including corporal punishment). Children must reverently obey their parents (*Eph 6:1*). These primary responsibilities, prayerfully executed, will honor the name of Christ in the community and strengthen the cause of Christ in generations to come.

Section 3 – Participate in Missions and Evangelism

It is the duty of every Christian and of every church of Christ to seek to extend the Gospel to the ends of the earth. Missionary efforts are the natural consequences of regeneration (*Ps. 51:10-14*). It is the duty of every child of God to witness by life and word. Personal efforts at witnessing for Christ are expected of every member. Beyond this, we are committed to common efforts for sending the gospel to the ends of the earth.

Section 4 – Support the Ministry Financially

We also assert our conviction that Christians are to support the work of the Lord by offerings made to the local church. Proportionate giving is a distinct and positive command in Scripture (*Mal. 3:8-11, Matt. 23:23*); hence, we pledge ourselves to systematic contribution for the support of this church with a proportion of our income according to the principle in I Corinthians 16:2.

Section 5 – Exercise Christian Liberty

We shall require of each other in our daily walk and conversation loyal obedience to all those moral precepts established in the Word of God (*Heb. 10:24-25*); however, where God has not prohibited certain practices in His Word, the Christian has liberty to participate in them. The following principles must always guide the Christian's exercise of liberty:

- A. FEAR OF GOD – As the servant of Christ, all action must be motivated by love to God, and all objects must be used for His glory. The term "liberty" is often used as a cloak of malicious self-indulgence, which is sin (*I Cor. 10:31; I Tim. 4:4; I Pet. 2:15-16*).
- B. LOVE OF BRETHREN – Though no man may dictate to the Christian's conscience, the consideration of fellow saints must always deeply affect his decisions. In a spirit of serving the brethren, he must do that which he judges will edify them and prevent their stumbling. (*Gal. 5:13; I Cor. 10:23; I Cor. 8:9; Rom. 14:21-23*).
- C. COMPASSION FOR THE UNCONVERTED – Use of liberty must always be regulated by its effect upon sinners, and behavior chosen which is likely to win some (*I Cor. 9:19-22*).
- D. WATCHFULNESS OVER THE SOUL – Though free in conscience to use all of God's creation, carefulness in practice is demanded because of remaining lusts. Where the Christian judges himself weak through lust, he must abstain in order to Scripturally persevere (*I Cor. 9:23-27*). Note: See Article VIII, Section 6 for further application of these principles to worship.

Section 6 – Support the Church Leaders

It is the duty of every member to respect the God-appointed officers of the church. The duties of church members toward their elders, deacons, teachers, ministers, and pastors are as follows:

- A. To pray for them, that God would open a door of utterance unto them, to unfold the mysteries of the Gospel (*Eph. 6:18-20*).
- B. To obey the Elders in the Lord, in whatsoever they admonish them, according to the Word of God (*Heb. 13:17-22; 3 John 3,4*).
- C. To follow their example and footsteps, as far as warranted by the Word (*I Cor. 4:16, 11:1; Phil. 3:17; Heb. 13:7*).
- D. To stand by them, in all their trials and afflictions, and to defend them in all good causes, as far each member is able. In ***I Tim. 1:15***, those of Asia are blamed for turning away or not standing by the Apostle.
- E. In the event of the necessity of exposing the infirmities of the officers, let it be done according to the principles of Matt. 18:15-21 and I Tim. 5:19-20, with soberness and charity for the sake of the Gospel.
- F. To support the Elders financially within the guidelines of I Tim. 5:17 (see Article VII, Section 2D.)

Section 7 – Vote in Congregational Meetings

Recognition of church officers by way of nomination and voting are responsibilities of voting members. Also, the exercise of excommunication by vote is the responsibility of the congregation.

ARTICLE VI **Church Discipline**

Section 1 – Formative Discipline

Formative discipline is primarily positive through the teaching of God's Word, the example of Christian living, and the mutual ministry of the several members of the body of Christ. Therefore, every disciple (follower) of Christ must be under discipline (His instruction and correction), which is administered to each one through the church, according to I Cor 12:12-17; Rom 12:3-21; and other passages. Mutual submission to one another and to the overseers whom the Lord has set over His church (Eph 5:21; I Pt 5:5) will result in the sanctification of each member individually and of the whole body of the church collectively. There are occasions, however, when failure in the application of this formative discipline makes the application of corrective discipline necessary.

Section 2 – Corrective Discipline

The threefold purpose of corrective church discipline is to glorify God by maintaining the welfare of and purity in the local church (1 Corinthians 5:6), to edify believers by deterring sin (1 Timothy 5:20), and to promote the restoration and spiritual welfare of the offending believer by calling him or her to return to a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct (1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 2:5-8; Galatians 6:1).

A. Members of this church and all other professing Christians who regularly attend or fellowship with this church who purposefully reject the doctrine of our confession, or who unrepentantly engage in conduct contrary to our church constitution and covenant shall be subject to corrective church discipline, including dismissal according to Matthew 18:15-20 and various other passages in Scripture noted below.

B. According to the teaching of Scripture, a church must cut off from its fellowship and visible membership any person who

1. Insists on holding to false or heretical doctrine; or
2. Persistently conducts him/herself in a disorderly manner inconsistent with his/her Christian profession; or
3. Persists in disturbing the unity of peace of the church; or
4. Habitually absents him/herself from the meetings of this church without just cause

(Romans 16:17-18; Titus 3:10-11; Matthew 18:15ff; 1 Corinthians 5:1ff; 2 Thessalonians 3:6; Hebrews 10:23-25)

C. 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 18:15-20, Romans 16:17-20, 1 Corinthians 5:1-13, 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15, 1 Timothy 5:19-20, and Titus 3:10 must be carefully followed and applied to each and every case of discipline as appropriate. In some cases, public admonition and/or public repentance may be warranted (Matthew 18:17; 1 Timothy 5:20). In the most extreme cases, excommunication from the membership of the church may be necessary (Matthew 18:17; Romans 16:27-20; 1 Corinthians 15:1-13; 1 Timothy 1:20; Titus 3:10). The congregation shall have the right to excommunicate a member by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting. All the members of the church are obliged to submit to and enforce as appropriate the decision of the church (2 Corinthians 2:6) in acts of discipline.

D. Since the church is a spiritual and religious institution, the punishments inflicted by the church in discipline (2 Corinthians 2:6) are also spiritual. They include

1. Public verbal reproof (Matthew 18:17; 1 Timothy 5:20),
2. Social avoidance (Matthew 18:17; Acts 10:28; 11:3; Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:9; Galatians 2:12; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14; 2 John 10),
3. Suspension from the Lord's Supper (1 Corinthians 5:11), and
4. Removal from the membership of the church (Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:13)

They are intended to effect repentance through a sense of sorrow and shame (2 Corinthians 2:7; 2 Thessalonians 3:14). The church has no right to inflict corporal punishment of any kind, though a member guilty of civil or criminal actions may be delivered to the civil authorities according to the rule of Scripture (Romans 13:1-7; 1 Peter 2:13-14).

E. 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 disciplined member who gives satisfactory evidence of his/her repentance (2 Corinthians 2:6-8). The congregation shall have the right to restore the repentant member to full membership, under the recommendation of the eldership and by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting.

The members of this church, and all other professing Christians who regularly attend or fellowship with this church, agree that there shall be no appeal to any court because of the dismissal or because of public statements to the congregation during church discipline. Members who are under discipline by the church, as defined above, forfeit and waive the right to resign from this church. Resignations from membership are possible only by members who are in good standing and who are not under disciplinary action.

ARTICLE VII

Church Officers

Section 1 – General Statement

Jesus Christ alone is Head of the church (*Col. 1:18*). He governs His church through office-bearers whom He appoints and who are endowed by His Spirit with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work. Office-bearers in the church are of two kinds: Elders (also called Bishops and Pastors) and Deacons (*Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-13*). It is the duty of the church to seek and discover among its male members those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the necessary gifts for office-bearing. After formally recognizing them by common suffrage, the church shall set them apart by united prayer, and then submit to their God-given authority. No less than a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting shall be required for the election of an officer.

In the case that the church no longer has qualified officers, the membership may invite another like-minded congregation to oversee the church until such time that qualified officers are raised up.

Section 2 – Elders

A. PLURALITY AND PARITY – The Scriptures indicate that normally there should be a plurality of Elders in the local church (*Acts 20:17; Phil 1:1*). These men are called “Bishops” (meaning overseers) because they have oversight of the assembly (*Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2; Heb. 13:17*). They are called the “Pastor-teachers” given to the church “*for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering unto the building up on the body of Christ*” (*Eph. 4:11-12; Acts 20:28*). There is parity (equality) among the Elders, each bearing authority in the deliberations and decisions of the Board of Elders. Thus the plurality and parity of the Elders guard the flock from the weaknesses of rule by one man and use the collective wisdom of several godly men to rule the flock of God as one Board.

B. QUALIFICATIONS – The qualifications for a man chosen to fill the office of Elder are clearly set forth in *1 Tim. 3:1-7* and *Titus 1:5-9*. The recognition of these qualifications by the congregation will help prevent the infiltration of hirelings who forsake the flock and wolves who enter in and destroy the flock (*John 10:12-13; Acts 20:28-30*). Any man called to the Eldership must be able conscientiously to affirm his agreement with and support of the Confession, Constitution and By-Laws of the church. Should he at any time move from his positions, he is under spiritual and moral obligation to make this fact known to the Elders for further consultation. In the event of irreconcilable differences after consultation, this fact must be made known to the church for further disposition.

C. RESPONSIBILITIES – All Elders are pastors of the flock (*Acts 20:28*). They are responsible for the spiritual ministrations of the church, the implementation of discipline, the oversight of the souls of the members, and the oversight of all ministries and functions of the church. They

shall give account to God for all things in the church (*Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17; I Pet. 5:2-3*).

While every Elder should be "apt to teach", some will be more engaged in formal and public teaching while others will be more engaged in pastoring (that is, private teaching and admonishing) and governing (I Tim. 5:17a). The gifts of each man will be considered by the Board of Elders in assigning responsibilities.

One or more of the Elders (usually the supported Elder[s]) may use the title of "Pastor" for the sake of denominational communication and public contacts. It shall be the duty of the Elders to be diligent and faithful in attendance at the Board of Elders meetings and the regular services of the church. They shall make suggestions regarding the pulpit ministry and encourage the one preaching in the work of the Lord. Elders may call upon one or more of the Deacons to assist them in the fulfillment of their responsibilities.

D. SUPPORT – In view of the fact that the responsibilities of the eldership are numerous and great, Scripture makes provision for the financial support of Elders. I Tim. 5:17 encourages the support of "*elders who rule well*" (oversight) but "*especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching*." Thus a congregation may support more than one Elder in the various duties of that office but should place priority on the teaching function.

E. ELECTION – The normal procedure in the New Testament for the election of Elders is the process of recognition (*I Tim. 3:1-13*). For this reason, the congregation normally will look first among its members for officers (see By-Laws, Article III). However, in the event that none of the Elders possess sufficient proficiency to be financially supported so as to "*labor in preaching and teaching*" (*I Tim. 5:17b*), the Elders may look outside the congregation for such a man. In such a case, the Elders and the congregation should exercise extreme caution to avoid introducing a hireling or wolf into the flock (*John 10:12-13; Acts 20:28-30*). The procedure for the election of Elders is outlined in By-Laws Article III, Section 2.

F. LENGTH OF SERVICE – The Holy Spirit equips and places Elders in the church (*Acts 20:28*). Therefore, the church cannot arbitrarily fix either the number of Elders or their term of service. Therefore, the term of service for Elders and Deacons is indefinite except for certain cases discussed in By-Laws Article III, Section 2.

ARTICLE VIII

Board of Elders

The Board of Elders shall consist of all of the duly elected Elders. There is parity (equality) among the Elders, each bearing equal authority in the deliberations of the Board of Elders.

Section 1 – Responsibilities of the Board of Elders

The Board shall have the general oversight of all this church's affairs. The conduct of all church

business and the work of all church organizations shall be subject to its supervision and government.

Section 2 – Officers of the Board of Elders

Following each annual congregational meeting, at its first meeting, the Officers of the Board of Elders shall be elected from the membership of the Board of Elders to serve for one year, or until their successors are elected.

Section 3 – Membership and Discipline

The Board shall accept applicants for church membership and apply discipline to offending members in accordance with Article VI. The Elders shall watch over the souls of the flock as *“they that must give account”* (Heb. 13:17). They must be persistent in prayer for, visitation of, and instruction of the membership and its families.

Section 4 – Church Officers and Teachers

The Board shall appoint the directors of all church groups from its own membership. These, in turn, upon request, shall be responsible to present to the Board, for its approval, all proposed teachers and leaders.

Section 5 – Pulpit Supply

The Elders have complete responsibility for the teaching ministry of the church. It shall be the duty of the Board of Elders to supply the pulpit with men whose ministry in our church shall be consistent with the confession of this church.

Section 6 – Administration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

The Elders shall examine and approve candidates for professor's baptism and church membership.

The Elders shall have complete oversight over the administration of the Lord's Supper. Christian liberty in the matters of food and drink has application to the relationship between believers at all times and places (Rom. 14:20-21; I Cor. 10:31-32). This is especially true at the Lord's Supper, the supreme symbol of Christian unity (I Cor. 10:14-17, 23-24, 31-33). While recognizing that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper with the elements of the Passover (unleavened bread and mixed wine), it must also be noted that the New Testament seems to allow some degree of liberty in the choice of the elements. Jesus used the generic term "fruit of the vine" instead of the specific term "wine" (Matt. 26:29; Num. 6:3-5), providing biblical harmony with Paul's instructions on Christian liberty (Rom. 14:20-21; I Cor. 10:14-17, 31-33). Also, the broken bread of the Lord's Supper on the day of Pentecost was most likely the leavened bread of that feast (Lev. 23:16-17; Acts 2:42). Therefore, the Elders of this church

shall exercise wisdom and liberty in accordance with the above principles in the selection and administration of the elements of the Lord's Supper for our worship.

Section 7 – Grievances and Suggestions

The Board shall receive, consider, and dispose of any grievance, suggestion, or recommendation by any member or organization of this church.

Section 8 – Miscellaneous Duties

The Board of Elders shall exercise oversight over all other powers and duties which properly belong to a local church, congregation and corporation, but shall at all times be subject to the two-thirds vote of the congregation as set forth herein.

ARTICLE IX

Deacons

Deacons may be recommended and called by the Board of Elders as needed to oversee specific ministries and business matters within Hope Reformed Baptist Church. Deacons may be men who are qualified and gifted according to 1Timothy 3:8-13. Congregational confirmation of deacons shall be according to Article 3 of the By-laws.

Section 1 – Ministry of Mercy

The ministry of mercy in our church and community is a special responsibility of the Diaconate. Deacons shall see that the sick, the sorrowing, the aged, and the feeble-minded receive spiritual and physical comfort. They shall minister the Word of God, administer this church's benevolence funds as directed, and render counsel to those in need of succor. They shall be vigilant for opportunities to do good, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

Section 2 – Business Affairs

It shall be the Deacons' responsibility to carry out business related tasks of this church assigned to them by the Elder Board. This may include but not be limited to yearly budget assignments, legal matters, contract administration, property/grounds assignments, property maintenance, et cetera.

Section 3 – Limitation of Powers

Deacons shall not encumber, transfer, sell, or purchase any real estate for the church. In the case of legal necessity, trustees may be selected from the diaconal body.

ARTICLE X

Ordinations

Section 1 – Recognition for Specific Ministries

It is our hope that spirit-filled men will be called out from among us to proclaim the Gospel of the Grace of God. The Elders may oversee such men for preaching missions, planting churches, foreign missions, the military chaplaincy, etc.

When there is a prospective candidate for such ministries, the Board of Elders shall guide that person in his studies and preparation. It shall then call the Elders and the congregation to examine the qualifications of the candidate. It shall look into the soundness of his conversion, the godliness of his walk, the soundness of his doctrine, the degree of his gifts, the extent of his training, and the blessing of God upon his labors for Christ. The Elders shall insure that the examination will conform to the requirements of the specific ministry.

If the Elders heartily recommend that the candidate be approved, the church may give the recommended commission by a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting at a congregational meeting.

Section 2 – Installation of Elders

In a regular worship service of the church, one of the Elders shall question newly elected Elders as follows:

- A. Do you believe the Scriptures as written in the Old and New Testaments to be the Word of God, and do you accept them as the only infallible rule of faith and practice?
- B. Have you personally adopted and will you cheerfully submit to and defend the Confession, Constitution, and By-Laws of this church?
- C. Do you accept the Office of Elder readily, and do you promise to perform its duties of caring for the flock of God in the fear of His name?

Then the hands of the existing Eldership shall be placed on the heads of the new Elders and prayer offered in their behalf. Following this, the people shall be exhorted to esteem and obey those whom God has placed over them.

Section 3 – Installation of Deacons

In a regular worship service of the church, one of the Elders shall question newly appointed Deacons as follows:

- A. Do you believe the Scriptures as written in the Old and New Testaments to be the Word

of God, and do you accept them as the only infallible rule of faith and practice?

- B. Have you personally adopted and will you cheerfully submit to and defend the Confession, Constitution, and By-Laws of this church?
- C. Do you accept the Office of Deacon and do you promise to care for the poor and needy and to manage the business of this church in the fear of God?

Then the hands of the Elders shall be placed on the heads of the new Deacons and prayer offered in their behalf. Following this, the people shall be exhorted to esteem and obey those whom God has placed over them.

ARTICLE XI

Finances

The work of this church is financially dependent upon the voluntary gifts of God's people. Before the annual congregational meeting, the Board of Elders shall a prepared budget detailing the proposed expenditures for the coming year. When this budget is subscribed to by the vote of the congregation, it shall be considered the basis for the current liabilities. No committee or board is authorized to make changes in its provisions. If any unbudgeted need arises throughout the year the Elder Board may approve or deny it at their discretion. Any unbudgeted need of over \$1500 needs to be approved by the Congregation unless deemed a necessary expenditure that cannot wait for the church to vote.

ARTICLE XII

Amendments

Amendments to the Constitution may be adopted by a three-fourths majority vote of the members present and voting at a congregational meeting, provided that such amendments have been distributed by the Board of Elders in written form at least two weeks prior to the congregational meeting.

BY-LAWS

ARTICLE I

Congregational Meetings

Section 1 – Notice of Meetings

Notice of all congregational meetings shall be given at regular worship services at least one Sunday immediately prior to the meeting. In an emergency, a meeting may be called on shorter notice by notifying each local member by mail of the time, place, and purpose of the congregational meeting.

Section 2 – Number of Meetings

Congregational meetings shall be held biannually for the reception of reports and the transaction of such other business as may properly be brought before the meeting. One of these meetings shall be the Annual Meeting at which a commitment to the budget shall take place.

Section 3 – Method of Calling Meetings

It shall be the right and responsibility of the Board of Elders to call all congregational meetings. A written request to call a congregational meeting, stating clearly its purpose, signed by fifteen resident, voting members of the church in good and regular standing and presented to the Clerk, shall require the Board of Elders to call such a meeting. When special congregational meetings are called, notice must be given to the congregation as to the purpose.

Section 4 – Responsibility for Meetings

The Board of Elders shall arrange the details of all congregational meetings and see that all possible preparation for their successful conduct is made.

Section 5 – Quorum for Transaction of Business

The resident, voting members present at any constitutionally called congregational meeting shall be considered a quorum for the transaction of business.

Section 6 – Voting Age

Any member of the church **sixteen** years of age or over, in good and regular standing, shall have the responsibility to vote on any question properly brought before the congregation.

ARTICLE II

Membership Roll

In order to keep an accurate membership roll, there shall be an annual review of the membership roll by the Elders one month prior to the Annual Meeting. All who have been inactive members for whatever cause (see Article VI, Section 2) will be classified as such and will be notified of this action in writing.

In the event such inactivity is not corrected through the counsel of the Elders, the Elders may suspend the voting rights of inactive members until the situation is resolved by further church discipline.

ARTICLE III

Church Officers

Section 1 – Method and Requirements for Election of Elders and Deacons

A. All nominees shall have been a member of the church for a reasonable period of time before being placed in nomination. No nominee who has been a member of the congregation for less than a year will be considered for nomination without the consent of the Elders.

B. The nominees must submit to the training and testing process laid out by the elders, after this period of training upon consent of all the elders and the nominee, the nominee's name can be put before the congregation for consideration.

Section 2 – Election of Church Officers

A. **PASTORAL NOMINATION** — Nominations to the office of elder or deacon shall be made by the elders (Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). The elders alone may at any time nominate a candidate or candidates to either or both offices and call a special congregational business meeting for their consideration. Likewise, members are free at any time to suggest to the elders the names of men whom they consider to be potential officers.

B. **CONGREGATIONAL APPROVAL** — Any church meeting for the election of officers will be announced at least two (2) weeks previous to its being held. The names of all nominees shall be separately discussed and voted upon. During the discussion the nominee under consideration and members of his immediate family shall leave the presence of the church until the written ballot is taken. The scriptural qualifications shall be read with explanation given as needed, and the nominee's qualifications openly discussed in the fear of God and with due respect for the reputation of the nominee. The church should seek unity of mind concerning each nominee, but should such unity not be fully realized, no fewer than three fourths of those ballots cast shall be required for election. This vote shall take place by written ballot

subsequent to a full and free discussion oriented to the relevant Scriptural passages. The vote shall stand as it is first given in the written ballot for a season.

Section 3 – Termination of Service

The term of service for Elders and Deacons is permanent in nature. Therefore, church officers are not elected for a specific period of time. However, there must be allowances for the termination of service under certain circumstances.

A. LEAVE OF ABSENCE – After consultation with the Elders, an officer may request a leave of absence from the responsibilities of office for a certain period of time. If the Elders grant the request, this action should be reported to the congregation with an explanation. Extended leaves of absence beyond six months are at the discretion of the Elders and may require final resignation from office.

B. RESIGNATION – If an officer should make application to be released from office, the congregation should receive an explanation and release the officer from office by a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting. In the case of releasing a supported Elder from office, support will continue for a period not to exceed ninety days until he is gainfully employed. His duties will continue until that time.

C. TERMINATION – If the relations between an officer and the congregation become detrimental to the welfare of the church, and the officer has not submitted to the exhortations of the Board of Elders (*1 Tim. 5:19-20*), the Board of Elders shall have authority to consider this matter and make recommendation to the congregation at a duly called congregational meeting. If the officer's life or performance of duties should violate the standards of this church, and the Board of Elders so recommend, the officer's responsibilities may be terminated immediately following a congregational meeting at which his dismissal has been requested by a three-fourths majority vote of those present and voting. If the officer is a supported Elder, his support shall continue for a period not to exceed ninety days until he is gainfully employed.

D. DEPARTURE – If an officer moves away from the community and can attend this church no longer, his service will be terminated after six months.

Section 4 – Process for calling a Teaching Elder from Outside the Church

The normal process for the election of Elders is to look first in the congregation. But in the event that none of the present Elders possess sufficient proficiency to be financially supported to “labor in preaching and teaching” (*1 Tim. 5:17*), the Elders may look outside the congregation for such a man. Extreme caution is urged in such a case to avoid hirelings and wolves entering the flock.

After receiving candidate applications or resumes for the position of teaching pastor, the elders should prayerfully design a procedure for the processing, interviewing, investigating, potential candidates for pastor. The elders must seek the counsel and advise of the congregation as they

proceed. After reviewing the applicants, the Elders may invite a prospective Elder to visit the church for an interview, preaching, officers' meetings and congregational examination. It is preferred that the Elders work with only one candidate at a time. If the Elders are satisfied with the prospective Elder's qualifications, they may propose that the congregation extend a call to the candidate for pastoral office. A seventy-five percent majority vote will be required for congregational approval. The above procedure will constitute the normal process of congregational nomination and recognition required of other church officers from outside the church.

At the discretion of the Elders and with the prior agreement of the prospective candidate, a confirmation vote may be required in some circumstances after a period of one year's service. This procedure is designed to protect the flock in certain cases. This may be required of candidates who are largely unknown to the church beforehand, or who are presently without pastoral charge, or who have limited pastoral experience. In the event that the required seventy-five percent majority is not attained in the confirmation vote, the church will provide ninety days severance support to assist the candidate in his life plans, or less if mutually agreed upon.

ARTICLE IV

Church Boards

Section 1 – Monthly Meetings

The Board of Elders shall hold regular monthly meetings.

Section 2 – Quorum and Call for Meetings

The quorum of the Board of Elders shall be two-thirds of the total number of the Board. They shall meet at the call of their President, or at the request of any three members of the Board.

Section 3 – Duties of the Church Clerk

The Church Clerk shall be nominated by the Board of Elders and elected with a 2/3rds vote of the membership to serve a 1 year term of service at the annual meeting. He/she shall keep a record of all business transacted at the congregational and Board of Elders meetings, keep an accurate record of the membership, and carry on all necessary correspondence for the Board of Elders and the congregation.

Section 4 – Duties of the Church Treasurer

The Church Treasurer, who shall not be an active elder or paid church staff, shall be nominated by the Board of Elders and elected by a 2/3rds vote of the membership to serve for a 1 year term of service at the annual meeting. The Treasurer shall deposit all church funds in a bank account or accounts, as instructed by the Board of Elders, which account shall be opened and maintained in the name of the church. He/she shall disburse the same at the direction of the Board of Elders. He/she shall make monthly reports to the Board of Elders and an annual report to the congregation at the Annual Meeting. He/she shall submit his books for an annual

audit prior to the Annual Meeting, and at such other times as he/she may be directed by the Board of Elders. He/she may be required to furnish a bond, the amount of which shall be determined by the Board of Elders, and the cost of which shall be paid by the church. The Treasurer shall be primarily responsible for all offerings received by the church, and immediately following any service he shall count and keep a record of all offerings. An assistant Treasurer may be appointed from the Deaconate to assist in these duties.

ARTICLE V

Amendments to By-Laws

Amendments to the By-laws may be adopted by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting at a congregational meeting, provided that such amendments have been distributed by the Board of Elders in written form at least two weeks prior to the congregational meeting.

ARTICLE VI

Policies

Policies for Hope Reformed Baptist Church shall be adopted to address legal, personnel, and property issues as well as any other areas where written governance is required. Policies shall be adopted and enforced in a manner typical to Constitution & By-laws, and Amendments to By-Laws. A majority of two-thirds will be required to adopt or amend Policies at a congregational meeting.

ARTICLE VII

Dissolution

This church shall be considered dissolved when its membership concludes that it can no longer fulfill its hereto stated purpose of existence. In the event of dissolution, no donor, member, officer of the church, or private individual shall be entitled to share in the distribution of any assets of this church. Any assets of the church upon dissolution shall be used to pay any outstanding debts. Any remaining assets shall be divided among missionaries supported by the church at the time of dissolution, or the assets shall be given to another church of like faith and practice, ***holding to a confession of faith based on the principles*** of the London Baptist Confession of 1689, or other similar religious organization that is qualified as a charitable organization.