

# Preamble

The Bible, not this constitution, is our final authority for matters of faith and practice. Furthermore, we affirm that only by the indwelling Holy Spirit, not this constitution, can we fulfill the will of God for this church and for our community. With this in mind, the purpose of this constitution is merely to provide a framework to facilitate the ministry of this church for the Bible admonishes us to do all things "decently and in order" (1 Cor. 14:40). To this end, we the members of Rockford Baptist Church of Rockford, Michigan, willingly and cheerfully agree to be governed by this document and the accompanying policies.

## Article I

### The Corporation

Section 1 Name. The name of the corporation is Rockford Baptist Church (hereafter referred to as "church," i.e. its membership).

Section 2 Purpose. Centered on the Lord Jesus Christ, Rockford Baptist Church desires to glorify God through our Worship, through our Witness and through our Walk.

- A. Through our Worship: By giving praise and honor to God, by remembering the ordinances, by faithfully gathering each week and encouraging each other in Christian fellowship, and by listening to God's Word.
- B. Through our Witness: By sharing our faith with others, by sending forth missionaries, by proclaiming the gospel of Jesus Christ after the pattern of the Great Commission.
- C. Through our Walk: By living God-like lives, by serving others in the power of the Spirit, by practicing Christian stewardship, by growing in Christ by daily prayer and study of Scripture, and submitting to the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Section 3 Relationships. The church is autonomous, but it may enjoy fellowship, cooperate actively, and affiliate with organizations of like doctrine. This church is in fellowship with the Conservative Baptist Association of America.

Section 4 Finances. The church's financial support is derived from the tithes, gifts, and bequests of its members and friends.

Section 5 Fiscal Year. The church's fiscal year is January 1 through December 31.

### Section 6 Authority.

Civil Government: We believe that civil government is appointed by God for the interest and good of society and authorities are to be prayed for, honored and obeyed, except in things opposed to the commands of the Bible and the teachings of Jesus Christ. Daniel 3:17-18, Romans 13:1-7, Philippians 2:10-11, and 1 Peter 2:13-14, 17.

Final Authority: Under the Bible and through the guiding of the Holy Spirit of Jesus Christ, the membership of the church has final authority in all matters.

## Article II

### Membership

Section 1 Qualifications for Membership. Any person who confesses faith in the Lord Jesus Christ evidences this confession in life has been baptized by immersion and accepts the Confession of Faith, the Constitution and its policies, and the Covenant may become a member of Rockford Baptist Church upon recommendation of the elders.

A person may not hold membership in both Rockford Baptist Church and any organization (e.g. secret societies) whose principles or practices are antithetical to this church.

Section 2 Reception of Members. Any person who desires to become a member shall inform the pastor or another elder. The candidate for membership shall be instructed in Church doctrine and government and the member's responsibilities as directed by the elders. The candidate member will submit a written application for membership. Each candidate will then meet with the elders for a question and answer period both by the elders and the candidate. The elders shall make a recommendation to the church regarding the application for membership. The church, by a simple majority vote of the members present at any regular Sunday morning worship service, shall receive the candidate into membership.

Section 3 Duties and Privileges of Members. Each member should: so live as to give evidence of the Holy Spirit's indwelling attend weekly services and business meetings faithfully support the church financially, as the Lord prospers and contribute time and abilities to church programs and activities. Any member wishing to resign from an office or committee shall submit a written resignation to his or her electing or appointing body.

Section 4 Associate Members. Any person whose residence in the area is temporary (for example, a student or missionary), and who wishes to retain membership in his or her home church, may request admission as an associate member by following the procedures in Section 2. Such members participate in all the provisions of this Constitution, but they may not vote nor are they eligible for office.

Section 5 Discipline of Members. The elders shall investigate allegations and proceed according to Matthew 18. If the elders determine that discipline is necessary, the church is responsible to act upon the recommendation of the elders. (See policy book for details.)

Section 6 Termination of Membership. A simple majority vote by the church is required to terminate membership, with the following exceptions: if a member joins another church or requests termination of membership, his or her name shall be removed by the elders. In all of the above cases the elders shall notify the individuals in writing. The elders shall also remove the names of members who have died. Concerning the pastor and his wife, see Article III, Section 1, B, 1, d.

# Article III

## Administration and Organizational Structure

Section 1 Officers. The officers of this church are the pastor, elders, deacons, and deaconesses.

A. General Provisions.

1. All officers shall be elected by the church in accordance with the provisions of this constitution. The officer year is from annual meeting to annual meeting.
2. The elders and deacons shall serve for three consecutive years and shall be out of office one year before being eligible to be elected to the same office. The deaconesses shall serve for two consecutive years and shall be out of office for one year before being eligible to be elected to the same office.
3. To hold an office other than pastor, a person shall be a member for one year immediately preceding the election date, and must be in agreement with the Confession of Faith, the Constitution, and the Covenant of the church.
4. The failure of any officer to fulfill the responsibilities of the office for four months without satisfactory reason shall be considered sufficient occasion for the elders to declare the office vacant.
5. Vacancies may be filled by the elders until the next annual business meeting.
6. No person shall hold more than one office per year.
7. The elders, deacons, and deaconesses shall each meet monthly. Details of their policies and procedures shall be presented to the congregation for adoption, and placed in the policy book.
8. Communication between the elders, deacons, deaconesses, and the church is essential. The elders are to be informed of business transacted at least monthly by the deacons, deaconesses, and each committee. (See policy book.) The elders, deacons, deaconesses, and each committee shall report their activities to the church. Reports may be oral or written, and made by any officer or committee member.

B. The Senior Pastor. The senior pastor is an elder. He shall preach and teach the Word of God, lead the public church services, administer the ordinances, exercise a ministry of prayer and pastoral care, and lead the members in a practical Christian life.

1. Relationships.

- a. The senior pastor is an ex-officio voting member among the deacons, deaconesses, all committees, and all church organizations.
- b. He shall serve as vice moderator of all church business meetings.
- c. All paid ministry staff shall be responsible to and under the direction of the senior pastor, who shall provide counsel, encouragement, and Christian leadership, and who shall represent the staff to the elders.
- d. The senior pastor and his wife shall become members of the church when they arrive and begin their ministry, and their membership shall terminate when he resigns or leaves (See policy book.)

2. Calling.

- a. The elders shall appoint a pulpit committee of two elders, two deacons, two deaconesses, and two church members at large. A waiting period of one month after the pastor leaves the field shall follow, before the first prospective candidate is called to fill the pulpit. The

pulpit committee shall use the scriptural guidelines found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Peter 5:1-3 in reviewing a candidate's qualifications.

b. The pulpit committee shall recommend to the church one candidate at a time, and the provisions of his call.

- The voting shall be by ballot at a special business meeting. Only one ballot shall be cast per candidate.
- A three fourths (75%) majority vote including proxies is required to call a pastor.
- The count shall be announced to both the membership and the candidate.
- The call shall be prepared by the pulpit committee, as approved by the membership, and extended in writing to the candidate stating the provisions of the call including finances, vacation, moving expenses, conference, and expenses, and placed in the policy book.

3. Termination. The senior pastor shall serve for an indeterminate term. The pastoral relationship may be dissolved by the senior pastor's resignation, his death, or by a simple majority vote of the voting members present including proxies at a special business meeting. The senior pastor shall give at least two months' notice of his resignation and the church shall be required to do the same. A different period of notice may be arranged by mutual agreement. If the pastor is guilty of heresy or immorality, he shall be dismissed immediately by the action of the church with one month's salary and be relieved of all pulpit, pastoral, and administrative duties.

C. Elders. Elders manage the affairs of the church, similar to how a father manages the affairs of his household (1 Tim. 3:4-5 5:17). This responsibility includes leading the church in doctrine (Acts 15:2 16:4) preaching and teaching (1 Tim. 3:2 5:17) shepherding and overseeing the church, not lording it over its members, but by example (1 Peter 5:1-3) and visitation and praying for members (Jas. 5:14).

Duties.

1. To minister to the spiritual needs of the congregation.
2. To oversee and evaluate the church program and personnel.
3. To administer the ordinances.
4. To confirm a chairman of Christian education, missionary, outreach, and worship committees.  
- Elected boards (elders, deacons, and deaconesses) may elect their own chairman.
5. To arrange for pulpit supply in the absence of the pastor to bring the message during Sunday Services in the absence of the pastor. In the event of an extended absence by the pastor a pulpit supply committee may be formed (see committee's).
6. To direct the formation of the associate ministry staff calling committee.
7. To appoint the nominating committee and other special committees as the need arises.
8. To appoint the church clerk each year.
9. To employ and supervise the office administrative assistant.
10. To recommend to the church, at the annual business meeting, the quorum for business meetings for the next year.
11. To approve affiliated organizations.
12. To instruct and recommend prospective members to the congregation.
13. To distribute the fellowship fund.

14. To oversee the discipline of members.
15. To remove from membership the names of those who have joined another church or who request termination of membership, and to notify in writing all those whose membership is terminated. The elders shall also remove the names of members who have died.
16. To arrange for pulpit supply in the absence of the pastor.
17. To recommend candidates for licensure and ordination.
18. To prepare the agenda for business meetings.
19. To report their activities regularly to the church.
20. To consult with the senior pastor and chairman of the elder board regarding the cancellation or postponement of any regular service if needed.

D. Deacons. Deacons serve the church. This responsibility includes areas of finance, administration, and social service.

Duties.

1. To assist the elders in ministering to the needs of the congregation.
2. To be responsible for the business affairs of the church including physical properties, the receipt of all funds including cash and non-cash gifts, the banking of such funds, and the expenditure of all funds except the fellowship fund.
3. To recommend policies for use of church facilities and equipment other than regular church programs.
4. To appoint the financial secretary and treasurer.
5. An examination of the financial records of the church should be accomplished on an annual basis consisting of either an inspection, compilation, review, or audit depending on the appropriateness each year as determined by the board of deacons. This examination should also be conducted by an outside accountant who is not a member of the church for the purpose of independence. However, if something should occur during the year which could cause the necessity for an examination of the records, the board of deacons could appoint an accountant to perform such an examination at that time.
7. To appoint a building committee and other special committees as the need arises.
8. To present a proposed annual budget to the church for adoption at the annual business meeting.
9. To supervise the disbursement of funds according to the adopted annual budget to authorize such other non-budgeted expenditures as needed up to one percent (1%) of the total annual budget per occurrence, with an annual maximum of three percent (3%). These non-budgeted expenditures shall be reported at the next scheduled business meeting.
10. To sign all work and purchase orders.
11. To supervise the facility related staff and oversee upkeep of the church's physical facilities
12. To represent the church in all legal matters, and sign legal documents.
13. To see that the church complies with all laws pertaining to the church and its property.
14. To secure all necessary insurance.
15. To bring financial needs to the church.
16. To report monthly to the elders and quarterly to the church.

E. Deaconesses. Deaconesses serve the church. Their responsibility is similar to that of the deacons.

Duties.

1. To assist the elders in ministering to the needs of the congregation.
2. To prepare the communion and assist those participating in baptism.
3. To assist the deacons on matters of building and property upkeep and decoration, and to care for these decorations.
4. To arrange hospitality for occasions that involves the whole church family.
5. To care for flowers and other tributes or remembrances sent by the church. To care for the lunch at the time of a funeral, as requested. (See policy book.)
6. To oversee women's ministries.
7. To appoint special committees as the need arises.
8. To report monthly to the elders and regularly to the church.

Section 2 Associate Ministry Staff. The associate ministry staff consists of all persons in paid positions of ministry.

- A. Relationships. Associate staff ministry positions (i.e. the director of worship, director of small groups, assistants to the pastor and youth pastor, etc...) shall be under the direction of the pastor and elder board. Their job descriptions and requirements for membership shall be determined by the calling committee and placed in the policy book. Each one who is a member of the church shall be an ex-officio member of the committee in his or her area of work.
- B. Calling
  - a. The elders shall appoint the chairperson of an associate ministry staff calling committee and one elder (in addition to the pastor) to serve on the committee. The elders shall also approve the remaining members on the committee.
  - b. Specific Steps:
    - The committee shall recommend to the church one candidate at a time, and the provisions of his or her call.
    - The voting shall be by ballot at a special business meeting. A three fourths (75%) majority vote is required to call a person to serve as an associate ministry staff member.
    - The specific provisions of the call specifying the finances, moving expenses, conference time, business expenses shall prepared by the calling committee and discussed with the candidate before the vote.
    - If the candidate and specific provisions of the call are approved by the membership, the call shall be extended in writing to the candidate by the church clerk and placed in the policy book.
  - c. Termination. Unless otherwise specified, the process for termination of associate ministry staff is the same as specified for termination of senior pastor. See Article III, B, 3. Ministry staff members are not required to offer their resignations when the senior pastor resigns.

Section 3 Appointed Personnel.

- A. Church personnel are appointed as follows:
  - a. Church clerk and administrative assistant by the elders.
  - b. Custodian, treasurer and financial secretary by the deacons.
  - c. Instrumentalists and vocalists by the Director of Worship and the worship committee.
  - d. Sunday School Superintendent, children's program supervisors (i.e. Wednesday night

programs, VBS director, Children's Church Coordinator), and youth sponsors by the Christian Education Committee.

- B. Appointments are made for a period of time determined by the appointing body, and may be renewed for a time, but should not be considered indefinite.
- C. Duties are determined by the appointing body and are to be described as noted in the policy book.

#### Section 4 Moderator.

A moderator shall be elected at the annual meeting to conduct all church business meetings. The term of office is from annual meeting to annual meeting, and the moderator can be re-elected. The person shall be a member of the church, but shall not be an officer (i.e., elder, deacon, or deaconess).

## Article IV

### Committees

#### Section 1 Standing Committees.

- A. The standing committees are
  - a. Christian Education Committee.
  - b. Missions Committee.
  - c. Outreach Committee.
  - d. Worship Committee.
- B. Committees serve during the church fiscal year
- C. A chairperson is approved to each committee annually by the elders. However, by mutual consent, and with approval of the elders, the chairman may continue in their position year by year.
- D. Duties of each committee shall be in the policy book.
- E. All committee chairmen shall be members of the church.
- F. Each committee shall report their regular meeting activities to the elders and to the church. (See policy book re. Article III, Section 1, A, 8 concerning reporting to the elders.) Reports to the church may be oral or written, and made by any committee member i.e. whatever method best facilitates communication.
- G. A simple majority of the committee shall be present for action on any matters.

#### Section 2 Special Committees.

- A. Special committees may be appointed by the officers (elders, deacons, and deaconesses) at their discretion or by action of the church.
- B. Special committees are appointed for a specific task (that should be described in the policy book) and are automatically dismissed when that task is completed.



# Article V

## Meetings

### Section 1 Regular Services.

#### A. Sunday Services.

There shall be regular Sunday worship services. The elders and pastoral staff shall have the authority to cancel or postpone any service.

#### B. The Ordinances.

1. Baptism. Baptisms shall be scheduled by the elders.
2. The Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper shall be observed at least monthly.

### Section 2 Business Meetings.

#### A. Moderator

1. A moderator shall be elected at the annual meeting to conduct all church business meetings. The person shall be a member of the church, but shall not be an officer (i.e., elder, deacon, or deaconess).
2. The pastor shall serve as vice moderator of all church business meetings.

#### B. Business Meetings.

1. There shall be a semi-annual meeting of the church to conduct business
2. The agenda for each meeting is the responsibility of the elders, deacons, deaconesses, and pastoral staff.
3. Any member may present an item of church business orally or in written form at any regular business meeting for their consideration, as part of "new business." However, items that involve paid staff and/or changes to the budget are to be presented in written form two consecutive Sunday's before the meeting to allow adequate time for consideration as per Article V. Section 2, item E; Special Business Meetings.

#### C. Annual Business Meeting.

1. There shall be an annual meeting of the church to be held in November.
2. Items of the annual business meeting are found in the Policy Book.

#### D. Special Business Meetings. Special business meetings may be called by the elders, or by a simple majority vote of the members at a regularly scheduled business meeting. Written notice of such special business meetings shall be printed in the church bulletin and announced in the two consecutive Sunday morning worship services prior to the meeting. The notice shall state the time and purpose of the meeting. Business that is not mentioned in the notice shall be transacted at special business meetings.

#### E. Voting.

1. All members 18 years and older are voting members.
2. Any voting member unable to attend a business meeting may ask another voting member to cast a proxy. See policy book for explanation and example. Each member is limited to voting proxies for two people.
3. All elected officers (i.e., elders, deacons, and deaconesses), with the exception of the pastor, shall receive a simple majority vote (50% +1) by one written ballot per election. The majority

shall be determined by the total votes cast including proxies.

4. Voice vote. Usually a voice vote shall be taken on matters requiring a simple majority. A ballot vote shall be taken on matters pertaining to personnel or indebtedness, or when requested by a member.
  5. Ballot vote. The exact count shall be announced on all ballot votes except for the election of officers. For the election of officers (not including the pastor), only election decisions shall be announced. The exact count shall be available privately on request.
- G. Quorum. A quorum for any business meeting during that fiscal year shall be established by the church on the recommendation of the elders at the annual business meeting. The quorum shall be no less than 15% of the voting membership of the church at the start of the fiscal year.

## Article VI

### Church Organizations

Auxiliary or affiliated societies shall be permitted to meet in the name of the church only when approved by the elders and pastoral staff.

Section 1 Youth Sponsors. Youth sponsors shall be appointed by the pastor that oversees the youth ministries and approved by the Christian Education Committee. They shall be members of the church.

Section 2 Bible Education: Sunday School is the children's school of the church for the purpose of studying the Bible. The Bible shall be the core of the curriculum. The purpose of Children's Sunday School is that every member shall know Jesus as Savior and to then give young member of God's family a solid, Biblical foundation for committed, health growth into becoming life-long followers of Jesus Christ. Sunday School teacher shall be members of the church.

Section 3 Adult Bible Fellowship. Adult Bible Fellowships are a means by which the church spiritually trains adults. The Bible shall be the core of the curriculum. The objectives are that every member shall know Jesus as Savior, grow in his or her knowledge of Scripture and develop in his or her relationship with Jesus Christ. Appointments are made by the Christian Education Committee.

## Article VII

### Policy Book

A Policy Book shall be kept in the office by the administrative assistant, including details referenced in the constitution, and policies and procedures of the elders, deacons, deaconesses, and committees. Entries shall be submitted by the elders, deacons, deaconesses, and Committees for review and approval by the elders as outlined in the policy book. The congregation is to be informed of any changes that are made to the policy book.

## Article VIII

### Licensure and Ordination

A member who desires licensure or ordination shall inform the pastor or another elder. Licensure and ordination are the responsibility of the church upon recommendation of the elders.

Section 1 Licensure. Any male member, who in the judgment of the elders, gives evidence of his consecration, zeal, and aptness to teach, and is convinced that he is called of God to the work of the ministry, may be licensed by the church to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ. A two thirds majority vote including proxies is required at any business meeting of the church to issue a license.

Section 2 Ordination. If one of the male members desires ordination and possesses scriptural qualifications as recognized by the elders, the church at any business meeting may call an ordination council of ministers and brethren of like faith.

The council shall examine the candidate and make a recommendation to the church. A two thirds vote by the church including proxies is required to call the council and to ordain a member.

## Article IX

### Amendments

An amendment to this Constitution, the Confession of Faith, or the Covenant, shall be presented to the elders, who shall notify the church in writing at the two consecutive Sunday morning worship services prior to the business meeting acting upon its adoption. A two-thirds majority ballot vote including proxies is required to adopt the amendment.

## Article X

### Dissolution

Should a condition arise at any time in the future that this corporation (the church) should be dissolved, its assets and property shall not be used to benefit any private person or individual members but shall be transferred to such other tax-exempt, Christian, non-profit organizations as the church at the time of such dissolution shall direct by its vote.