

HILL COUNTRY FELLOWSHIP CHURCH CONSTITUTION

This document contains the operating guidelines for Hill Country Fellowship - Burnet. It is intended to be a dynamic document and will likely be revised as the church grows and takes on a greater scope of ministry. Revisions will be made according to section V. below.

I. GOVERNMENT:

Scripture provides general principles which serve as guidelines for church leadership. These guidelines have been followed in formulating a philosophy of government for Hill Country Fellowship Church as follows: (Acts 6:3, 14:23, Col. 1:18, 1 Tim. 3:1-7, 5:17, Titus 1:5-9, Heb. 13:7, 17).

A. Christ (Col. 1:18)

Christ is the true source of all the Church is and does, and His glory is to be the objective of every act, function, and motive of the Body, both individually and corporately. (1 Cor. 10:31)

Christ has provided His thoughts and His direction for the Body in the Word. The Bible reflects and contains His mind, His commands, His counsel, and His purpose for every believer. (2 Tim. 3:16, 17)

The Body is to conform to His Word, thus carrying out His will to His glory. That is the Body's reason for being. (Col. 3:15-17)

B. Elders

Hill Country Fellowship Church has chosen to be an Elder led church. The Elders, as overseers of the local church, are responsible for the spiritual health of the Body. They are to glorify Christ by serving the Body according to the Biblical principles of love and care. In practice, the Elders establish the guidelines and policies for conducting services, programs, and the general conduct of church business. They are to lead by precept and example, realizing they are accountable to the Lord Jesus Christ for their efforts. (Heb. 13:17, Acts 20:24, 28)

1. Qualifications

The qualifications for an Elder are set forth in the Scriptural passages 1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:1-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-4. He is to be self-controlled, hospitable, able to teach, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money, not a recent convert. He has a good reputation with outsiders, is not overbearing or quick-tempered, loves what is good, is upright, holy, disciplined, above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, respectable, not given to drunkenness, manages his own family well, sees that his children obey him, does not pursue dishonest gain, and keeps hold of deep truths. An Elder demonstrates through leadership a commitment to the purposes, vision, and the core values of the church.

2. **Selection**

Any man who aspires to the office of Elder is first approved by a vote of the Elders and then a vote of the membership assembled at a duly called congregational meeting.

3. **Number and Term**

There will be a maximum of nine Elders at any time. Each man will serve for a three-year term. Upon conclusion of his term, he must function in a non-Elder role for at least one year before becoming eligible for Eldership again. A man filling an unexpired term of two years or less may be eligible to waive this one year at the end of his term and serve an additional term subject to the above prescribed selection process. The Senior Pastor serves as a perpetual Elder and is one of the nine. The Elders shall annually select a chairman to direct Elder and congregational meetings. In the absence of the chairman, the Elders will select an interim chairman.

4. **Replacement**

A vacancy created by departing Elder may be filled in accordance with B.2 above. The new Elder will complete the departing Elder's term.

5. **Dismissal**

The dismissal of an Elder because he is not fulfilling the responsibilities and/or qualifications of an Elder is the responsibility of the other Elders, and is accomplished by a vote of these Elders. The exception is the Senior Pastor whose dismissal is covered in III B., below.

C. **Senior Pastor**

The Senior Pastor is the spiritual leader of the congregation. In this unique position he provides for the equipping of the saints through a regular ministry of preaching, training, and encouraging the congregation as a whole. His goal is to mature the saints through insightful and accurate presentation and proclamation of the Word, stressing both the understanding and application of divine truths and principles. He provides vital input on planning, ministry challenges, and Biblical guidance to the Elders during the decision making process. He is often the primary agent in the implementation of the various programs and ministries undertaken by the church. He is accountable to the Elders for the discharge of his ministry. He is also responsible for the management of the church office and supervision of all staff. (1 Tim. 4:11-13, 15, 16; Eph. 4:11, 12; 2 Tim. 3:16, 17, 4:2-4; Matt. 5:13)

D. **Staff**

1. **Definition**

Staff members are defined as paid employees of the church, whether full or part-time.

2. **Senior Pastor**

The Senior Pastor will be recruited and hired by the Elders with the approval of the voting membership. His salary and benefits will be established by the Elders and reviewed annually.

3. **Church Staff (other than Senior Pastor)**

The Senior Pastor is the manager of the church staff. With the approval of the Elders, the Senior Pastor may delegate responsibilities within the staff for the purpose of carrying out his responsibilities.

The Senior Pastor is responsible for the recruitment and management of all staff. Salaries and benefits for pastors are established by the Elders upon the recommendation of the Senior Pastor. Final offers of employment or termination require mutual agreement between the Senior Pastor and the Elders. However, the hiring and termination and salaries & benefits of non-pastoral staff are at the discretion of the Senior Pastor within the constraints of the approved budget. Except for the Senior Pastor, staff members are not eligible for nomination as an Elder.

4. **Performance Review**

The performance of staff members will be reviewed on at least an annual basis. The Senior Pastor is responsible for church staff reviews. The Elders review the Senior Pastor.

II. **Membership**

A. **Qualifications**

Membership in Hill Country Fellowship Church is open to all who testify to two Elders of their salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, and agree with the Constitution, Purpose and Doctrinal Statements. Associate membership is available for those under eighteen years of age who testify to two Elders of their salvation by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Associate membership does not include the right to vote. Elders and pastors and must be members of Hill Country Fellowship Church.

B. **Expectations**

Members of Hill Country Fellowship Church are expected to support their church by participation in worship, instruction and giving of their time, talents, and treasures to the accomplishment of the purposes of the church. Members should take seriously the Great Commission and the admonition of the Lord Jesus Christ to love one another. (Matt. 28:19-20; 2 Cor. 9:7, Heb. 10:25, John 13:35)

C. Term

The term of membership is permanent unless one of the following occurs:

1. The member is not in attendance at regular services for a period of six months.
2. The member asks to be dropped from the membership roll.
3. The member is dismissed due to action, behavior, or speaking in opposition to the Purpose or Doctrinal Statements of Hill Country Fellowship Church (see Dismissal below).

D. Dismissal

The dismissal process for any member of Hill Country Fellowship Church must follow the pattern established by the Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 18:15-17. If the member refuses to repent and seek restoration of fellowship, as determined by the Elders, that person's membership is terminated.

E. Reinstatement

A former member in good standing can be reinstated to membership following an interview with at least two Elders and a one-month period of regular attendance.

A dismissed member will be reinstated by repenting and seeking restored fellowship with the Elders and then if deemed appropriate by the Elders with the church assembled.

III. Voting

A. Elders

Voting within the Eldership is preferably unanimous but knowing the frailty of mankind, a simple majority will suffice. Exceptions are voting on indebtedness that exceeds 5% of previous 12 months General Fund Offerings, the purchase or leases longer than 60 months of real or other property, and the selection or dismissal of Elders and changes to the Doctrinal Statement or to this document. These exceptions shall be approved with no more than one dissenting Elder vote.

B. Members

Voting by the membership is required for the following: the purchase of real property, calling or terminating the Senior Pastor, the appointment of Elders, indebtedness that exceeds 5% of previous 12 months General Fund Offerings, the purchase or lease agreements of over 60 months, and changes to the Doctrinal Statement or to this document. A 60% majority vote of the total votes cast is required for approval of the above-mentioned items.

IV. Congregational Meetings

A. Annual Meeting

In order to effectively communicate and ratify major issues and decisions, an annual congregational meeting will be scheduled by February 15 of each year.

B. Agenda

An Agenda will be prepared and distributed to the congregation two Sundays prior to that meeting time. Agenda items submitted by a voting member(s) will be placed on the Agenda at the discretion of the Elders. Agendas for meetings called by the voting members will be part of the petition calling the meeting. In case of emergencies, the requirement for distribution of Agendas may be waived by the Elders.

C. Special Meetings

A congregational meeting may be called by the Elders as they deem necessary or by a petition of 20% of the voting membership of the church.

D. Announcement

Except in extreme emergencies, congregational meetings will be announced in the church bulletin two Sundays in advance of the meeting date.

E. Quorum

The voting members present at a duly called congregational meeting will constitute a quorum.

F. Attendance

Congregational meetings are generally open to regular attenders and members alike; however voting is limited to members 18 years of age or older.

V. Amendments and Revisions to these Practices

Amendments and revisions to these Practices must be presented to the congregation at least two weeks prior to a congregational meeting and approved by a vote in accordance to paragraph 3B above.

This document is ratified by the voting members of Hill Country Fellowship on Dec. 11, 2005.