

CONSTITUTION

Dallas Reformed Baptist Church Dallas, Texas

PREAMBLE

We the members of the Dallas Reformed Baptist Church do ordain and establish the following Articles, to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

ARTICLE I

NAME

The name of this local church shall be The Dallas Reformed Baptist Church. We have chosen this name not as a sectarian label, but as a name descriptive of our doctrinal convictions. By this name we affirm that we are Reformed, by which we mean that we unashamedly embrace the great Biblical doctrines that came to prominence in the Protestant Reformation, sometimes referred to as "the doctrines of grace." And we take the name Baptist, indicating that we are this in organization and practice.

ARTICLE II

ASSOCIATION

Section 1. We acknowledge no ecclesiastical authority other than our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the church (Ephesians 1:21-23, 5:23), and who directs the affairs of the church through elders chosen and ordained according to the precepts of Holy Scripture (Acts 14:21-23, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9). The elders themselves at all times and in all their activities stand under the authority of Holy Scripture (Acts 16:4, 1 Corinthians 7:17, 11 Timothy 3:16,17).

Section 2. The church may and does cooperate with other like minded churches in matters of mutual interest and concern (II Corinthians 8:18-24). We may seek the assistance (I Corinthians 16:1,2) and counsel (I Thessalonians 1:7, 2:14) of other churches in matters of special concern to us, but the decision of no other church or group of churches shall at any time be acknowledge as binding on this church (Acts 14:21-23, Philippians 4:15).

Section 3. One special type of fellowship and cooperation with other churches is formal membership in an association of churches. Within the terms of Section 2 of this Article, this church may join itself to associations of churches. Upon the recommendation of the elders, such associations may be entered with the expressed consent and approval of the congregation (Acts 15:22, 11 Corinthians 8:19).

ARTICLE III

PURPOSE

The Purpose of this church is to glorify the God of the Scriptures by maintaining and promoting His worship both individually and corporately, by evangelizing sinners, and by edifying His saints (Phillipians 3:3, 1 Peter 2:4,5, Matthew 28:18-20). Therefore we are committed to the proclamation of God's perfect Law and of the glorious Gospel of His Grace through all the world to the defense of that "faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), and to the pure and faithful celebration of the ordinances of the New Covenant.

ARTICLE IV

ARTICLES OF FAITH

We adopt as the fullest expression of our faith the London Confession of Faith of 1689. The ultimate authority in all matters of faith, order, and morals is and must be the Bible alone, which truth is clearly set forth in the opening article of the Confession itself. This historic document, albeit imperfect, is an excellent summary of "the things most surely believed among us" and we find it to be an assistance in controversy, a confirmation in faith, and a means of edification in righteousness.

ARTICLE V

MEMBERSHIP

Section 1. Requirements for Membership: Any person shall be eligible for membership in this church, who professes repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 2:37-42, 5:14, 8:12), who manifests a life transformed by the power of Christ (1 Corinthians 1:1-2, 6:11), who has been scripturally baptized upon profession of faith (Matthew 18:18-20), who expresses substantial agreement with the Confession and Constitution of this church (1 Corinthians 14:40), who intends to give whole hearted support to its ministry (Ephesians 4:30), and who is willing to submit to its government and discipline (1 Corinthians 1:10, Hebrews 13:17).

Section 2. Types 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 (1 Corinthians 12:14). Practical considerations, however, require that certain distinctions be recognized in the membership of this church.

Paragraph 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, who continue in the duties set forth in Section 4 of this Article, and who do not come under corrective discipline of the church as set forth in Article VI, shall be considered regular members in good standing and entitled to all the rights and privileges of membership in the church (Acts 2:37-47).

Paragraph B. Temporary Members: Persons who come to live in our area for a limited period of time (such as students, military personnel, persons on special work assignments) may be re-

ceived into or removed from the membership of the church on the same basis and in the same manner as persons having 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 rights and privileges and subject to all the liabilities and discipline of regular membership. When such a person terminates his period of temporary residence as a member in good standing, he will be released to the fellowship of his "home church" and no longer be regarded as a member of this church (Acts 18:27, Romans 16:1-2).

Paragraph C. Associate members: Regular members who move away from our area may, at their request, be retained as associate members of this church until they join themselves to another church, or a period of six months elapses, whichever occurs first. In unusual cases associate membership may be retained for longer periods of time by special arrangement with the elders, provided regular communication with the church is maintained. At the discretion of the elders, associate membership may also be granted to invalids, Christian workers, and others whose relationship to the church involves unusual circumstances. An associate member shall enjoy the privileges of pastoral oversight and church fellowship, and be subject to the discipline of the church. An associate member shall not be permitted to vote in any business meeting of the church, nor to hold any elected position in the church.

Section 3. Procedures in the Reception of New Members

Paragraph A. Application for Membership: A person who desires to become a member of the church shall formally express that desire by submitting, to the elders, a completed membership application form, part of which shall include a written testimony of his confession of faith in Christ, and a statement indicating his substantial agreement with both the 1689 Confession of Faith and the Constitution of Dallas Reformed Baptist Church (Acts 9:26).

Paragraph B. Initial Elder Review: (Mandatory) Upon reception of the application for membership, the elders will make a determination as to whether to continue, postpone, terminate, or expedite the process of application. In the case where an applicant is, or has been a member of another church, special effort will be made to determine his present or former standing in that church and identify his reasons for leaving (Acts 15:2). If the elders of an applicant's former church raise an objection which the elders of DRBC deem valid, the application process will be either postponed or terminated (Acts 20:28; 1 John 4:1). If the elders discover that the applicant enjoys a good standing in his former church, they may expedite the membership application process (Acts 9:27; Romans 16:1; Colossians 4:10).

Paragraph C. Congregational Scrutiny: If the elders choose to receive an application for membership, they shall, for two consecutive Lord's Days, inform the congregation of their decision to do so and announce the precise date and time that a public testimony of the applicant's faith in Christ and his agreement with the 1689 Confession of Faith and the Constitution of the Church will be given to the congregation. Following, the giving of the applicant's public testimony (Ephesians 4:29; 1 Corinthians 14:26; Ephesians 4:3; 1 Corinthians 1:10). The elders will give the congregation no less than one month and no more than six months to, in Christian charity and through biblical wisdom assess the applicant's manner of life and

doctrine, and bring any questions, concerns, objections, or words of encouragement about the applicant to the elders, privately (Acts 9:26-27; 2 Corinthians 11:4; Galatians 1:6-9; 1 John 4:1). The elders will carefully investigate any questions, concerns, or objections with regard to the applicant's manner of life or doctrine (Acts 9:26; 1 John 4:1), and if such prove to be legitimate, they will either terminate or postpone the application process. (Acts 20:28; 1 John 4:10)

Paragraph D. Elder Scrutiny and Membership Reception: If at the end of the time allotted for congregational assessment of the applicant's life and doctrine, no questions, concerns, or objections have been raised which have given the elders sufficient reason to postpone or terminate the application process, they will privately interview the applicant to make a final determination as to whether he 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 wholehearted support to its ministry, and is willing to submit to its government and its discipline. If the elders are satisfied that the applicant meets the requirements for membership, they shall, for at least two consecutive Lord's Days, announce the same to the membership as well as the precise date and time that the applicant will be formally received into the membership. If, during the interim period between the elders' announcement and the date the applicant is to be formally received into the membership, there are questions, concerns, or objections raised concerning the applicant's fitness for membership which the elders deem valid, then they may either postpone the applicant's reception into the membership or terminate the application process altogether (Acts 20:28; 1 John 4:1). If, however, no questions, concerns, or objections are raised during this interim period that the elders deem valid, then membership and all the privileges thereunto will be publicly extended to the applicant (Acts 9:27-28).

Section 4. Conduct Required of Members

Paragraph A. Attendance at Stated Meetings: All regular members and temporary members are required to attend all stated meetings of the church unless providentially hindered (by illness, accident, unusual working conditions, and other such circumstances). The stated meetings of the church are all the Lord's Day (Sunday School, morning and evening worship, and the Lord's Supper), the midweek prayer service, the business meetings of the congregation, and any special meetings which the elders shall occasionally deem it necessary to call (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:24-25). The members are strongly urged to engage themselves in due preparation of heart prior to meetings and to make every effort to be punctual in attendance (Isaiah 1:10-17; Matthew 7:12; 15:8; 1 Corinthians 14:40).

Paragraph B. Financial Support: Scripture clearly teaches that Christians should financially support the work of the Lord by systematic, proportionate giving through the local church (Malachi 3:8-10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9). The members of this church are expected to conform to this rule of Scripture. Members will not be considered as fulfilling their duty in this matter by giving to other causes. This is not meant to forbid such giving, and it is acknowledged that personal acts of benevolence need not be conducted through the church (Hebrews 13:16). However, financial giving to this church should be expressive of one's level of commitment as a member of this assembly, in view of a Christian's responsibility to support the work of the ministry and the work of the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:13-14; Galatians 6:6). The tithe is not imposed upon God's people as a tax, but is strongly urged upon each member as a general guide

for basic giving and as an expression of worship. To this should be added gifts and offerings according to one's ability and the willingness of his heart (Exodus 36:2-7; 2 Corinthians 8:1-12; 9:7).

Paragraph C. Promotion of Edification and Peace: Inasmuch as the church is represented in Scripture as a body having many members, each of the members having its particular function and yet having concern for the health and protection of the whole (1 Corinthians 12:12-27; Ephesians 4:4, 11-16), the members of this church must strive for the good of the entire body. Members must prayerfully seek to discover their gifts and talents and exercise them appropriately (Romans 12:3-8). We must also seek to cultivate acquaintance with one another and maintain mutual transparency and honesty so that we may be better able to pray for one another; love, comfort, and encourage one another; and help one another materially as necessity may require (Galatians 6:10; Ephesians 4:25; 1 John 3:16-18). In addition, we must discreetly confess our faults to one another (James 5:16), faithfully admonish and encourage one another (Matthew 18:15; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Hebrews 3:12-13; 10:24-25), and refrain from all backbiting and gossip (Psalm 153; Proverbs 16:28; 26:20-22). In pursuit of the peace and well-being of the church, the elders may determine that some matters of congregational business are so sensitive that the members will be expected to keep such matters confidential and not to discuss them with persons outside this assembly (Proverbs 11:13).

Paragraph D. Support of and Submission to Leadership: Members are expected to support and submit to the overseers of the church. Supporting God's servants necessitates praying for them and their labors (Ephesians 6:18-19), cultivating personal acquaintance with them, loving them, and esteeming them highly for their work's sake (1 Thessalonians 5:12-13), standing by them and not forsaking them in their afflictions and in all their good causes (2 Timothy 1:15), and defending rather than prejudicing or damaging their good name (Acts 23:5; 1 Timothy 5:19). Submitting to God's servants necessitates imitating their Christian graces, faith, and godly principles as they also imitate Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1; Hebrews 13:7; 1 Peter 5:3); receiving their teaching with all readiness of mind and teachableness of spirit, yet with ultimate allegiance to the Word of God (Acts 17:11; James 1:19-21; 1 Thessalonians 2:13); humbly heeding their Scriptural rebukes and warnings as from those appointed to watch for our souls and committed to present us complete and mature in Christ (Colossians 1:28; Hebrews 13:17); seeking and carefully considering their counsel as from those counted faithful by the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:1, 25); and cheerfully embracing and abiding by their decisions regarding corporate policy in God's house, which is His church (1 Timothy 3:5, 15; Hebrews 13:17), without gainsaying, even when personally differing with their judgment (Romans 10:21; Jude 8-10).

Paragraph E. A Godly Christian Life: All who come into the membership of this church are expected to walk worthily of the Lord, that His Name be not blasphemed but rather His excellencies be displayed through us, and that the good name of the church be not damaged but rather enhanced. Therefore, every member is expected to cultivate godliness in the following areas:

1. Personal Devotions: Each member is expected to walk personally with the Lord, making use of all the private means of grace available to him, including daily and habitual secret prayer (Psalm 55:17; 88:9; Daniel 6:10; Matthew 6:5-11; Colossians 4:2), daily and habitual reading and meditating on God's Word (Psalm 1:2; 119:11, 97), continual maintenance of a good

conscience with judgment day honesty (Acts 24:16; 1 Timothy 1:19; Hebrews 10:22; 13:18), periodic and wholesome self-examination, prayerfully conducted by the standard of God's Word (Psalm 139:23-24; 2 Corinthians 13:5; 2 Peter 1:10-11; 1 John 5:13), and careful and spiritual observance of the Lord's Day (Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 20:8-11; Isaiah 58:13-14; Acts 20:7; 1 Corinthians 16:2; Revelation 1:10).

2. Family Life: The church expects its members to obey the teachings of the Scriptures with respect to family life and government of the home. As the God-appointed head of the family, the husband must rule over the household with gentleness and love, but also wisdom and firmness (Ephesians 5:22; 1 Timothy 3:4-5). The wife must also be in subjection to her husband in all things according to the rule of Scripture (Ephesians 5:22-24; 1 Peter 3:1). The husband with the wife must nurture their children in the chastening and admonition of the Lord (Ephesians 6:2), by setting a godly example before them, by leading them in family worship, by instructing them consistently in the Scriptures (Genesis 18:19; Deuteronomy 6:7), by praying for them (1 Chronicles 29:19), and by wise and firm discipline, including corporal punishment when it is needed (Proverbs 13:24; 22:15; 29:15; Hebrews 12:7).

3. Personal Evangelism: Not all Christians have the same God-given ability to communicate the Gospel (1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11, 14-20, 27-30), nor the same opportunity (Acts 4:33). At the same time, evangelism is not restricted to experts or professionals (Acts 11:19; 2 Corinthians 4:13). All Christians should be deeply concerned for the glory of God, the eternal welfare of lost men, and the prosperity of the church (Psalm 90:16-17; Matthew 10:32-33; Romans 9:1-3; Ephesians 3:20-21). Therefore, members are expected to pray for the extension of the Kingdom of God throughout the entire world (Ephesians 6:18-20; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-2; 1 Timothy 2:1-8), and to seek to recognize and seize every opportunity to bear witness to his faith in Christ both by consistent Christian conduct and by the testimony of the lips (Romans 1:16-17; Philippians 2:14-16; 1 Peter 3:14-16).

4. Christian Liberty: Each member of the church is required to render in his daily life loyal obedience to all the moral precepts established by the Word of God (Romans 8:3,4). If God has not condemned or forbidden a practice in His Word, a Christian is at liberty to participate in it. The exercise of Christian liberty, however, must at all times be governed by an earnest desire to walk in the fear of God and to glorify Him in all things (1 Corinthians 10:31; 1 Peter 1:17), a loving regard for the consciences of weaker brethren (Romans 15:1-3; 1 Corinthians 8:9), a compassion for the lost (1 Corinthians 9:19-22), and a zealous regard for the health of one's own soul (Romans 13:14; 1 Peter 2:16).

5. Separation from the World: God never intended the glorious blessing of Christian liberty which we enjoy to become an excuse and covering for worldliness (Galatians 5:13; 1 Peter 2:16). To the contrary, we have been liberated from the bondage to our former sins in order that we might be a people distinct from this wicked world and set apart to God (Leviticus 18:1-30; Titus 2:11-14; 1 Peter 1:14-15). Accordingly, we are commanded to detest rather than love godless society (Proverbs 1:10-19; Romans 12:1-2; James 1:27). Therefore, members are expected to detest and be separate from the wicked attitudes, practices, and unwholesome influence of the ungodly society around us. This is not to be thought of as a call to absolute separation from all contact with the ungodly, which would require us to leave the world (1 Corinthians 5:9-10).

Respecting the World's Attitudes: Members are expected to resist the worldly attitude that the things of this life are of primary importance (1 John 2:15-17). Members are not to become so absorbed with work, material possessions, politics, recreation, television, sports, or any other person or things that would rival our primary attachment to Christ (Matthew 6:24). Members are not to adopt the distorted values of the world, such as: considering self-worth to be rooted in intelligence, wealth, usefulness to society, beauty, sex appeal, or athletic skill; or considering that our personal peace and happiness should be pursued as our ultimate goal, and are attained by our acquiring possessions. Members are not to adopt the moral relativism of the world, especially respecting the sanctity of life and truth. Members are to resist worldly attitude about masculinity and femininity, reject the carnal notions that male and female roles are arbitrary and reversible, that sexual orientation is a matter of preference rather than morality, and that marriage is oppressive, unless it is egalitarian. Members are to regard the wife's primary role to be that of a helper to her husband (Genesis 2:18), her basic (but not necessarily exclusive) sphere of labor to be domestic (Proverbs 31:10-31; 1 Timothy 5:14; Titus 2:4), and her estate as wife and mother to be noble and honorable, rather than degrading and unfulfilling. Members are to regard a husband's role not only to be that of provider and protector (Ephesians 5:23, 28; 1 Timothy 5:8), but also to be that of giving personal nurture to his wife (Genesis 18:6-8; Ephesians 5:25-26; 1 Peter 3:7).

Respecting the World's Practices: Members are not to indulge in any of the vices which surround us: drunkenness, drug abuse, gluttony, viewing pornographic materials, fornication, homosexuality, and other such sins.

Respecting the World's Influence: Members are to refrain from all entangling relationships with the ungodly, such as intimate, frequent companionship with them (1 Corinthians 15:33; James 4:4), pursuing romantic interest in them (Judges 16:4, 5; 1 Kings 11:4-9; Proverbs 2:16-17; 6:20, 23-25), and contracting marriages with them (1 Corinthians 7:39; 2 Corinthians 6:14). Similarly, members are expected to carefully seek to discern and resist any wicked influence of this godless society upon our souls and our families, whether it is exerted by means of television, videotapes, movies, music, literature, schools, or by any other means (Romans 12:1-2).

6. Maintain a Biblical Perspective and Practice Regarding Human Sexuality:

1. Biblical Perspective: Human sexuality was created by God as a part of the natural order wherein He created both male and female. (Genesis 1-3) The determination of one's gender is a matter of biological and genetic code which is reflected in the physical distinctions between males and females at birth, as governed by divine providence. Marriage has only one legitimate meaning, and that is that marriage exclusively joins one male and one female in a single, covenantal union, as delineated by scripture. (Gen 1:27; 2:24) Such will be the only marriages recognized by this church.

2. Biblical Practice: God has commanded that no sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. The following forms of sexual activity are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex: homosexuality, lesbianism, bi-sexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, transgenderism, and any other practice forbidden by the Word of God. God also disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance. Furthermore, marriage ceremonies or funerals performed in any facility owned, leased, or rented

by this church will only be those ceremonies that are sanctioned by God as reflected in the above Biblical perspective and which are in accordance with our 'Church Building Use' policy. Neither is any member of this church to participate in or perform any marriage ceremony not reflected in the above Biblical perspective. (Genesis 19, Leviticus 18:1-30; Romans 1:26-29; 1 Corinthians 5:1, 6:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4)

Section 5. Termination of Membership

Paragraph A. Reasons for 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 (Hebrews 12:23).
- 2. By Transfer:** When it is so requested, the elders may grant a departing member in good standing a letter of transfer to the fellowship of another church (Acts 18:27). No such letter may be given to a member who is at that time under the corrective discipline of this church. The elders may refuse to grant a letter of transfer to any church which is in their judgment disloyal to the faith which was once delivered to the saints (Jude 3), or which does not exercise godly care over its members.
- 3. By Resignation:** Membership in Dallas 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. It follows, then, that members cannot terminate their membership unilaterally under all circumstances. As a general rule, a member may voluntarily resign from membership in Dallas Reformed Baptist Church. 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, as is appropriate to the circumstances and in accordance with the procedures outlined in Article 6 (Acts 15:24; 1 John 2:18-19; 2 John 7-11).
- 4. By Exclusion:** If a member habitually absents himself from or ceases to attend the stated meetings of the church without showing just cause, or if upon relocation a member ceases to maintain vital contact with the church, such a one may be excluded from membership at the direction of the elders (1 John 2:19). In such cases, the elders shall attempt to contact the person and to rectify and resolve the situation (Ezekiel 34:4). If these efforts are ineffective the elders shall inform that person (when feasible) and the congregation that such a person is no longer a member. If a member not guilty of heresy, scandalous immorality, or divisiveness either renounces his commitment to keep any of the requirements of membership listed in Section I or Section 4 of this Article (Psalm 15:4; 24:4; Matthew 5:37) or ceases to practice them as a pattern of life (Ecclesiastes 5:1-5; Matthew 21:28-30; 23:3) and yet wishes to remain in membership, refusing to resign voluntarily, he may be excluded, but only after repeated admonitions from the elders (2 Timothy 2:24,26). In such cases the elders shall announce to the congregation at a stated meeting of the church their intention to exclude that person. Time will be allowed for objections or questions to be raised privately with the elders by any member. If no objection is raised which the elders considered to be valid, the person will be excluded by action of the elders. The congregation and the person shall be informed of this action.

5. By Excommunication: According to the teachings of Holy Scripture, a congregation must cut off from its fellowship and visible 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 unity, peace, or purity of the church (Matthew 18:15; Romans 16:17-20; 1 Corinthians 5:1, Titus 3:10-11). The procedures to be followed in such excommunication are set forth in Section 2 of Article VI.

Paragraph B. Implications of Termination:

1. And the Universal Church: Dallas Reformed Baptist Church does not exist in isolation from, but is a part of, the universal church of Christ composed of all true believers. Accordingly, open and forthright communication among the churches is vital to the purity, peace, edification, and unity of the church universal. Therefore, the elders may, at their discretion, disclose to other evangelical leaders and churches the circumstances under which a person's membership was terminated (Acts 15:24; 1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Timothy 2:17; 4:10-14).

2. And Society: Dallas Reformed Baptist Church does not exist in isolation from society at large. Accordingly, the church has a moral obligation to society both to act with integrity and to maintain its testimony (2 Corinthians 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 (Leviticus 5:1; Proverbs 29:24; 1 Peter 4:15).

3. And Divisive Conduct: Termination of membership does not give license to former members to sow discord, spread false teachings or reports, or engage in any other behavior which threatens the peace and unity of Dallas Reformed Baptist Church or the church universal. Therefore, 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 church universal (Acts 15:24; Romans 16:17-20; 1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Timothy 2:17; 4:10,14).

ARTICLE VI

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Section 1. Formative Discipline: Every disciple (follower) of Christ must be under His discipline (His instruction and correction), which He administers to each one, both personally (Acts 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 11:30-32; 1 Thessalonians 4:6; Hebrews 12:5-11; Revelation 2:22-23) and through the church (1 Corinthians 12:12-17; Galatians 6:1; Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Hebrews 3:12-14). Mutual submission to one another and to the overseers whom the Lord has set over His church (Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 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 formative discipline alone is insufficient and corrective discipline becomes necessary.

Section 2. Corrective Discipline

Paragraph A. General Statement: Corrective discipline becomes necessary when heretical doctrine or disorderly, immoral, or scandalous conduct appears among the members of the church. As a general rule and whenever feasible, an effort must be made to resolve the 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 in Matthew 18:15-17; 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 and appropriately applied to each and every case of corrective discipline. In some cases, public admonition may be warranted (Matthew 18:17; 1 Timothy 5:20). In other cases, some of the privileges of membership of the church may need to be suspended and appropriate strictures imposed (Romans 16:17-20; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15). In the most extreme cases, excommunication from the membership of the church may be necessary (Matthew 18:17; Romans 16:17-20; 1 Corinthians 5:1-13; 1 Timothy 1:20; Titus 3:10).

Since the church is a spiritual and religious institution, the punishments inflicted by the church in corrective discipline are also spiritual (2 Corinthians 2:6-7; 10:4). They include public, verbal reproof (Matthew 18:17; 1 Timothy 5:20), social avoidance (Romans 16:17; 1 Corinthians 5:9-11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14), and the withdrawal of distinctive Christian fellowship (Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:13; 2 John 10), and 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, however, to confiscate goods, revoke conjugal rights, or inflict corporal punishment of any kind. Nevertheless, a member guilty of criminal actions may be delivered to civil authorities according to the rule of Scripture (Romans 13:1-5; 1 Peter 4:15). The goals of corrective discipline are always the glory of God, the welfare and purity of the church (1 Corinthians 5:6), and the restoration and spiritual growth of the offender (1 Corinthians 5:5; 2 Corinthians 2:5-8; 1 Timothy 1:10).

Paragraph B. Public Reproof or Censure: Public reproof consists of a pastoral effort, before the gathered church, to call an impenitent church member or church members to repentance for sin too serious to merely be covered by love. The elders may administer public censure whenever, in their judgment, public misconduct (Galatians 2:11-14; 1 Timothy 5:20), patterns of sin (Titus 1:12-13), or serious doctrinal error (Titus 1:10-13) pose a significant threat to the godliness, unity, or testimony of the congregation. Those who humbly receive the word of public reproof, own and confess their sin, and manifest a transformed life (Proverbs 28:13), shall afterward be publicly commended for their godly repentance (2 Corinthians 7:7-11). If the reproof is not heeded, further discipline may be imposed.

Paragraph C. Suspension of Privileges: Some misconduct of the part of a member is so detrimental to the unity, holiness, and testimony of the church, that the Lord requires public reproof to be accompanied by the suspension of some or all of the privileges of membership according to the nature and gravity of the offense (Romans 16:17-20; 2 Thessalonians 3:14,15). In all cases of suspension, the offending person is still to be regarded as a brother in Christ and as a member of the church, and not as a wicked man cut off from distinctly Christian fellowship (Matthew 18:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:15). In addition, the Lord wills that this severe reproof be expressed and enforced by the entire church (Matthew 18:17; Romans 16:17-20; 2 Thessalonians 3:6,14,15). Therefore, in accordance with the procedures outlined below for each of the five ma-

for categories of offenses, the elders shall, at regular or specially called congregational meeting, recommend to the congregation that the offending brother be suspended, specifying the grounds for the discipline, the privileges to be revoked, and the strictures to be imposed. To be valid, an act of suspension must have the approval of at least two-thirds of the members in good standing, present and voting. In the interest of maintaining a climate of peace, the elders shall have the right, at their sole discretion, to impose a temporary suspension on a member during the brief interval between their determination to recommend suspension and the congregational vote. A member under suspension shall be treated by the congregation according to the specific applications of the general principle of social avoidance (Romans 16:17-20; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15) determined by the elders. Those who humbly submit to the imposed discipline shall afterward be forgiven, have their privileges restored, and be publicly received back into the full fellowship of the church (Matthew 18:15; 2 Corinthians 2:5-11).

The general grounds and generic categories of sin which require suspension are as follows:

1. A stubborn private offender (Matthew 18:15-17): When a private offense remains unresolved, even after the method prescribed by our Lord in Matthew 18:15,16 has been graciously and prayerfully followed it is considered an aggravated offense.

The brethren involved shall bring the matter to the elders who, if they judge the matter serious enough and cannot persuade the brother to repent, shall report the situation to the church, and recommend that the stubborn brother be suspended (Matthew 18:17). If even after suspension, the person remains adamant in his sin, excommunication shall be enacted according to the procedure outlined in Paragraph D of this Article (Matthew 18:17).

2. Divisive teachings or behavior (Romans 16:17-20; Titus 3:10): When a member deliberately persists in the propagation of serious doctrinal error contrary to Scripture and our confession, or attempts to sow discord among us contrary to Scripture and this constitution, he may be suspended as a factious man. Since every member is responsible to help preserve the unity of the Spirit (Ephesians 4:3), none of us are to conceal such divisive behavior, but rather reprove it and disclose it to the elders (Deuteronomy 13:6, 1 Corinthians 1:10-11). Whenever the elders become aware of divisive behavior they are to confront it meekly and patiently according to the Word of God (1 Corinthians 1:10; 4:21; Titus 3:10). If, after receiving repeated admonition from the elders, a member persists in such behavior, the elders shall report the situation to the church and recommend that the divisive brother be suspended. If, even after suspension, the person remains adamant in sowing discord or in spreading serious doctrinal errors, excommunication shall be enacted according to the procedure outlined in Paragraph D of this Article.

3. Disorderly behavior (2 Thessalonians 3:6-15): When a member deliberately persists in conduct which displays a flagrant or public disregard for either the order appointed by God for all mankind in the creation ordinances, namely, work and Sabbath (Genesis 2:1-3,15; Exodus 20:8-11; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-15) and marriage (Genesis 2:18-24; 1 Corinthians 7:1-17,39; 1 Timothy 5:8; Titus 2:5), or the order established by Christ for His church in Scripture (1 Corinthians 11:17-34; 1 Corinthians 14:37-40; 1 Timothy 3:14-15) and adapted to our congregation in this constitution, he may be suspended as a disorderly man (2 Thessalonians 3:10-12). If, even after receiving such admonition from the elders, a member persists in this

behavior, the elders shall report the situation to the church and recommend that the disorderly brother be suspended (2 Thessalonians 3:14-15). If, even after suspension, the person remains adamant in disorderliness, excommunication shall be enacted according to the procedures outlined in Paragraph D of this Article.

4. A scandalous sin: If a member has sinned scandalously but shows hopeful signs of repentance, including submission to the admonition of the elders, it would be wrong to excommunicate him. It may still be necessary, however, to suspend him for a time from some of the privileges of membership lest reproach be brought upon the name of Christ and the church (2 Samuel 12:14; Romans 2:24), lest others be emboldened to sin (1 Timothy 5:20), and lest the offender himself fail to test his own soul and realize the gravity of his offense (Hebrews 3:12-13).

5. Contempt of church discipline: If a person is accused or suspected of gross sin and absents himself from the congregation, refusing to meet with the elders that the matter may be investigated, such a person may be suspended from all privileges of membership (Numbers 16:12,20,23-27; Matthew 18:17). The elders may recommend at a later date to the congregation that this person be either excluded or excommunicated.

Paragraph D. Excommunication:

1. Some types of conduct must be categorized as "immoral" (1 Corinthians 5:9,11; 6:9-10), and a member blatantly and impenitently guilty of such conduct must be cut off from the fellowship of the church (Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:3-5,13). In such a case, the elders shall make earnest efforts to bring the offender to true repentance and reformation, but if these efforts fail, they shall report the same to the congregation at a regular or specially called business meeting of the church and recommend that the offender be excommunicated, which must be done, according to Scripture by the action of the entire church (Matthew 18:17; 1 Corinthians 5:4). To be valid, an act of excommunication must have the approval of at least two-thirds of the members in good standing, present and voting.

2. Likewise, some wrong opinions regarding the doctrines of Scripture are so serious that they must be categorized as "heretical" (Galatians 1:6-9; 1 Timothy 4:1), and a member who persists in propagating or holding any such position, in spite of earnest and patient admonition by the elders, shall be excommunicated in the same manner as an immoral person.

ARTICLE VII

Church Officers

Section 1. General Statement: Jesus Christ alone is the Head of the church (Colossians 1:18), and He governs His church through office-bearers whom He appoints (Acts 20:28; Ephesians 4:11) and who are endowed by His Spirit with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work (1 Corinthians 15:9, 10). There are two kinds of such officers: elders (also called pastors, or bishops) and deacons (Acts 20:17,28; Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:1-13). It is the duty of the church to seek and discover among its members those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the necessary gifts for the office-bearing, and after formally recognizing them by common suffrage,

to set them apart by united prayer and then to submit to their authority (Luke 10:16; John 13:20; Acts 6:3-6; 14:23; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:5).

Section 2. Elders

Paragraph A. Qualifications of Elders: Each elder must meet the spiritual qualifications of the office set forth in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Any man called to this office must be able to conscientiously affirm his agreement with the Articles of Faith and the Constitution of the church. Should he at any time move from this position, he is under spiritual and moral obligation to make this fact known to the church.

Paragraph B. Duties of Elders: Elders are responsible for the spiritual ministry of the church. The eldership, as a body, is responsible to give comprehensive oversight to the church, including: the preaching and teaching of the whole counsel of God, both publicly and privately (Acts 20:17, 20, 21, 27; Titus 1:9), the watching out for the welfare of the soul of every member of the church (Ephesians 4:11-16; Colossians 1:28; 1 Thessalonians 2:11; Hebrews 13:17), and the directing of the church in its tasks by setting general policy and by making specific decisions (1 Timothy 3:4,5; Hebrews 13:17; 1 Peter 5:1,2). Nonetheless, the elders must always exercise authority with sensitivity to the consensus of the congregation (Ezekiel 34:4; 1 Timothy 3:4-5; 1 Peter 5:3) in the posture of servants and examples to the congregation respecting any large project or expenditure and should be willing to yield to the congregation when appropriate (Acts 15:22; 19:30; 21:11-14). In addition, the elders must maintain oversight over one another, and must give mutual counsel regarding the stewardship of one another's gifts (Acts 20:28; Galatians 2:9).

Paragraph C. Plurality of Elders: Although in new or small congregations only one man may have the gifts requisite for the office of elder, the Scriptures indicate that normally there should be a plurality of elders in the local church (Acts 20:17; Philippians 1:1). The church should endeavor to discover and formally recognize all the men whom the Holy Spirit has endowed with the requisite gifts and graces for the office, but only such men.

Should it come to pass, in the providence of God, that Dallas Reformed Baptist Church has only one man qualified for the office of elder, the church must wait upon God with fervent prayer that He might remedy this abnormality (Matthew 9:37-38). In such cases, the sole elder is urged to seek spiritual oversight, for himself and his family, from the eldership of another church. He should seek counsel for matters of importance and guard against being self-willed or tyrannical in his attitude or rule (Ephesians 5:21; 1 Peter 5:3, 5). The sole elder bears full authority in and responsibility for the affairs of the church.

Should it come to pass, in the providence of God, that Dallas Reformed Baptist Church is without any elders, a steering committee shall be formed, consisting of five male members in good standing, nominated and chosen by majority vote at a business meeting of the church (1 Corinthians 14:40). This committee shall make arrangements for pulpit supply, search for a pastor, and conduct other necessary business of the church. This committee shall seek constant counsel from the eldership of another like-minded church. This committee shall be disbanded as soon as a man is called to the office of elder.

Paragraph D. Parity and Diversity of Elders: The elders are all equal in office and authority (Acts 20:28; Hebrews 13:17), but diverse in gifts and function. Each elders must be "apt to teach", be engaged in private instruction and admonition, and be engaged in the administration and government of the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Timothy 3:1-7). However, some will be more experienced, involved, and proficient than others in executing various dimensions of the pastoral office (1 Timothy 5:17). Some will be more engaged in formal and public teaching than others (1 Timothy 5:17). In view of this diversity, as well as the numerous and grave responsibilities of the office, it is highly desirable that at least one elder should devote himself full-time to the work of the ministry and the oversight of the church. The church is responsible to give adequate financial support to such men, while others of the elders fulfill the office as they maintain a secular vocation (Acts 18:3-5; 1 Corinthians 9:9-11; 1 Timothy 3:15, 18).

Paragraph E. Number of Elders and Length of Term: The number of elders shall not be fixed. These may all continue as long as they remain qualified, able, and willing to serve. The length of their term of office cannot be fixed by the church.

Paragraph F. Chairmanship of the Elders: The elders shall choose one of their number to be chairman. They shall also select a vice-chairman to serve as chairman in the chairman's absence (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Section 3. Deacons

Paragraph A. Qualifications of Deacons: Each deacon must meet the spiritual qualifications of the office outlined in Acts 6:3 and 1 Timothy 3:8-13. Any man called to this office must be able to conscientiously affirm his agreement with the Articles of Faith and the Constitution of this church. Should he at any time move away from this position, he is under spiritual and moral obligation to make this fact known to the church.

Paragraph B. Duties of Deacons: Deacons are responsible to administer the ordinary business, secular affairs, and benevolence concerns of the church so that the elders may devote themselves without distraction to the more spiritual matters (Acts 6:2-4). They must fulfill the duties of their office in cooperation with and subjection to the elders. The Chairman of the Board of Deacons (see paragraph D, this Section) shall choose a treasurer to serve as a custodian of the funds of the church. The treasurer shall open and maintain bank accounts in the name of the church. A complete record of all receipts and disbursements shall be kept, and monthly and annual reports made to the church. The treasurer shall execute his duties in submission to the elders and deacons.

Paragraph C. Number of Deacons and Length of Term: The number of deacons shall not be fixed. These may continue in office as long as they remain qualified, able and willing to serve. The length of their term of office cannot be fixed by the church.

Paragraph A Chairmanship of the Deacons: The deacons shall choose one of their number to be chairman. They shall also select a vice-chairman to serve as chairman in the chairman's absence (1 Corinthians 14:40).

Section 4. Recognition, Installation, and Confirmation of Church Officers

Paragraph A. The Task of Recognition: The appointment of men to the office of elder or deacon is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ alone (Ephesians 4:11). However, He has ordained that the local church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, exercise the responsibility of recognizing, in its midst, men whom He is so appointing (Acts 6:3). Elders and deacons are ordained to office by the laying on of hands by the eldership (Acts 6:6, 1 Timothy 4:14). Since this is an expression of approval for which the elders alone are responsible, each officer must have the approval, not only of the church as a whole, but of the eldership in particular (1 Timothy 5:22; Acts 14:23; Titus 1:5). Christ's appointment of a man to either of these offices is recognized when a man possesses an inward conviction that the Lord is calling him to serve in a particular office, and when the church observes, in that same man, evidence of the gifts and graces required by Scripture for that particular office (1 Timothy 3:1-7, 8-12; Titus 1:5-9). The recognition of office bearers is a matter of such gravity that it should be accompanied by much prayerful waiting upon God for guidance, a careful consideration of the relevant passages of Scripture, and an objective evaluation of each man nominated (Acts 6:6; 14:23). These activities are the responsibility of each individual member of the church as well as the church as a whole (Acts 6:3,5)

Paragraph B. The Process of Recognition

1. Nominations. Nominations to the office of elder or deacon shall be made by the elders (Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23), who may, at any time during the year, call a special congregational meeting for this purpose. Periodically, the elders will survey the membership of the church to determine whether there exists a groundswell of support for any individual (s) for office (Acts 6:2-3); however, at any time, a member in good standing may recommend to the elders a potential nominee for either office. Upon the recommendation of any individual for office, the elders will prayerfully and with biblical objectivity consider whether the individual recommended should be nominated (1 Timothy 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 5:22).

2. Congregational Approval: There must be a minimum period of one month from the time of a man's nomination until the meeting called for his public examination and congregational vote (1 Corinthians 14:40). During this period, the members have a solemn obligation to prayerfully assess each nominee in the light of the relevant passages of Scripture (Acts 6:2-3, 6). Any member who has reservations concerning a nominee's fitness for office should contact him or one of the elders (1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9; 1 Timothy 5:22). Failure to resolve the reservation to the elders' satisfaction may warrant either termination or postponement of the congregational vote (1 Timothy 5:22). When the time comes to consider a nomination during a business meeting of the church, the candidate for office, and any members of his immediate family who are present, shall be requested to leave the room while his qualifications are discussed by the congregation in the fear of God and the light of Scriptures. Following this discussion, a written ballot shall be taken (Acts 6:2-3, 5). It is desirable that the vote of the congregation be unanimous, but if unanimity is not realized, no less than a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting shall be required for the election of an officer of the local church.

Paragraph C. Installation: Following the recognition of an office-bearer by vote of the congregation, he shall be publicly installed in his office at a regular worship service by the prayer of the whole church and the laying on of the hands of the existing elders.

Paragraph D. Confirmation: Office-bearers are subject to the same rules of discipline as are other members of the church. They shall hold office as long as they are faithful to their calling and have the confidence of the congregation. The church shall reconfirm (or express withdrawal of) confidence in each of its office-bearers at its annual meeting three years following the date of installation, and every three years thereafter in the manner designated in Paragraph B2 of this Section.

Section 5. The Discipline and Resignation of Officers

Paragraph A. The Warrant for the Discipline of Officers: While elders are overseers of the flock, they are themselves members of the flock. Therefore, each elder as an individual is under the oversight of his fellow elders and is subject to the same discipline as are all the members of the church. Church officers are subject not only to the same rules of discipline as the other members, but in addition are subject to public reprimand by the elders (Galatians 2:14; 1 Timothy 5:20), and/or removal from office (1 Timothy 3:2), if they no longer are qualified for their office or if their behavior is disorderly or scandalous, thereby bringing reproach upon Christ and the church, and setting the stumbling block of bad example before the brethren.

Paragraph B. Procedure for the Discipline of Officers: The process of discipline may be initiated either by the elders or by individual members of the congregation. Any member who is offended at the behavior of any church officer should first approach that officer privately and express his or her concerns. If the concerns are not resolved, the member should inform the elders of the situation and wait upon them in their determination of the matter (Matthew 18:15). Since this is such a delicate and serious matter, the elders shall proceed with due caution and earnest prayer (1 Timothy 5:19). If the elders judge discipline to be necessary, they shall inform the congregation of the basis for the proposed discipline in principle and in fact. If he so desire, the officer accused shall have opportunity to speak in his own defense. The removal of an officer shall require congregational approval at a duly called congregational meeting. In order to retain his office in such circumstances, the officer must receive a vote of confidence by no less than three-fourths majority of the members present and voting.

Paragraph C. The resignation of Officers: An officer may resign his office without prejudice if for good and valid reasons he feels that he is no longer able to discharge the duties of it.

ARTICLE VIII

CONGREGATIONAL BUSINESS MEETINGS

Section 1. General Statement: There shall be an annual business meeting of the church for the hearing of reports, the confirmation of officers, and the transaction of such other business as may be brought before the meeting. Special business meetings may be called at other times at the discretion of the elders.

Section 2. Notice of the Meetings

Paragraph A. Notice of all the congregational meetings shall be given at regular worship services. A minimum of seven days notice shall be given for any meeting at which official church

business is to be conducted. However, in the case of an emergency, a meeting may be called on shorter notice by notifying each regular member by mail or telephone of the date, time, place, and purpose of the meeting.

Paragraph B. Meetings for the hearing of special reports or for seeking counsel of the congregation may be called on shorter notice, but no vote may be taken or other business transacted at such meetings.

Section 3. Quorum: The regular members present at any properly convened congregational meeting shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

Section 4. Chairmanship: As a general rule, the chairman of the board of elders shall preside at business meetings. In the case of his absence or inability to serve, the elders shall appoint another member of the church to preside, whether from among the elders, deacons, or congregation.

Section 5. Secretary: The secretary (an individual appointed by the chairman of the board of deacons) shall record the minutes of each congregational business meeting as well as keep record of the membership and attendance at such meetings.

Section 6. Voting

Paragraph A. All regular members who have reached the age of eighteen years of age and are in good standing in the church may vote on any question properly brought before the congregation.

Paragraph B. Unanimity of heart and mind under God shall at all times be sought and prayed for (Acts 6:5), but when unanimity is not realized, not less than a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting shall be required to make any resolution valid. In some cases, as specified in this Constitution a three-fourths majority shall be required.

ARTICLE IX

AMENDMENTS

Section 1. This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting at a duly-convened business meeting of the congregation.

Section 2. No proposed amendment may be voted on which has not been distributed to the congregation in written form at least two weeks prior to such meeting.

THE COVENANT OF MEMBERSHIP
Dallas Reformed Baptist Church
Dallas, Texas

Having been brought by the sovereign grace of God to repentant faith in the resurrected Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, we do now publicly declare our total reliance upon and allegiance to Him as our Prophet, Priest, and King. In solemn joy we covenant together to worship Him and to walk in Christian love for the glory of Christ who is the Head of His body, the church.

We do now in the presence of the holy, omniscient, omnipotent God, and before angels and men commit ourselves to the Triune Lord Jehovah: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, seeking His enablement for the fulfilling of this covenant.

We covenant together to uphold the public worship of God in accordance with His Holy Word: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, honoring the preaching of the Word, submitting to Christ's ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, giving ourselves faithfully to corporate prayer as well as private and family worship in our homes, diligently instructing and training those entrusted to our care in Biblical doctrine and conduct.

In reliance upon the grace of the living God, we hereby determine to exercise a mutual care and watchfulness for one another to fulfill the law of Christ: striving for the good of the whole church to promote the knowledge of the truth which is in accordance with godliness, exhorting and admonishing one another in a spirit of meekness, and praying for one another according to the will of God.

As "the salt of the earth" and "the light of the world", we will, by divine enablement, deny ungodliness and every worldly lust: perfecting holiness in the fear of God, being zealous for good deeds and the maintenance of a clear conscience before God and men that we might not bring reproach upon the name of our King, but rather be used of Him to adorn His gospel so as to attract sinners to our compassionate and willing Savior.

We agree to contribute freely and cheerfully of our income, as God has graciously prospered us for the maintenance of a faithful and evangelical ministry among us, for the support of the needy, and for the spread of the gospel throughout the world.

*"Now to Him who is able to do exceeding abundantly
beyond all that we ask or think, according to the
power that works in us to Him be the glory in the
church and in Christ Jesus to all generations
forever and ever. Amen."
Ephesians 3:20-21*