

Proposed Constitution and Bylaws
Cardinal Baptist Church
Ruther Glen, Virginia

C O N S T I T U T I O N

ARTICLE 1: IDENTITY

Section 1: Name

The name of this body is Cardinal Baptist Church, now or formerly located at 25050 Ruther Glen Rd., Ruther Glen, Virginia, 22546.

Section 2: Purpose

We exist for the purpose of glorifying God through obedience to The Great Commandment (Matt. 22:36-40) and The Great Commission (Matt. 28:19-20).

As individual followers of Christ, we celebrate Him through worship, communicate with Him through prayer, and mature in Him through discipleship. As a body of believers, we deepen relationships with each other through fellowship and care for each other through ministry. All of this serves to equip us for the great purpose of telling a lost and dying world about new life in Christ.

Section 3: Affiliation

As an autonomous Baptist church, we have full power and authority to govern and organize ourselves without interference or instruction from any external ecclesiastical body. We do cooperate with many like-minded churches and agencies through affiliation with the Southern Baptist Convention and the Southern Baptist Conservatives of Virginia. Other affiliations may be formed or dissolved by the congregation according to the terms of the bylaws.

ARTICLE 2: BELIEFS

Section 1: Statement of Faith

We believe the 66 books of the Old and New Testament Scriptures, that is, the Bible, is God speaking to us. Therefore, the Bible deserves and receives our highest devotion and loyalty. It is the final authority on all issues of life in this world and the world to come. Furthermore, we subscribe to the doctrinal statement of *The Baptist Faith and Message, 2000* (included herein by reference), adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in that same year.

Section 2: Statement on Marriage and Sexuality

We believe that the term “marriage” is defined and sanctioned by God. As delineated in Scripture, it has only one meaning – marriage joins one man and one woman in a single, exclusive union (Gen. 2:19-25; Matt. 19:4-6; Eph. 5:22-31).

We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to occur only between a man and a woman who are married to each other. We believe that God has commanded that no sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage (Exod. 20:14; Lev. 18:6-20, 22-23; Proverbs 5:15-23; Matt. 5:28, 32; Rom. 7:2-3; 1 Cor. 7:2-5).

We believe that any form of sexual immorality, such as but not limited to; adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bestiality, transsexuality, pedophilia or incest is sinful and offensive to God, as stated in Scripture (Gen. 1:27; Exod. 20:14, 22:19; Lev. 18:6-20, 22-23; Lev. 20:10-21; Mark 7:21-23; Rom. 1:26-27).

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of the church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the church members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by the church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, shall agree to this Statement on Marriage and Sexuality and conduct themselves accordingly. In addition, no ceremony contrary to this statement may be conducted on any property or within any facility owned, leased, or controlled by this church (1 Cor. 11:1; Phil. 3:17; 1 Thess. 3:9); nor shall any official representative of the church officiate such a ceremony elsewhere.

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ (Rom. 3:24, 6:23; Gal. 6:1; Eph. 1:7; 1 John 1:9; Rev. 3:19-21).

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture nor the doctrines of the church (Eph. 4:29; Col. 3:12).

We reject the idea that the expression or proclamation of the biblical definition of marriage and the prohibition of sexual activity outside of marriage constitutes hateful or harassing speech. Any such allegations are contrary to the mandate given in Scripture to believers to speak the truth in love. Submission to demands made by any individual or organization to do otherwise would constitute a violation of our consciences, a surrendering of the gospel, and a failure to follow the commands of Christ.

ARTICLE 3: MEMBERSHIP

Section 1: Qualifications

The New Testament presents a picture of definable groups of people who, once committed to the Lord, identified themselves with and committed themselves to a particular local body (Acts 2:42-46, 11:26; Rom. 16:1, 1 Cor. 1:2; 2 Cor. 8:1).

Membership is open to any person who has personally accepted Christ as Savior and Lord, who has received baptism by immersion as a believer, and who desires to be committed to Cardinal Baptist Church as a local body of believers. Membership is not a prerequisite for involvement in every ministry, but it is required for ministry leadership. Membership is required to participate in congregational decision making.

Section 2: Covenant

Having been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, I now join the membership of Cardinal Baptist Church. I have turned from sin and publicly confessed through baptism that Jesus is Lord to the glory of God the Father. I know that God raised Jesus from the dead and now gives the Holy Spirit to help me glorify Him.

As a church member, I now consider myself accountable to other church members. The standard of accountability will be a correct and balanced application of the Bible. Out of love for fellow members, I will likewise hold them accountable.

I recognize that many church problems are caused by the members disobeying God in the areas of speaking and giving. Therefore, I will be careful to obey God so as to speak well of others and give generously of my time, talent, and treasure.

In the event that I move to a place where active membership here is impossible or impractical, I will diligently search for and bind myself to a church body similar to this, where I can continue to live out my faith in community with other believers.

Section 3: Procedure for Membership

After one has offered himself or herself for membership, he or she will go through new member orientation. Upon completion of that orientation with the desire to join still intact, he or she will be publicly presented to the church for membership in one of the following ways:

1. By profession of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and for baptism
2. By promise of a letter from another church of like faith and order
3. By statement of their conversion experience and baptism by immersion should a letter not be available

In the event of dissent regarding a candidate, the matter will be referred to the deacons who will later bring a recommendation to the church.

Section 4: Designations of membership

The designations of membership are Active and Watchcare; in accordance with the Bylaws.

Section 5: Voting rights

Each eligible active member age 18 and older is entitled to one vote in business meetings. Voting by proxy is prohibited.

Section 6: Termination of Membership

Members will be removed from the church roll for any of the following reasons, in accordance with the Bylaws:

1. Death
2. Transfer of membership to another church
3. By request of the member
4. Discipline by the church
5. One year of inactivity

Section 7: Church Discipline

We recognize that sinless perfection is unattainable in this life, but we do strive for purity of life and conduct. Should a member fall woefully short of this standard, the procedure for discipline, based on Matt. 18:15-20, will be in accordance with the Bylaws.

ARTICLE 4: GOVERNANCE BY THE CONGREGATION

Authority: The congregation is the final authority on all matters pertaining to the governance of Cardinal Baptist Church.

Meetings: The Congregation shall gather in bi-monthly business sessions in accordance with the Bylaws.

Quorum: A quorum for business meeting shall be a number equal to or greater than the sum of currently serving deacons.

Calendar: The fiscal year shall begin January 1 and end December 31.

Standing Committees: The standing committees shall be Ministry Coordination and Financial Leadership; in accordance with the Bylaws.

ARTICLE 5: GOVERNANCE FOR THE CONGREGATION

Section 1: Pastor

The pastor is a man who meets the scriptural qualifications of that office (1 Tim. 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9).

Responsibilities: He shall lead the church through the preaching and teaching of the Word, have a leading role in public worship, give guidance and direction through his role as elder.

Term: Once he is named to the office, he shall serve an indefinite term not subject to recall or renewal.

Selection: The pastor will be selected by the congregation in accordance with the Bylaws.

Termination: If necessary, the congregation will declare the office of pastor vacant in accordance with the Bylaws.

Section 2: Deacons

Definition and Composition: Deacons are godly men who meet the scriptural qualifications for that office (1 Tim. 3:8-12).

Responsibilities: They shall work with the pastor in continually assessing the ministry needs of the congregation. In addition to them personally meeting ministry needs, they shall also recruit and motivate other members and attenders to take a role in ministry. They shall also assist in administering the ordinances.

Term: A deacon shall serve a three-year term and may return to service after a one-year sabbatical. The sabbatical year may be waived in the absence of qualified candidates.

Selection: The congregation shall affirm deacons in accordance with the Bylaws.

Termination: If necessary, the congregation may remove a deacon from office in accordance with the Bylaws.

Section 4: Treasurer

Definition: The treasurer is a church member whose integrity is above reproach and possesses the willingness and ability to perform the duties of the office.

Responsibilities: The treasurer shall keep a written record of all income and disbursements. The treasurer shall sign all checks, and report to the church receipts, disbursements, and account balances. All books, records, and accounts kept by the treasurer shall be considered the property of the church, and must be turned over to his or her successor. These books shall be open to inspection by any active member of the church.

Term: The treasurer shall be elected by the church annually, and shall remain eligible for reelection.

Selection: The congregation shall elect the treasurer in accordance with the Bylaws.

Termination: If necessary, the congregation may remove the treasurer from office in accordance with the Bylaws.

Section 5: Clerk

Definition: The clerk is a church member whose integrity is above reproach and possesses the willingness and ability to perform the duties of the office.

Responsibilities: The clerk is the official records keeper of the church. Such records include details of membership and minutes of the church in business session. The clerk shall also communicate with denominational bodies by way of report as to the status and statistics of the church.

Term: The clerk shall be elected by the church annually, and shall remain eligible for reelection.

Selection: The congregation shall elect the clerk in accordance with the Bylaws.

Termination: If necessary, the congregation may remove the clerk from office in accordance with the Bylaws.

ARTICLE 6: CORPORATION OFFICERS

The purpose of this article is to clearly identify those who will function in legal matters and business pertaining to the corporation as registered with the Commonwealth of Virginia. This article grants no power, honor, or authority to anyone relative to the affairs of Cardinal Baptist Church. Any such power, honor, or authority is delineated elsewhere in the Constitution and Bylaws.

1. The pastor shall serve as the president of the corporation.
2. The deacon chairman shall serve as the vice-president of the corporation.
3. The deacons shall serve as the board of the corporation.
4. The treasurer shall serve as the treasurer of the corporation.
5. The clerk shall serve as the secretary of the corporation.

ARTICLE 7: AMENDMENTS

This constitution may be amended by the congregation provided that said amendment is printed and made available by all reasonable means, to the membership prior to any action. The amendment shall be read and discussed at no fewer than three business meetings before the vote to amend. The vote for amending must be at least three-fourths.

ARTICLE 8: INDEMNIFICATION

If a church member acting in the name of the church is sued, the church will cover the costs of defending the member, provided the member was acting in good faith and behavior and is innocent of violating civil law.

ARTICLE 9: DISSOLUTION

In the event that Cardinal Baptist Church dissolves or disbands, its assets shall transfer to at least one other non-profit organization whose orientation is similar to ours. The terms of dissolution and transfer shall be recommended by the deacons and approved by the congregation.

ARTICLE 10: RATIFICATION

Section 1: Disposition of prior documents

Upon ratification of this constitution, all prior constitutions and bylaws shall immediately become null and void.

Section 2: Ratification procedure

The existence of the Constitution will be announced and made available by all reasonable means to the membership. At that time, a business meeting to take place at least thirty days from the initial announcement shall be called. The only agenda of that meeting will be a vote to ratify the new Constitution. The vote for ratification must be at least two-thirds.

B Y L A W S

A. AFFILIATIONS

From time to time, it may be prudent to establish or dissolve affiliation with an outside organization in order to protect, enhance or advance the objectives of the church. The deacons shall consider such action and bring a recommendation to the congregation.

The proposal for establishing or dissolving affiliation shall be printed and distributed to the membership of Cardinal Baptist Church prior to any action. The proposal shall be read and discussed at no fewer than three business meetings before the vote. The vote for establishing or dissolving affiliation must be at least three-fourths.

B. MEMBERSHIP

1. Membership designations

a. Active members are those who attend regularly, participate in ministry, and whose lives reflect well the name of Christ. Members who have absented themselves from church life for a period of one year without worthy cause or providential hindrance shall be removed from membership. The beginning of the year of absence will be determined and recorded by the deacons, giving every benefit of the doubt to the member. Such record shall be written and submitted to the clerk. Throughout this time effort shall be made to restore the member back to regular activity.

b. Watchcare members are those who temporarily locate to our area but have chosen to retain membership in the church from which they came. They may hold membership in only one other church of like faith and order.

2. Church Discipline

The church is an assembly of believers, who, even at their best, are fallen and flawed individuals. Our attitude toward the imperfections and shortcomings of others should be one of love with understanding that we all have imperfections and shortcomings (Matt. 7:1-5; 1 Peter 4:8). That said, all believers are to make every effort to live in a way that brings no shame to the name of Christ or His church.

When a member is habitually sinning in some observable way, the other members have an obligation to correct this behavior and bring the erring one back into the light of truth. (Some examples of such behavior include but are not limited to cohabitation, aberrant sexual practices, gossip, illicit drug use, and flagrant lack of integrity.) Our pattern for confronting and changing behavior is rooted in Matt. 18:15-20:

- a. A church member who is aware of habitual sinning with an unrepentant spirit by another member is to meet privately with the erring member. Ideally, this member should be one who has great love for the erring member and is most familiar with the details of the sin. The motivation for this meeting is love for the erring member and high hopes for repentance. If the erring member is repentant and will forsake the sin, the matter is closed.
- b. If the erring member is unrepentant, the original two members will meet again with one or two others who will act as witnesses and perhaps join in urging the erring member to repent.
- c. If the erring member continues in the sin and unrepentance, other meetings of various sizes may occur, but the final meeting will be public where the erring member will either publicly repent or be removed from the membership (1 Cor. 5:11; 2 Thess. 3:6, 14). In the event of removal from

membership, the church will continue to pray for and love the now former member in hope that there will later be repentance and restoration (2 Cor. 2:5-8).

- d. A member who is under church discipline will not be granted a letter of transfer to another church.

C. CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

The Congregation shall gather in bi-monthly business sessions, on the fourth Sunday evening of odd numbered months. Any deviation from this schedule will be announced at least fourteen days prior to the actual meeting date. The meeting will be chaired by the pastor or another deacon and will be moderated according to *Robert's Rules of Order*, latest edition. The deacons can call for other business sessions as needed, provided that such meetings are announced at least fourteen days prior to the actual meeting date.

D. REGARDING THE PASTOR

1. Selection:

A majority of the deacons, chosen by them, shall be included in the Search Committee. This deacon majority shall solicit congregational input as to what other church members might be included on the committee. The non-deacon church members shall then be affirmed by a two-thirds vote of the congregation. Once the committee is formed, it shall remain fixed regardless of terms of any other office held. Committee members who leave the Committee due to death, resignation, or some other contingency may be replaced by a two-thirds vote of the church.

The Search Committee shall prayerfully assess the needs and future of the church, then use whatever means at their disposal to learn of qualified candidates. After the Committee has settled on a candidate, he shall visit the congregation in view of a call. The meeting to elect a pastor shall be a called meeting for that purpose only. Voting shall be by secret ballot with three-fourths voting in the affirmative to extend a call. Once the call is extended and accepted, the candidate immediately assumes the office of pastor regardless of when he might physically move to the area. In the event that his immediate assumption of the office conflicts with a similar one held elsewhere, he and the Search Committee shall negotiate a date when he shall assume the office. The Search Committee shall be disbanded immediately upon the office of pastor being filled.

2. Termination:

The pastor's term of service shall expire and the office declared vacant under the following circumstances:

- a. death or resignation
- b. disgraceful misbehavior
- c. ineffectiveness

3. The process for declaring the office of pastor vacant is as follows:

- a. The deacons shall meet with the pastor at least once to assess the situation.
- b. The deacons will then vote on the question of declaring the office of pastor vacant. The vote for declaration must be a three-fourths majority.
- c. The deacons shall announce a called business meeting not less than two weeks from the initial announcement. This meeting will consider no business other than declaring the office of pastor vacant. The meeting will culminate with the congregation voting on the question. The vote for declaration must be a three-fourths majority.

E. REGARDING DEACONS

1. Initial Selection:

Upon ratification of this Constitution and Bylaws, all active deacons shall continue in the office. They shall agree among themselves regarding a rotation schedule which will result in some of them serving only one or two years from the time of ratification.

2. Subsequent Selection:

The deacons shall solicit congregational input as to who may be considered for the office. They shall then vet the candidates and arrive at a list of individuals to further consider. The continued vetting process shall include at least one interview between the deacons and the individual candidate, the purpose of which is to assess the candidate's fitness and willingness to serve. The final list of candidates shall be presented to the church in business session for affirmation. Voting shall be by secret ballot with a three-fourths majority required for affirmation. Once affirmed, an ordination service will be scheduled for any who have not been ordained previously.

3. Number:

The number of deacons shall not be less than three. Any amount greater than three shall be determined by congregational affirmation. The deacons shall elect a chairman annually, along with other officers as they see fit.

4. Termination:

The deacon's term of service shall expire after three years or upon his death, resignation, removal from office. The process for removal from office is the same as the removal of pastor.

F. REGARDING THE CLERK AND TREASURER

1. Selection:

The deacons shall present the name of a prospective treasurer or clerk to the congregation for affirmation at any business session. The vote to affirm must be two-thirds.

Termination: The process for removal from office is as follows:

- a. The deacons shall meet with the officer at least once to assess the situation.
- b. The deacons will vote on the question of removal from office. The vote for removal must be a three-fourths majority.
- c. Upon the deacons voting for removal, they shall present such as a motion in a business meeting. The congregation's vote to remove from office must be a simple majority.

G. REGARDING THE MINISTRY COORDINATION COMMITTEE

1. Selection

The Ministry Coordination Committee shall consist of the pastor, deacon chairman, and at least three other church members nominated by the deacons and elected annually by the church in business session. Additional nominations may be made from the floor of said business meeting.

2. Responsibilities

The first Committee elected following ratification of this constitution shall write and publish a document detailing the various ministry teams to serve the congregation. Details such as number of

members, length of terms, duties and expectations may be part of said document. After being approved (and perhaps amended) by the congregation in business session, this document will serve as an ongoing guide for the future. The document may be updated by recommendation of the Ministry Coordination Committee and vote of the congregation.

They shall, as needed, make recommendations to the church for establishing or dissolving ministry teams according to the present needs and abilities of the congregation.

They shall, at least annually, nominate persons to serve on existing ministry teams for election by the church.

They shall, in consultation with the pastor, determine the present needs of the congregation regarding the calling of other pastoral staff. They shall not, however, be authorized to initiate or terminate employment of any staff member.

H. REGARDING THE FINANCIAL LEADERSHIP COMMITTEE

1. Selection

The Financial Leadership Committee shall consist of the pastor, deacon chairman, and at least three other church members nominated by the deacons and elected annually by the church in business session. Additional nominations may be made from the floor of said business meeting.

2. Responsibilities

The first Committee elected following ratification of this constitution shall write and publish a document detailing procedures for budget formation and monitoring spending. Details such as an annual schedule or reimbursement request procedures may be part of said document. After being approved (and perhaps amended) by the congregation in business session, this document will serve as an ongoing guide for the future. The document may be updated by recommendation of the Financial Leadership Committee and vote of the congregation.

They shall present to the church a proposed unified budget as close as possible to the beginning of the fiscal year.

They shall assist the treasurer to see that receipts and disbursements are recorded and accounted for responsibly and transparently. They shall also monitor expenditures in light of budgetary constraints for the purpose of formulating future budgets.

They shall seek input from ministry leaders as to financial needs and budget requests.

They shall admonish ministry leaders and officers are to adhere to budgetary limitations in terms of budgeted amounts as well as actual funds on hand.

I. AMENDMENTS

These Bylaws may be amended by the congregation provided that said amendment is printed and distributed to the membership of Cardinal Baptist Church prior to any action. The amendment shall be read and discussed at no fewer than two business meetings before the vote to amend. The vote to amend must be two-thirds.