

# CONSTITUTION & BY-LAWS

Established prayerfully and by God's grace  
Submitted by: Dr. Casey W. Smith, Founding Elder



**COVENANT**  
REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH

March 24, 2014

“For the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Christ; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-13)

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# **PREFACE: FORMAL AFFIRMATION**

After years of prayer, study and work in the Gospel ministry, today on March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2014, with the consent of the Holy Spirit and confirmation of the Word of God, I formally adopt this newly established Constitution and By-Laws of Covenant Reformed Baptist Church of Shelby, North Carolina with all supporting documents cited herein.

## **“REFORMED” BAPTIST DISTINCTIVES:**

This Constitution and By-Laws reflect the distinctives of what it means to be not only “Baptist,” but “Reformed” as distinctively unique from Independent, Free-Will, and other denominational congregations or associations. We echo the formal principle of the Protestant Reformation which was the belief that the Scriptures alone are the final authority for faith and practice.

The Bible tells us what we are to believe about God and what He requires of us. It is God's complete and final revelation to us; therefore, we must not add to it or subtract from it. We believe that the Bible is sufficient to “thoroughly equip” us for every good work (2 Timothy 3:17).

As the Bible is the revelation given to us through the apostles and the prophets with Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, the church's foundation is complete. Therefore, special revelation in the form of visions, dreams, tongues, or prophecies have ceased.

Because we live in a day of doctrinal vagueness and confusion, we must be clear about what we believe the Bible teaches. Therefore, we are a confessional church, in that we have a written Confession of Faith that clearly states what we believe the Scriptures teach. In doing so; we fully subscribe to the historic London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689.

We do not hold our Confession as equal to or above Scriptures, but as an accurate expression of the system of doctrine taught in Scriptures. As such, it is a great help in our faith assisting in controversy, edification and instruction. We believe that God is absolutely sovereign over all things (Daniel 4:35).

We believe that He is also sovereign in the salvation of men. The Bible teaches that man, because of sin, stands guilty and condemned before God's Law; he has a corrupt heart and is alienated from God; and, worst of all, he can do nothing to save himself from God's wrath or to reconcile him with God.

The Good News of the Gospel is that God alone has undertaken to do all that is necessary to deliver man from his awful condition. The Triune God plans, accomplishes and applies redemption. God the Father unconditionally elects, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, redeems by His atoning death, and the Holy Spirit effectually calls and enables sinners to come to Christ. Salvation, from beginning to end, is of the Lord (Jonah 2:9); therefore God receives all of the glory. Man receives none.

By 'Reformed' we mean that we trace our theological roots back to the 16th Century Protestant Reformation. It was during this powerful movement of God that men and women turned from the traditions and commandments of men and began to look once again to the Holy Scriptures as their only certain and infallible rule of faith and practice. As they looked to the Scriptures alone they began to rediscover the great doctrines of the Bible, which have been summarized by these 5 solas:

1. **Sola Scriptura** (Scripture Alone)
2. **Sola Gratia** (By Grace Alone)
3. **Sola Fide** (By Faith Alone)
4. **Sola Christus** (Christ Alone)
5. **Soli Deo Gloria** (To God Alone be Glory)

By 'Baptist' we mean that we believe that only confessing believers should be baptized and become members of the church.

May the Lord be honored by the manner in which the affairs of this church are conducted as carried out in agreement with said Constitution and By-Laws under the ultimate guide of God's Holy Word. In keeping with the conduct and calling of God, I submit all of my actions and those whom the Lord shall, by His providential hand, send to join in bearing their cross for His glory, as part of the membership of Covenant Reformed Baptist Church of Shelby, North Carolina. To our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ be all glory, power, wisdom, honor, and strength, Amen.

Casey W. Smith  
Founding Elder/Pastor-Teacher

March 2, 2014  
Date

# **ARTICLE I: NAME, LOCATION, AND AFFILIATION**

The name of this church shall be **COVENANT REFORMED BAPTIST CHURCH (CRBC)**. The church, initially operating as a home-church, is located at 2617 Flagstone Court, Shelby NC 28152 with a mailing address of P.O. Box 2476, Shelby NC 28150.

While autonomous and unaffiliated with any convention; pending a future consideration of leadership with congregational approval; **CRBC** will explore affiliation with the Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America ([www.arbca.com](http://www.arbca.com)).

## **ARTICLE II: PURPOSE**

The purpose of **CRBC** is as stated in the New Testament Scriptures. Being “a people for God’s own possession” (I Pet 2:9), the church exists for God’s pleasure. It is to bring glory and honor to His name and the name of His Son, Jesus Christ (Rom 12:1-2, Col 1:15-23). Our congregation is established with the desire to equip the saints for the ministry and edify the body of Christ (Eph 4:12). This involves careful preaching and teaching of God’s Word (II Tim 3:16-17) and being diligent to preserve the unity of the Spirit and the bond of peace (Eph 4:3). In so doing, the church fulfills the Great Commission given by Jesus Christ (Matt 28:18-20).

### **Proclamation:**

Jesus commissioned the church to be the salt of the earth and light of the world (Matt 5:13-16). This involves holy living and zealous proclamation of the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. The church is composed of people whom the Lord has saved by His grace through faith (Eph 2:8-9) who now proclaim His Excellencies in everything they say and do (I Peter 2:9-10).

### **Discipleship:**

The church serves to equip the saints for the work of service (Ephesians 4:12). This is done through systematic bible study and exhortation. The truths of God’s Word have been entrusted to faithful men who are to train others also (II Timothy 2:2). Discipleship results in Christians living in unity, growing in holiness, growing up in all things into Him who is the head, even Christ (Eph 4:13-16).

### **Ministry:**

The church is designed to be the hands and feet of Christ here on the earth, for “we are God’s workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works” (Ephesians 2:10). Ministry and service is always done with an understanding that our work is done unto the Lord (Romans 12:11, Matthew 25:31-46). He is the one that we serve when we serve other Christians and those who are destitute and in need. Of special concern are widows and orphans (James 1:27).

Ministry involves caring for those within the church and reaching out to those outside with the gospel, working in accordance with that message with practical helps, as God equips us.

# **ARTICLE III: VALUES AND CONFESSION OF FAITH**

## **SECTION 1: VALUES**

Because we believe that the Holy Bible is the Inspired, Infallible, and Inerrant Word of God, it alone is and will be the basis and authority of answering any and all questions regarding the purpose, structure, and function of the church. The following beliefs are non-negotiable and are the foundation on which this constitution and these by-laws are based. We believe in the verbal and plenary inspiration of the Scriptures.

The Scriptures are the inspired Word of God and they are infallible and inerrant in all matters. The Bible was written by holy men of God, as they were moved by the Holy Spirit in such a way that their writings were supernaturally and verbally inspired and free from error (2 Tim. 3:16; 1 Pet. 1:20-21). We believe the Bible, the collection of sixty six books from Genesis to Revelation, constitutes the complete and only authoritative revelation of God to man (1 Cor. 14:37; 2 Pet. 3:15-16); that it does not only contain and convey the Word of God but is the very Word of God (John 17:17); and that anyone who adds to or takes away from this completed revelation is cursed of God (Rev.22:18-19). God has preserved His Word down through the ages (Psa. 12:6-7, 119:140; Matt.5:18, 24:35; I Pet.1:23) in the Hebrew and Greek manuscripts which underlie the King James Version (the Masoretic text of the Old Testament and the Textus Receptus of the New Testament). The King James Version of the Bible shall be the official and only English translation of the Holy Scriptures used by this church and all of its ministries.

We believe that the Bible is the absolute, authoritative standard of faith and practice, to be studied, proclaimed, obeyed, and defended (Deut. 6:69; Josh. 1:8; Psa. 19:7-11; John 17:17; Jude 34); that it is to be understood literally, historically, and grammatically (Matt. 12:39-41; II Pet. 1:16) unless the context clearly indicates otherwise (John 6:35,51-58; 10:7; 15:1); and that every portion is without exception profitable for doctrine and Christian growth (II Tim. 3:16). Our values are born and lived out in light of the Word of God, our first and final source of all faith and practice.

### **1. WE BELIEVE IN A HIGH VIEW OF GOD**

- Isaiah 42:8, 46:9-10; Ps 115:3, Rev 4:11
- The Lord God is God over all creation, the object of our worship, the focus of our service, the author and perfecter of our faith. Everything we do will be judged by and is intended to magnify the glory of Almighty God.

### **2. WE BELIEVE IN A HIGH VIEW OF SCRIPTURE**

- Hebrews 4:12-13, II Tim 3:16-17, II Pet 1:19-21
- The Holy Scriptures contain the authoritative, sufficient, infallible, inerrant revelations of God to man. They are the final authority over our ministries, representing the will and instructions of God. They are the fullness of the message of hope that unites and defines our ministry.

### **3. WE BELIEVE IN THE TEACHING OF SOUND DOCTRINE**

- Titus 2:1, II Tim 4:3-4
- Since God's revelation to man has been given in the form of literary text, we have an obligation to understand and teach His word according to sound doctrine. We teach it out of obedience to our Lord rather than to please man (Gal 1:10, I Thes 2:4).

#### **4. WE BELIEVE IN PERSONAL HOLINESS**

- Eph 5:3-12, Rom 12:1, I Pet 1:15-16, II Cor 7:1, Matt 18:15-20
- Having been laid hold of by Christ in salvation, Christians are called to a life of holiness as to be a reflection of the character of Christ in the world. We have become new creations of God created unto good works which God has prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. Now, as fellow brothers and sisters in Christ, we are to stir one another up to follow Christ in holiness. We are accountable to God and one another for how we live, for we have been bought and are not our own.

#### **5. WE BELIEVE IN SPIRITUAL AUTHORITY**

- Col 1:18, I Pet 5:1-4, Heb 13:17, I Tim 5:17
- God has clearly defined the structure of authority for the church. Christ is the head of the church and He mediates His rule through the shepherding of godly elders (pastors). The elders (pastors), having a high view of God and scripture, being devoted to the preaching, teaching and practicing of sound doctrine, and being examples of personal holiness before the congregation, are responsible to lead the church. The congregation is accountable to the elders (pastors) and the elders are accountable to God. Therefore, decision making authority is vested in the elders (pastors), who shepherd the church
- In the formation of this congregation, with a single elder, the goal will be to add, as immediately as the Lord shall provide additional elders for the purpose of elder-rule.
- In no way will Covenant Reformed Baptist Church be a pastor-led congregation but will, by God's grace operate under a plurality of elders with further support from an elected deacon board to follow. A Biblical model is not one that mimics the corporate world or CEO mentality that has pervaded so many congregations in our day and we shall labour diligently in prayer seeking God's blessing for establishing and maintaining an elder board of godly men in whom the call to preach and teach the gospel shall be manifest, by God's grace.

#### **6. WE BELIEVE IN GODLY RELATIONSHIPS**

- John 13:34-35, I Thes 4:9, Eph 5:22-6:1
- The greatest evidence of Christ in the life of any Christian is found in love for other believers. As Christians, we must pursue and maintain godly relationships, loving and encouraging one another so that Christ will be evident among us. This is seen in Godly families as well.

#### **7. WE BELIEVE IN THE NECESSITY AND VALUE OF PRAYER**

- I Thes 5:17, Eph 6:18, Matthew 21:13
- The church is by definition a "house of prayer." Prayer is a large part of every Christian's life. Private and Public prayer must not be neglected.

#### **8. WE BELIEVE IN PRAISING GOD**

- Ps 118:1, 150:2-6, I Pet 1:3-4
- Throughout God's Word we see the resounding refrain: PRAISE THE LORD! We, as God's people, join the chorus, by the Holy Spirit's work of regeneration in our hearts; we exalt the name of Jesus Christ all to God's glory! Praise involves believers focusing our minds' attention and hearts' affection on the worth of who God is and what He does.

## **9. WE BELIEVE IN THE CALL TO SERVE OTHERS**

- Matt 20:28, I Pet 4:10, Phil 2:3-4
- We are called to follow Christ's example in serving others out of love! This service takes on many different forms and involves us putting others before ourselves in our resources of money, talents, and time.

## **10. WE BELIEVE WE MUST MAINTAIN A MISSIONS FOCUS**

- Matthew 28:18-20, Rom 10:14-15
- We are called to preach the gospel to all nations, all peoples! We will always maintain a focus that remembers the Lord's desire and plan to save people of all nations!

## **SECTION 2: CONFESSION OF FAITH** (under separate cover)

- Our confession is based upon the 2nd London Baptist Confession of Faith written in 1689. As the 2nd London Baptist Confession is grounded in the Westminster Confession, both documents have been studied side by side and therefore; both have been utilized, in part, to succinctly express the "faith once delivered unto the saints."
- Changes have also been made to reflect the particular beliefs of our congregation and for the purpose of transparent and honest scholarship; explanatory notes have been made for those changes throughout as footnotes for reference.
- Affirmations are made of several supporting documents with added appendices are also included.
- The longer confession defines the doctrinal position of **CRBC** being accepted and fully affirmed as the official position of the church. The shorter confession defines the essentials of the Christian faith, the affirmation of which is therefore necessary for membership and services within **CRBC**.

# **ARTICLE IV: CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

## **SECTION 1: THE CHURCH DEFINED**

The word church (ekklesia) means "called out ones" and can refer to the entire spiritual body of Christ or a local congregation of that body. In the New Testament it most often refers to an established local congregation of believers. Scripture teaches that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united body called the Church, the family of God, of which Jesus Christ is the head (Col 1:18, Eph 1:22). Further, the English word "church" derives its meaning from the Greek word kuriakos which means "belonging to the Lord." The Church is made up of individual local congregations of believers that assemble together for the cause of fellowship and growing in Christ. God has given each local congregation all that it needs to individually and corporately mature and carry out the commands and commissions of our Lord (Col 4:15). The church exists for the spiritual purpose set forth in Chapter 23 of The Confession of Faith.

## **SECTION 2: MEMBERSHIP DEFINED**

Members of this church shall be comprised of those who have:

1. Repented of Sin and Believe in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior (Matt 10:32, Rom 10:9).
2. Requested to be a member of this church.
3. Made a commitment to abide by the membership covenant of this church.
4. Publicly affirmed the Covenant Reformed Baptist Church Shorter Confession of Faith
5. Been baptized (Matt 28:19, Acts 2:38, 8:12, 19:5).
6. Been formally received as members of the church being confirmed by the elder(s)

## **SECTION 3: PURPOSE OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

Church membership is important in that it facilitates:

1. The defining of who belongs to our local congregation (Phil 2:2).
2. The knowing of who should participate in the privileges and responsibilities of the church (I Tim 5:16, James 5:14).
3. The providing of adequate care, nurture, and protection for every individual that belongs to this church (Acts 6:1).
4. The exercising of authority and oversight in discipline and restoration of those members not maintaining a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct (I Cor 5:1-5).

## **SECTION 4: PROCEDURES FOR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

### **A. APPLICATION FOR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

- Any person may request membership with this church by publicly or privately presenting himself or herself to an elder(s) for membership.

### **B. PROCESS FOR CONSIDERATION OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

- The person shall meet with an elder or an elder-appointed member to discuss if he or she has truly trusted Christ as Savior and Lord.
- The person will be required to sign the membership covenant
- Pending conversion, baptism, signing of the membership covenant, and elder(s) approval, the new member will be publicly presented to the congregation as a fellow member of **CRBC**.

## **SECTION 5: MEMBERSHIP COVENANT**

The Church is made up of individual local congregations of believers that assemble together for the cause of fellowship and growing in Christ. As a local congregation of Christians, **CRBC** seeks for God's grace in providing for the mutual edification of believers. Its elder(s) do(es) hereby affirm that he/they will teach sound doctrine (in accordance with the CRBC Confession of Faith) leading to a healthy and growing body of believers and its deacon(s) do hereby affirm that he/they will diligently serve the body in practical matters. God has given each local congregation all that it needs to individually and corporately mature and carry out the commands and commissions of our Lord Jesus Christ (Colossians 4:15). **CRBC** will equip the saints for ministry, edifying the body of Christ.

As a member of **CRBC**, I join them in affirming the following:

- I have repented of my sin and believe in Jesus Christ as Lord & Savior.
- I have been baptized.
- I affirm the **CRBC** Shorter Confession of Faith.
- I desire to be a member of **CRBC**.

I affirm and accept the following responsibilities and will fulfill them by the Lord's grace:

- Seek to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.
- Support the church with my regular attendance in worship.
- Seek to use my spiritual gift in our church to the glory of God.
- Support the church financially.
- Be accountable to the church in doctrine and conduct.
- Submit to the loving rule, oversight, and authority of the elders regarding reproof, instruction, correction, and loving discipline.

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Member)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Printed Name of Member)

\_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of affirming CRBC Elder)

\_\_\_\_\_  
(Printed Name of affirming Elder)

\_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_-\_\_\_\_\_  
(Date)

## **SECTION 6: DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS**

1. It shall be the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of the erring member's heresy or misconduct to warn and to correct such erring member in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration.
2. If said erring member does not heed this warning, then the warning member shall again go to the erring member accompanied by one or two witnesses to warn and correct such erring member, seeking his or her repentance and restoration.
3. If said erring member still refused to heed this additional warning, then, it shall be brought to the attention of the elders.
4. The elder(s), upon careful and prayerful investigation, shall tell it to the church.
5. If said erring member refused to heed the warning of the elders and the church, he or she shall be publicly dismissed from the church.

6. There shall be no appeal to any court from that decision.
7. It is understood that this process will continue to conclusion even if the erring member leaves the church or otherwise seeks to withdraw from membership to avoid the discipline process.
8. If said member, after dismissal, heeds the warning, demonstrates repentance, and requests restoration of membership, he or she shall be publicly restored to membership.

## **SECTION 7: REMOVAL FROM MEMBERSHIP**

Members may be removed from the church membership for any of the following reasons:

1. Death.
2. Transfer of membership, providing that disciplinary action is not in process for an offense under Article IV, Section 6 of this Constitution and By-laws.
3. Inactive for 6 months.
4. Disciplinary action.
5. Member request, providing that disciplinary action is not in process for an offense under Article IV, Section 6 of the constitution and by-laws.

## **SECTION 8: RESTORATION OF MEMBERSHIP**

If a member, after dismissal, heeds the warning, demonstrates repentance, and requests reinstatement, he or she shall be publicly restored to membership. Any such request shall be made to the elder body (Galatians 6:1).

## **SECTION 9: MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS**

### **A. TYPES OF MEETINGS**

1. A regular annual meeting shall be held to affirm the church's annual budget and hear reports to the congregation from the elder body regarding the church.
2. A quarterly meeting will be held to inform the church about recent decisions and future direction.
3. Special meetings may be called by the pastor-teacher or the elder body to report to the church of pending decisions or decision made by the elder body.

### **B. NOTICE OF MEETINGS**

Any special-called meetings shall be publicly announced and in printed form at least two (2) weeks prior to the meeting unless extreme urgency renders such notice impractical.

## **SECTION 10: ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH**

Scripture teaches that there are two ordinances that the church is to observe till Jesus' return:

1. Baptism (see Chapter 26 of The Confession of Faith)
2. Lord's Supper (see Chapter 27 of The Confession of Faith)

# **ARTICLE V: CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

## **SECTION 1: PURPOSE OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

Church government is an extremely practical and theologically significant issue. Biblical structure and function allows the peaceful and orderly working out of the ministry of the church. The Church is the family of God and its head is Jesus Christ. Just as God has given us the structure and the function of each person in a family, He has done so in regard to His church (Eph 5:23). God's Word reveals the proper structure of the church and the function of each of its parts. The purpose of such structure and instruction is to ensure spiritual maturity both individually and corporately as a New Testament Church (Eph 4:11-13).

## **SECTION 2: STRUCTURE OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT**

### **A: JESUS CHRIST IS THE HEAD**

Scripture teaches that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. Jesus Christ has revealed His will for us, as the Church, through His Word, the Bible (Eph 5:23).

### **B: ELDERS**

Jesus Christ as Head of the Church mediates His rule over the Church by gifting Elders (Pastors) to shepherd, oversee, and lead the church. These Elders are directly responsible to Jesus Christ for the governing of the church according to His Word (Acts 20:28-30, I Thes 5:12-14, I Pet 5:1-2).

### **C: DEACONS**

Deacons are recommended by the church and approved by the Elders to assist the Elders in the practical ministry of service to the church (Acts 6:1-6).

## **SECTION 3: COUNCILS**

To promote efficient handling of church matters, the Elder body may appoint various councils from within its membership at large. These councils shall perform tasks solely in accordance with the duties and with the powers specifically delegated by the elder body. The general functions of any council are:

1. To bring considered recommendations to the body of Elders concerning church matters.
2. To provide a wider base of counsel to the Elders regarding church matters.
3. To assist in leading the rest of the congregation in ministry.
4. All Elders serve as ex-officio members of all councils and may sit as such at their discretion. All councils shall exist for the period specified by the Elder body.
5. Councils may include the following: Finance, Ministry/Education, Evangelism and Missions.

## **SECTION 4: TRUSTEES**

The Elder body for the purpose of signing legal documents involving the sale, purchase, or rental of property, or other legal document where the signatures of Trustees are required, shall appoint Trustees which may be made up of the Elders themselves. They shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer property without the specific authorization of the elder body. Trustees shall serve for a period specified by the body of Elders.

## **SECTION 5: ORDINATION & LICENSING**

### **A: ORDINATION**

Ordination refers to the recognition by the elders and the church of a man's desire and qualifications for ministry as a Pastor or a Deacon (Acts 6:6, 13:2-4, 20:28). Ordination shall be conferred for life, so long as the man manifests the qualification of the office to which he was ordained and continues to serve in such capacity.

### **B: LICENSING**

A man shall be licensed by CRBC to the Gospel ministry upon the approval of the Elder body. This shall provide legality for a man to perform weddings and may offer greater access to those in prison ministry settings as well as hospital visitation and ministry opportunities.

## **SECTION 6: CHURCH RECORDS AND BOOKS**

The church shall maintain current, adequate, and correct accounts, books, and records of its business and property. An accurate account of all receipts and disbursements shall be maintained by an administrator that is appointed by the Elder body. The fiscal year of CRBC shall begin on June 1st and end on May 31st of each year.

## **SECTION 7: FINANCE**

CRBC shall operate under a budget as defined by the Elder body in order to carry out the call for missions (local and international), caring for members, widows.

### **Tithing**

Many Bible scholars agree tithing was an Old Testament practice discontinued by the early churches, as was offering animal sacrifices. In fact, the word 'tithing' is only mentioned in the New Testament to describe giving under Old Testament law. Paul's instruction to New Testament believers is that **“every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver”** (2 Corinthians 9:7). If you want to give CRBC 10% of your income, then it must be your decision, as you are led – never “grudgingly or of necessity.” Paul further testifies **“But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster”** (Galatians 3:25). Church leaders using scare tactics and intimidation based on Old Testament law to illicitly obtain tithes and offerings are in serious Biblical error...and if wrong in this area, they could be wrong in other areas, too. When you give financially to CRBC, give **“according as he (God) purposeth”** in you heart brethren.

Allocation of Finances:

Until amended by a majority vote of the Elder board; the allocation of **CRBC** finances shall be as follows:

**75%:** Missions (local & international)

**25%:** Ministry operations

The 25% operational allocation will be used to cover expenses that may include rent, study materials, website maintenance, and normal operations. From the operational account; a portion may be designated to save for the future purchase of land and property, if the Lord so ordains. The allocation may be amended by a majority vote of the Elder body after presenting the financial needs to the members. By default, the floor allocation for missions shall never be less than 50% which said allocation may never be amended.

**CRBC** shall look to ministries that, by God's grace, have demonstrated a commitment to putting the Word of God into the hands of men, women, boys and girls across the world. One such example is the Gideons International and may serve as a guide to **CRBC's** future giving. Heartcry Missionary Society is another great example of faithfulness to the Word of God in both the U.S. and internationally. Recommendations may be made to the Elder board by members. A majority vote of the Elder board shall determine the planned giving for any ministry for a designated period of time and shall be reviewed annually and reported to the members with quarterly updates at each quarterly business meeting.

## **Debt**

Statistics show that most pastors leading churches into debt do not remain until the debt is repaid. The Bible also states that a borrower is "**slave to the lender**" (Proverbs 22:7) and having a financial plan before starting a project is "**wise**" (Luke 14:28). Committing church or ministry funds long-term is serious and should be Spirit-led, not ego-driven, particularly when it comes to real state. Across the US, hundreds of millions of dollars in church buildings and parking lots sit idle five to six days each week. That money could have been spent more wisely reaching people for Christ, which is the mandated of **CRBC**.

With trust in Almighty God and having the assurance that he shall meet all of the needs of **CRBC** "**according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus,**" (Philippians 4:19) the permanent position of our church regarding debt is very simple.

**CRBC** shall never borrow money from any secular organization, ministry, or association for the purpose of obtaining property whether tangible or intellectual. No Elder, Deacon, or member is now or ever shall be authorized to sign, on behalf of **CRBC**, any note or debt-obligation for any purpose. This includes the leverage of existing property be it tangible or intellectual. Therefore, loans may not be extended on behalf of **CRBC** as well. Any financial decisions made by the Elder body may be in the form of "giving" only.

This position shall not be amendable as long as **CRBC** exists and shall serve as a testimony and biblical example of financial stewardship as taught by the Word of God for as long as God is pleased to do so in/through our church family.

## **SECTION 8: DISSOLUTION OF THE CHURCH**

The elder body shall allow the church membership to decide by ballot vote for dissolution. A 75% majority vote of all eligible members present is required for dissolution of the church.

Upon the dissolution of the church, the elder body shall cause all assets of the church to be distributed to another church or ministry of like faith and kindred spirit. The elder body shall allow the church membership to approve their decision on the distribution of the assets of the church. Approval shall require a 75% majority vote of all eligible members present at a meeting called for that purpose.

## **SECTION 8: AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS**

The constitution and by-laws adopted by CRBC on March 24, 2014, shall supersede all prior resolutions, precedents, and actions of the church not in harmony with its provisions.

The constitution and by-laws may be amended or changed by the elder body. Changes to Article III, Values and Confession of Faith will require a unanimous vote of the elder body. The elder body shall seek the formal affirmation of the congregation when changes or amendments to the constitution and by-laws are required (See ARTICLE VI, Section 9.B.1.)

## **ARTICLE VI: ELDERS**

The New Testament Scripture is clear about those who have the responsibility of rule, oversight, and care of the church. These men are called Elders, Overseers, and Bishops. All three different titles are used to refer to the same spiritual office of leadership in the church and are synonymous (I Tim 3:1-7). CRBC shall not recognize unbiblical titles like many used today such as “Senior Pastor,” “Minister of Music,” “Reverend”, etc. We know that Christ is the head of the church and that He mediates His rule through the shepherding of Elders (pastors) (Acts 20:17-18, 28-31, I Pet 5:1-4).

### **SECTION 1: RESPONSIBILITY OF ELDERS**

#### **A: TO SPIRITUALLY SHEPHERD THE CHURCH**

1. To preach and teach God’s Word (Acts 6:2-4, I Tim 5:17, II Tim 4:2).
2. To pray (Acts 6:4).
3. To maintain doctrinal purity in the church (Gal 1:6-9, I Tim 1:3-7, Jude 3-4).
4. To reprove, rebuke, and exhort the church with great patience (II Tim 4:2, Titus 1:9-11).
5. To be examples in the church (I Pet 5:3).

#### **B: TO GOVERN AND OVERSEE THE AFFAIRS OF THE CHURCH**

1. To establish policies and practices for the church that are consistent with scripture and the purpose of the church (I Tim 3:4-5).
2. To direct and oversee all of the financial resources and expenditures of the church.
3. To direct and oversee the maintaining of adequate and correct accounts, books, and records of the business of the church.
4. To appoint officers and councils as needed to carry out the business of the church in an orderly and acceptable manner. Any officer or council appointed by the Elders is directly responsible to the Elders and shall serve as long as the elders see the need (Acts 6:3).
5. To select a Pastor-Teacher in accordance with the selection process established in these By-laws.
6. To appoint Elders for the church in accordance with the selection process established in these by-laws (Titus 1:5).
7. To appoint Deacons for the church in accordance with the selection process established in

these by-laws (Acts 6:2-6).

8. To maintain open communication with the church body.

## **SECTION 2: QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS**

### **A: GIFTED BY GOD**

An Elder (Pastor) must be a man who has been gifted by God to serve in the Gospel ministry. The following are evidences of such gifting:

1. Confirmation of the gifting to the ministry by other believers (II Tim 2:1-2, 3 John 1:12).
2. Possession of the abilities necessary to serve (giftedness).
3. A deep desire to serve (I Tim 3:1).
4. A lifestyle characterized by moral integrity (Titus 1:6-9, I Pet 5:1-3).

### **B: ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP & CONFESSIONAL AGREEMENT**

An Elder must affirm and adhere to the membership covenant of this church (Heb 10:25). Additionally, he must affirm with little or no exceptions the Covenant Reformed Baptist Church Confession of Faith.

### **C: BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS**

An Elder must possess the qualifications described in 1 Tim 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. He shall be:

1. Blameless as a steward of God; above reproach.
2. A "one woman man." (See commentary)
3. Temperate, sober, vigilant.
4. Sober-minded, prudent.
5. Given to hospitality.
6. Apt to teach; able to teach; he can exhort believers and refute false teaching.
7. Not given to wine.
8. Not violent; not pugnacious.
9. Patient, moderate, forbearing, gentle.
10. Not a brawler, not contentious; not soon angry or quick-tempered.
11. Not covetous; not a lover of money; not greedy of base gain.
12. Rules his own household well. His children are faithful; not accused of rebellion to God.
13. Not a novice; not a new convert.
14. Has a good report or reputation with outsiders.
15. Not self-willed.
16. Loves what is good.
17. Just, fair.
18. Holy, devout.
19. Self-controlled

Can a divorced man be biblically qualified to serve the church as a Pastor, Elder or Deacon?

What does the Bible teach? If the Bible does support the traditional prohibition to these leadership positions, we should not compromise just because divorce has become so prevalent. We should do exactly what the Bible says. The crux of the issue is one small phrase that appears twice in 1

Timothy 3 (verse 2 concerning overseers and in verse 12 concerning deacons) and again in Titus 1:6 as a requirement for Elders. Elders and Deacons were both required to be “the husband of one wife.” That is the sum total of the biblical evidence. Those who maintain that divorced men are prevented from serving as Pastors, Elders or Deacons must demonstrate that this phrase applies to divorce. Those who hold that this passage permits service from divorced men must demonstrate that the phrase does not speak to divorce.

The issue boils down to this question. Does the requirement that Elders and deacons be the **“husband of one wife”** preclude those who have been divorced from serving? If we can determine what that phrase means, we can answer the question pretty easily. The question is what “husband of one wife” means.

A word of warning is appropriate here. There are two sins that we must avoid. In Revelation chapter 2, the Lord Jesus rebuked the Pergamum and Thyatira churches for tolerating evil and false doctrine. Tolerating what God calls sin cannot be tolerated so, if this phrase is properly interpreted as “never divorced” then we should not go beyond what the Word of God allows. But there is another danger to be avoided. In 1 Corinthians 4:6, Paul warned the people not to **“go above that which is written.”** Jesus rebuked the religious leaders and Paul warned the Galatians about those who added human rules to God’s Word. If “husband of one wife” does not refer to divorce, then those who have issued a blanket prohibition of service by divorced men have imposed human rules on God’s Word and that is no small matter. Look at Revelation 22:18-19 where John gives this warning about the prophecies he has written:

**“For I testify unto every man that heareth the words of the prophecy of this book, If any man shall add unto these things, God shall add unto him the plagues that are written in this book: And if any man shall take away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part out of the book of life, and out of the holy city, and from the things which are written in this book”**

Severe penalties await to those who either add or take away from the Word of God. Perhaps that warning is specific to the Revelation, but the principle is instructive for us. It would be deeply damaging to the Body of Christ to allow divorced men to serve in leadership positions if the Scriptures prohibit it. But it would be just as serious a sin to prevent men from serving without biblical warrant. It is not acceptable to either take away from the teachings of scripture or to add to them.

Anyone who engages in an argument wants to place the burden of truth on the other side; it grants a huge advantage if one’s opponents bear that burden. But I do believe that it is incumbent on those who would use **“husband of one wife”** as a blanket prohibition against divorced men serving as pastors or deacons to prove their point. If the passage cannot clearly be demonstrated to be a prohibition on service by the divorced, then it should not be used in that way. Unless there is a clear prohibition in God’s Word, we should not make one. Ultimately, though, the crux is the meaning of this phrase. So, what does it mean to be **“the husband of one wife?”** There are three major views to this passage:

### **1: Polygamy:**

Many have taken this in the most literal sense possible, as a condemnation of polygamy. The common English translation of the phrase would seem to differentiate the husband of one wife from the husband of more than one wife. It is the simplest interpretation and most literal interpretation.

Two objections; however, can be raised to cast doubt that this phrase speaks of polygamy. First, while there was some polygamy practiced among the Jews, but Paul was not writing to a primarily Jewish culture here. If polygamy was not a huge issue, it seems unlikely that Paul would focus on that as he gave instructions about church leadership.

Secondly, the most devastating evidence against the polygamy interpretation is found in 1 Timothy 5:9, where the same phrase is used with the gender roles reversed. Widows who were going to be added to the list (which no one knows too much about) had to have been **“the wife of one man.”** Regardless of how common polygamy (more than one wife) was, polyandry (a wife with more than one husband) is among the rarest of cultural phenomena. When Paul demands a woman be the wife of one man, it is clear he was not addressing polyandry. When he uses a nearly identical phrase to refer to a husband of one wife, it is then unlikely that polygamy is the focus.

### **2: Prohibition against divorce:**

The most common focus of this verse has been as a prohibition against divorced men serving in leadership positions. Since Jesus said that divorce (except on the grounds of adultery) was invalid and adulterous, it is logical to assume that a divorce man who remarries is actually married to two women and by that is the husband of more than one wife.

The prohibitionist group is not uniform by any means. Some would prohibit all divorcees from serving in these positions. Other would restrict only those who were divorced after their conversion. How can we hold someone accountable for their actions before Christ saved them? There is a continuum of strictness among those who hold this view, but share the belief that this verse eliminates those who are divorced from this kind of service in the church.

### **3: The kind of husband:**

The third view, the one I hold, and as such; shall be established as the official position of **CRBC**, is that this passage does not refer to divorce, but to the kind of husband a man is to his wife. It is my contention that neither divorce nor polygamy is the primary focus of this passage. I believe that Paul is requiring that a man must demonstrate himself as a faithful and devoted husband before he is ready to lead in any capacity within God’s church.

The Greek phrase in 1 Timothy 3:2, “*mias gunaikos andra*”, could be literally translated “one-woman man” or “a man of one woman.” The key leaders of the church, Elders and Deacons, are to demonstrate themselves to the church as “one-woman men.”

What is in view here is the man’s heart. It involves much more than just being sexually faithful to his wife. A one-woman man is faithful in body, yes, but also in soul and spirit. He is devoted to his wife. His relationship with his wife demonstrates that he knows how to be a servant-leader. If he is not faithful and devoted to his wife, it is unlikely he will be faithful and devoted to his church duties. This is a much higher burden than some other interpretations require. If the command is simply a prohibition that a man never has been divorced, all that is required is that a man has avoided divorce. But this command is more significant than that.

I have known men who have never been divorced and have never cheated on their wives, but show little devotion to their wives. They may be technically “the husband of one wife” but cannot by any means be called a “one-woman man.”

It is my belief that this kind of character is what is in view in this command. If Paul had wanted to say that a man who had ever been divorced was not qualified to serve as an Elder or Deacon, there are ways he could have said that in Greek. Paul spoke clearly and it is clear what he meant in this

passage. He was saying that men, who lead the church, should be men who have demonstrated their abilities to lead their homes and demonstrate faithful servant-leadership to their wives.

Certainly, polygamy would be inappropriate for church leaders, but it is not the chief intent of this verse. In reality, those who use this as a prohibition of divorce are also assuming the passage refers to a form of polygamy. They believe that the first marriage was not ended and so, by the second marriage, the man has become a kind of polygamist, married in God's eyes to both his former wife and his current one. My quarrel with this view is two-fold. First of all, I think it makes a blanket generalization about the teachings of Jesus on divorce that is, in many cases, not warranted. A man who is divorced on biblical grounds is freed from his marriage covenant and is free to remarry. When he remarries, he is the husband of one wife and one wife only – his new wife. The former marriage is over, in God's eyes.

My second problem with this view is that if Paul was intending to prohibit divorced men from serving as Elders or Deacons, there are ways he could have stated that more plainly. "An overseer must never have divorced a wife and remarried." He could have given words that would clearly and unequivocally say that. Paul was never one for veiling his words. He said what he meant. If he had meant divorce here, he would have said it.

The most obvious focus of the phrase is fidelity and commitment. A husband must demonstrate to all that he knows what it is to be a servant leader by being a good husband who loves his wife and devotes himself to her. Context, linguistics and logic all seem to support this viewpoint. It is; therefore, an unwarranted stretch to use this phrase as a blanket condemnation of divorced men as serving as Elders, Deacons or in other leadership positions. No biblical grounds exist on which to deny all divorced men from serving. To do so, in my mind, is to violate the teachings of Scriptures.

#### **D. ORDINATION**

An Elder (Pastor) should be ordained to the Gospel ministry by CRBC or a church of like faith (Acts 14:23). Perspective Elders must undergo an examination by the Elder body to assess desire for the office, gifting by the Lord, and biblical qualification including personal piety and knowledge of the Scriptures.

### **SECTION 3: SELECTION OF ELDERS**

#### **A. INITIAL SELECTION OF ELDERS**

In as much as the Pastor-Teacher has the responsibility of the spiritual equipping and oversight of the entire congregation initially, he shall, as immediately as God provides qualified men, present men to the membership as candidates for Eldership. Upon the addition of Elders, there shall be an immediate equality of responsibilities, oversight, and administration. As other Elders join the Elder board, the realization of the call to "give ourselves continually to prayer and the ministry of the Word" shall result, as God designed.

#### **B. ELDER SELECTION PROCESS FROM WITHIN THE CONGREGATION**

The process by which Elders are nominated and appointed to the body of Elders is as follows:

1. The Elders shall set aside men that they determine have met the qualifications of the office of Elder. They shall be declared as being under consideration.
2. The Elder body shall then make it known to the church that a particular individual is being

considered as a candidate for the office of Elder.

3. For a period of time, not less than thirty (30) days, the congregation will have the opportunity to prayerfully consider the individual's qualifications for the office of Elder. If members for any reason feel that the person may be unqualified, they should go to him in love and discretion and privately discuss their concerns (Matt 18:15-18, Titus 1:7). If after a discussion with the nominee, the members feel that their concern is unresolved, then they should approach the Elders with their concern. During the time that a man is under consideration, there are several options:

**Option 1:** The man under consideration can withdraw himself from consideration and the process will cease.

**Option 2:** The Elder body may deem the man unqualified and the process will cease.

**Option 3:** The man and the Elder body agree that the process should continue.

After the time of consideration, the Elder body shall call a special meeting for the purpose of a formal affirmation of the Elder candidate. After prayerful consideration of the counsel of the congregation, the Elder body shall vote and make known their decision regarding the man. Upon Elder body approval, the man shall immediately assume his position as an Elder.

#### **SECTION 4: NUMBER OF ELDERS**

The number of Elders shall be as many as are qualified and needed to carry out the ministry of Elders in the church. The Elder body shall determine that number.

#### **SECTION 5: TERM OF ELDERS**

The term of office for an Elder shall be as long as he is qualified, capable, and desirous of fulfilling the duties of an Elder.

#### **SECTION 6: LEADERSHIP AMONG ELDERS**

In as much as the Pastor-Teacher has the responsibility of the spiritual equipping and oversight of the entire congregation, of which each of the elders are a part, he shall serve as the chairman, moderator, and spokesman for the Elder body to the church. He shall prepare the agenda for the Elder meetings as well. He shall have but one vote in the Elder body (Acts 15:13-21).

For the purposes of the **CRBC** Constitution and By-Laws; it shall be understood that the founding Elder shall, upon being joined by additional elders, share in a plurality and equality of leadership, as an example of New Testament polity. The Pastor-Teacher shall not have exclusivity for the call to preach and teach, as other Elders shall be asked to fulfill their calling to "feed the flock of God."

In the event the Pastor-Teacher cannot fulfill his calling as the chairman, moderator and spokesman for the Elder body, a 75% vote of the Elder body shall be required to elect his replacement prior to bringing the decision before the congregation. If the Elder body determines to look outside of the currently serving Elder body, then the matter must be presented to the members for a vote which also requires 75% in agreement prior to looking beyond the present Elder body to call a new Pastor-Teacher to serve alongside the present Elder body and among the members.

## **SECTION 7: ELDER BODY MEETINGS**

Meetings of the Elder body shall be held on a regular basis as determined by the Elders. Anyone desiring to approach the Elders on any matter or need may feel free to arrange to meet with them. Any Elder may call special meetings of the Elder body as needed, but all Elders must be informed about the meeting and the subject matter to be discussed in advance. All major decisions require all Elders to be informed and included in the decision whether by physical presence, phone, or submitted letter.

## **SECTION 8: THE AUTHORITY OF ELDERS**

### **A. DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY**

All the decision-making authority of the church is vested in the Elder body who shepherd the church. The objective of any and all decisions made shall be to please the Lord regarding the matter at hand (Acts 15:2-6, Heb 13:7).

### **B. DECISION-MAKING PROCESS**

Decisions shall be reached after prayerful consideration in a spirit of humility, with each Elder regarding others before himself. A matter receiving a unanimous “yes” vote is a “yes” decision. A matter receiving a unanimous “no” vote is a “no” decision. A 25% “no” vote will require a second vote. If there are less than 4 members on the board of elders, a simple majority is required to make a decision. When a decision is made by the elders, the decision making process will be as follows:

#### **VOTE 1:**

1. If all the elders vote “yes,” the answer is “yes,” and the matter is settled.
2. If all the elders vote “no”, the answer is “no”, and the matter is settled.
3. If 25% of the elders vote “no,” a second vote is required.
4. Before a second vote is taken, additional information, discussion, Godly counsel, and time as needed and agreed upon by the Elders, will be allowed to go over the matter at hand. After considering the additional information, discussion, and counsel, the Elders will then allow the time needed for prayer.

#### **VOTE 2:**

1. If 75% of the Elders vote “yes,” then the decision is “yes,” and the matter is settled.
2. If less than 75% of the Elders vote “yes,” then the decision is “no,” and the matter is settled. The Elders all agree that a decision on any specific matter will be determined by the second vote.

### **STATEMENT OF UNITY:**

Any decision made after following the agreed upon decision-making process will be a unified “yes” or “no” decision. All Elders agree to be unified in the final decision, “yes” or “no,” in public and in private, even though it may not agree with their personal preference (Acts 15:6-22)

### **C. SPECIAL DECISIONS**

The Elder body shall seek the formal affirmation of the congregation when the following decisions are being made (Prov 11:14):

1. The selection of Elders.
2. The installation of or removal of the Pastor-teacher or Pastoral staff.

3. The church's annual budget and expenditures involving property.
4. Any changes or amendments to the Confession or Constitution and By-Laws

#### **D. AFFIRMATION OPTIONS**

The Elder body may choose at any time and on any matter to seek the affirmation of the congregation or any leadership group within the church such as Deacons, teachers, etc. These affirmations may be formal or informal.

### **SECTION 9: CONGREGATIONAL AFFIRMATION**

#### **A. PURPOSE OF CONGREGATIONAL AFFIRMATIONS**

The purpose of an affirmation from the congregation, Deacons or any other group of the church is the wisdom of seeking Godly counsel of many as taught in scripture (Prov 11:14). This type of counsel can be helpful to the Elders in the determining the wisest course of action in a matter. We must remember that the purpose of an affirmation is not so that the many can make the decision (Heb 13:17), but so the Elders can seek "one accord" in both mind and spirit for the unity of the church family.

#### **B. TYPES OF AFFIRMATIONS**

1. **Formal Affirmation:** A ballot vote of eligible members present at a meeting called for the specific purpose of affirming a decision being made by the Elders on a particular matter. The meeting shall be called by the Elders or Pastor-Teacher and publicly announced at least two weeks prior to the meeting. The results of all formal affirmations will be made public.

2. **Informal Affirmation:** A vote taken using any method desired by the Elders for the purpose of polling the counsel of the congregation or a leadership group (i.e. Deacons, teachers, etc.) on any matter.

#### **C. ELIGIBLE MEMBERS**

A church member is eligible to cast a ballot in formal affirmations when he or she is present.

#### **D. BALLOTS**

The ballots used for voting shall provide the following choices:

1. I affirm the proposed course of action.
2. I refuse the proposed course of action.
3. I am undecided on the matter.

### **SECTION 10: REMOVAL OF ELDERS**

Any Elder may be removed from office if he becomes physically incapacitated, spiritually unqualified, or his inability to serve is established by the remainder of the Elder body. Any accusation or action against an Elder must be presented to the Elder body in accordance with Scripture (I Tim 5:19-20)

## **ARTICLE VII: PASTOR-TEACHER**

## **SECTION 1: THE ELDER POSITION OF PASTOR-TEACHER**

The Pastor-Teacher is the teaching Pastor of the church. He is responsible for the spiritual equipping and oversight of the entire congregation. He is the spokesman for the Elder body to the congregation and is directly responsible to the Elder body for the carrying out of his duties in the church (Acts 20:28, Eph 4:11-12, I Pet 5:2-4).

## **SECTION 2: DUTIES OF THE PASTOR-TEACHER**

The duties and responsibilities of the Pastor-Teacher in order of their priority are as follows:

1. To pray (Acts 6:4).
2. To prepare and to preach the Word (Acts 6:4, I Tim 4:13, II Tim 4:2, Titus 1:5).
3. To protect the church from false doctrine (I Tim 4:16, Titus 1:9).
4. To see to the oversight and care of all church staff (Acts 20:34).
5. To lead in accordance with the Confession, Constitution and By-Laws

## **SECTION 3: AUTHORITY TO DELEGATE**

The Pastor-Teacher may, at his discretion, delegate any task pertaining to the administration and oversight of the church staff. Delegation may be done through the Elder body, Deacons, individuals or councils. In the event of the delegation of a task, those individuals or councils shall be directly responsible to the pastor-teacher, and the pastor-teacher shall remain responsible for the task. This provision is added with the following tasks in mind, but is not limited to this list.

As of the formation of the CRBC Constitution and By-Laws, the founding Elder, as Pastor-Teacher, shall have the singular authority to delegate such tasks to those willing to serve among the membership until such a time that qualified men are added to the Elder body, as the Lord shall send. Authority shall include, but not be limited to the ministry budget, administration of ordinances, and organizational oversight.

## **SECTION 4: THE SELECTION OF THE PASTOR-TEACHER**

With the initial formation of CRBC, the founding Elder shall serve as the Pastor-Teacher until such a time as ordained by God. In the event the founding Elder shall not be able to fulfill the call either by resignation, disqualification or death, the Elder body shall select a Pastor-Teacher as follows:

1. The Elders shall serve as the Pastor search council. The Elders may select any Deacon or individual member of the congregation, as they are led, to serve as a member of the Pastor search council.
2. The Elders shall set guidelines and procedures for the council to follow throughout the Pastor search process.
3. The council shall consist of at least three men and shall require that an Elder serve as the chairman.
4. The council shall be directly responsible to the elder body and shall keep them informed on its progress.
5. Upon the recommendation of the council and the approval of a specific Pastor-Teacher candidate, the Elder body shall make known to the congregation all pertinent information about the Pastor-Teacher candidate.
6. A special meeting shall be set and announced publicly at least two weeks in advance when a Pastor-Teacher candidate is to be considered.

7. At the special-called meeting, a formal affirmation of all eligible members shall be taken concerning the candidate for pastor-teacher. The results of this affirmation will be made public.

8. After formal affirmation of the congregation, the Elder body shall make the final decision regarding the candidate for Pastor-Teacher. Upon approval of the Elder body, the man shall become the Pastor-Teacher. The Elder body shall announce to the church the date that the new Pastor-Teacher's tenure shall begin.

8. In the absence of an established Elder or Elder Body, the members including any Deacons, will prayerfully determine by a majority vote how to proceed, in the calling of a Pastor-Teacher candidate, as the Lord shall direct.

## **SECTION 5: FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF THE PASTOR-TEACHER**

The following is set forth as foundational to viewing the role of a God-called Pastor-Teacher within a New Testament congregation. This section may prove to be what truly differentiates CRBC from many of our Baptist brethren, particular in the United States of America.

The congregation of CRBC at any time, consisting of individual men, women, boys, and girls, may take the liberty, as God leads them, to give not only to the Pastor-Teacher, but any Elder, Deacon, teacher or member monetary gifts as determined by his or her own conscience. That liberty of benevolence is between the individual and God to whom they should obey, as the Spirit leads them to give.

### **KEY DINSTINCTIVES:**

The key distinctives in regards to financial remuneration at CRBC shall be based on the the words of the Lord Jesus Christ. He commissioned the disciples to **“Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.”** (Matthew 10:8). In context, the Gospel ministry was given “freely,” and they were not to charge those to whom the Gospel was sent as they, being men freely chosen, freely redeemed, freely being recipients of salvation not of themselves, but as “God’s elect.”

While needs of support exist for those serving in leadership positions with which to provide for his family’s wellbeing; it remains incumbent upon the members to trust the Lord through gifts that are benevolent, out of a “cheerful heart,” and without obligation. Apart from the personal liberty of each member to give according to his/her own conscience; at no time will any Pastor-Teacher be a salaried employee of CRBC nor any other Elder, Deacon, teacher or member. Specific; however, to the called position of Pastor-Teacher, I shall further point to, as an example, the apostle Paul.

While Paul may have had the right to financial support (1 Corinthians 9:6-7, 14), he repeatedly established a pattern of not demanding money from the churches he served. He did this for a variety of reasons:

**A. He did not want to place an unnecessary burden upon the churches** (2 Corinthians 11:7-9; 12:13; 1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:8). How many pastors today consider the financial burden put upon God's people when seeking a pastoral position? How many of them diligently seek the will of God in these important matters (most often, it is simply *assumed* that one must be salaried)?

**B. He did not want to cause a hindrance to the Gospel**, since some might naturally assume that he was influenced by the money (1 Corinthians 9:12; 2 Corinthians 2:17; 7:2). How

many pastors today, who live lavish lifestyles, ever stop to consider that this might actually hinder the furtherance of the Gospel, or that it might feed into the stereotype that paints preachers as religious hucksters?

**C. He wanted to be in a position of always being able to give unto others in need**, instead of continually being on the receiving end (Acts 20:33-35; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; 2 Thessalonians 3:6-12). How often is this demonstrated in the lives and ministries of our modern pastors in America?

With this in mind, it is less than likely that he would have burdened the churches he planted by requiring that they secure full-time remuneration for their pastors. Carl B. Hoch, Jr., professor of New Testament at Grand Rapids Baptist Seminary, states:

In New Testament days, leaders were normally not paid. That is, money was given more as a gift than as an income or a salary. Leaders like Paul could receive money, but Paul chose not to receive any from the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 9:8-12). He wanted to serve without depending on any church for financial support. Churches had a responsibility to "reward the ox" (1 Timothy 5:17) and to share with those who taught (Galatians 6:6). But money was never to be the driving force of ministry (1 Peter 5:2). Unfortunately, churches today will not call a man until they feel they can support him, and some men will not seriously consider a call if the financial package is "inadequate" (*All Things New*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1995, p.240).

In Acts 20:33-35, Paul appears to clearly establish a pattern or model for those elders who serve as pastor-teachers:

A. They were not to covet riches or material possessions (v.33).

B. They were to be in a position to financially meet their own needs and even the needs of others by working with their hands (v.34).

Unlike the many church leaders in our day who never seem to leave their cushy chairs, Paul was not afraid of physically hard work. I have heard from the lips of too many preachers "I chose not to work a man's job and rather am trusting God to provide my needs as a full-time pastor!" I have more often heard that with what is really an arrogance and false humility as it really means, "I have more faith than you so, everyone else is just a layman!"

C. By working hard as did Paul, church elders were, therefore, able to help the weak and sick as well as exemplify the words of Jesus who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (v.35).

D. When Paul says, "I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (v.35), it is clear that he is providing a model for them to follow. But why provide such a model if pastors are to be salaried and completely living off the churches they shepherd? Such a model only makes sense if pastors, like everyone else, were to work with their hands and provide for their own needs.

John B. Polhill, professor of New Testament interpretation and Associate Dean for the School of Theology at The Southern Baptist Theological Seminary, has written the following on the subject:

In a real sense he [Paul] ended as he had begun (vv. 18-21), pointing to his own deportment in ministry as *an example for them to emulate*. The matter in question was the leaders' relationship to material goods. Paul's detachment from material gain is well-documented in his epistles. He never used his ministry as a "mask to cover up greed" (2 Thessalonians 2:5). At Corinth he supported himself with his own hands (Acts 18:2; 1 Corinthians 4:12; 9:12,15; 2 Corinthians 11:7; 12:13). The same was true at Thessalonica (1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:7-8). Verse 34 [Acts 20] would indicate that he followed the same pattern of self-support at Ephesus. In his epistles Paul exhorted his Christian readers to follow his example and work with their own hands, not being dependent on others (1 Thessalonians 4:11; 2 Thessalonians 3:9). In the Miletus speech Paul gave the additional incentive that such hard work put one in the position to help the weak. In his epistles he showed a similar concern that Christians help the weak and needy, that they share in one another's burdens (cf. Romans 15:1; 1 Thessalonians 5:14; Ephesians 4:28; Galatians 6:2). Greed is a universal human problem, and church leaders are not exempt (cf. the exhortation in v.28 for church leaders to "watch yourselves"). That avarice among church leaders was a real problem in Asia Minor seems to be attested by the Pastoral Epistles, in which Paul insisted that a major qualification for church leaders should be their detachment from the love of money (1 Timothy 3:3,8; Titus 1:7,11) ... "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Paul applied this rule to the specific problem of avarice among church leaders. The minister is to be a servant, a giver and not a taker. Acquisitiveness has been the downfall for many a servant of God. This word of the Lord as applied by Paul is sound ministerial advice. The one who leads the flock of God should focus on the needs of others, be more concerned with giving than with acquiring. Paul had begun his address by listing the qualities of his own ministry as an example for the Ephesian leaders to follow. He concluded with a final quality he had sought to model. Perhaps he held it off to the end because he saw it as the most essential of all for a legitimate ministry (*The New American Commentary: Acts*, Nashville, TN: Broadman Press, 1992, pp. 429-430).

The late F.F. Bruce, once considered one of the world's foremost New Testament scholars, writes:

Returning once more to the example which he had set them, he reminds them finally that those who take care of the people of God must do so without thought of material reward. As Samuel called all Israel to witness when he was about to lay down his office as judge (1 Samuel 12:3), so Paul calls the Ephesian elders to witness that all the time he spent with them he coveted nothing that was not his; on the contrary, he did not even avail himself of his right to be maintained by those whose spiritual welfare he cared, but earned his living—and that of his colleagues—by his own labors: "these hands," he said (inevitably with the attendant gesticulation), "ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me" (v.34). Let those to whom he was speaking likewise labor and thus support not only themselves but others as well—the sick in particular (*The New International Commentary on the New Testament: Acts*, Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans, 1986, p.418).

Simon J. Kistemaker, who served for many years as professor of New Testament at Reformed Theological Seminary, states:

In his [Paul] letters he discloses that he worked night and day with his own hands to support himself, so that no one would ever be able to accuse him of depending on the hearers of the Gospel for his material needs (compare 1 Samuel 12:3).

He refused to be a burden to anyone in the churches he established. By performing manual labor, he provided for his financial needs. Paul received gifts from the believers in Philippi, as he himself reveals (Philippians 2:25; 4:16-18), yet he declares that he did not solicit those gifts... The Ephesian elders had observed Paul's ministry and physical work during his three-year stay. They were able to testify that he had never exploited anyone (2 Corinthians 7:2), but had always set an example of diligence and self-sufficiency, in the good sense of the word. He was a model to the believers and taught the rule: "If you will not work, you shall not eat" (2 Thessalonians 3:10)... It appears that Paul generated sufficient income to support not only himself but even his companions... In every respect, says Paul to the elders of Ephesus, I taught you to work hard and with your earnings to help the weak... He exhorts them to follow his example and to labor hard (*New Testament Commentary: Acts*, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1990, pp. 737,740).

Commenting on Acts 20:33-35, Roland Allen notes:

When I wrote this book I had not observed that in addressing the elders of Ephesus, St. Paul definitely directs them to follow his example and to support themselves (Acts 20:34-35). The right to support is always referred to wandering evangelists and prophets, not to settled local clergy (see Matthew 10:10; Luke 10:7; 1 Corinthians 9:1-14) with the doubtful exceptions of Galatians 6:6 and 1 Timothy 5:17-18, and even if those passages do refer to money gifts, they certainly do not contemplate fixed salaries which were an abomination in the eyes of the early Christians (*Missionary Methods: St. Paul's or Ours?*, Grand Rapids: Wm.B. Eerdmans, 1962, p.50).

Some have appealed to Paul's words in Galatians 6:6 where he said "Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things" as justification for pastoral remuneration. But this is far from likely for the following reasons:

A. It is less than certain that the phrase "him that teacheth" refers exclusively to pastors, but may include local or itinerant teachers. The reader should also be reminded that pastors were not the only ones who corporately taught within the local assembly (Acts 13:1; 15:35; Romans 12:7; 1 Corinthians 12:29; 14:26; 1 Peter 4:10-11). Thus, if we are going to make Galatians 6:6 denote a full-time salary for pastors, we must also include those who are teachers as well (i.e. deacons, Sunday school teachers, nursery teachers, etc). But how many churches are willing to do this?

B. Our text urges us to "communicate in all good things," meaning to "share", which is a far cry from a full-time salaried position (coupled with medical insurance a funded 401K retirement plan, and a new car every two years!). To "share" something with someone is not necessarily the same as continually providing them with a stipend. Lest we forget, the early churches were extremely poor and, therefore, it is unlikely that Paul would have commanded them to raise full-time support for one or even all of their elders.

C. The phrase "all good things" could possibly refer to periodic financial gifts, food, or other items by which the teacher could be benefited. To extract from this text, then, the notion of salaried pastors is a mere assumption with no exegetical warrant from either the words or surrounding context. The Lutheran commentator, R.C.H. Lenski, finds no support for this view either. He takes Paul's words to mean "sharing in all good things" as meaning things spiritual.

This is just about the opposite of the common view [i.e., salaried teachers]. In addition to the context and the meaning of the words themselves one must note that when Paul writes about the one instructing, the Galatians would at once think of their first and greatest instructor together with his assistant who had twice been in their midst. Could Paul tell the Galatians in this letter that they owed material contributions to him and to his helpers? Could he do such a thing with no further word of explanation? Paul never took money for his work. When he speaks of this subject in 1 Corinthians 9 he does so with the fullest and clearest explanation. See the same thought in 2 Corinthians 11:7-12, which should be read in its connection with 1 Corinthians 9. We ought also not to forget the Judaizers who also came as teachers, on whose greediness 2 Corinthians 11:20 enlightens us. When such greedy fellows were working in Galatia, Paul could scarcely write the Galatians to share "in all things" (material) with their teachers. Aside from the implication involving himself, such an admonition would reflect on the true teachers in Galatia and suggest that they were also men who were to be paid... Pay for these teachers? There is no reason for mentioning it in this epistle. The efforts to have what Paul now says support the idea that teachers are to be duly rewarded show that this conception is untenable. Paul and his assistants took no such reward. Sowing for the flesh and sowing for the spirit deal with a subject that is far greater, namely with the desire for all good spiritual things in which the Galatians should seek to share (*Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistle to the Galatians*, Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg)

The words of Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:14 "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel", is another frequently cited text in support of salaried pastors. But this interpretation is highly dubious. Consider the following:

1 Corinthians 9 does not refer to pastors, elders, or any other leader normally associated with today's church. Instead it refers to "apostles" (those who are sent out), roughly equivalent to today's missionary. We are to financially support "those who proclaim the Gospel" because of the nature of their work. The fundamental difference between the work of an elder (who is not financially supported) and the work of an apostle (who is financially supported) is that the apostle must uproot and travel from location to location. His stay is temporary; consequently, his odds for gaining employment at each location are slim. He would therefore need financial assistance to do the work for which he was sent. The elder, on the other hand, is stationed at one location. His stay is permanent... Even the apostles did not make their living from the church. The passage in question simply means that the need of the apostle for food, shelter, and clothing were to be met by the church. Matthew 10:9-11 was no doubt the pattern that the early church used for apostles. There was no salary involved (*The Practice of the Early Church*, pp. 41-42).

Perhaps the strongest passage for paid pastors is 1 Timothy 5:17 "Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing,' and 'The laborer is worthy of his wages'". But, again, this is most unlikely due to the following considerations:

A. It is less than probable that the Ephesian church could have supported a full-time pastor, let alone a plurality of pastors which were already appointed by the time Paul wrote this epistle. 1 Timothy 5:17 indicates that all of the elders who rule well were to receive "double honor" (supposedly full-time pay), and not merely one man (such as the "senior pastor"). Are we to really believe that Paul wanted all of them on some kind of "payroll"? How many churches even do this in our day?

B. Paul had previously established a pattern or model for elders which meant working hard with one's hands and, thus, being in a position to help others (Acts 20:33-35). It seems hard to believe that he would have completely violated that model by now demanding that all the churches muster a full-time salary for each of their elders.

C. It is quite possible that 1 Timothy 5:17 has nothing to do with a salary or wage. The fact is that the word "honor" in this verse means just what it is translated as – honor, not pay, unless some would conclude that we should give some elders "double pay!" If Paul intended to teach that elders are to be paid, salaried employees, he could have used the Greek word *misthos*, meaning "wages" which is used in verse 18. In verse 18, Paul says, just as an ox deserves to eat because of his work, and just as a worker deserves to be paid because of his work, so an elder deserves honor because of his work. Verse 19 is a clear example of such honor. Once again, Atkerson and Svendsen write:

The word "honor" in this verse means just what it is translated as—"honor", not pay (unless we want to conclude that we should give some elders "double pay"! ). If Paul had intended to teach that elders are to be paid, he could have used the Greek word *misthos*, which means "wages" (which he used in v.18). In v.18, Paul simply says that, just as an ox deserves to eat because of his work, and just as a worker deserves to be paid because of his work, so an elder deserves "honor" because of his work. In his treatment of this same passage, Lenski adds these insightful comments:

It is generally assumed that the elders were paid for their services in the apostolic churches. We are convinced that this assumption is not tenable. The probability is that none of them were paid. The elders of the synagogues were not paid or salaried. Each synagogue had a number of elders, too many to have a payroll that would be large enough to support them. The apostolic congregations imitated the synagogue in this respect. Our passage speaks of "twofold honor," not of twofold financial pay or salary. Paul's two quotations support the injunction relating to according due honor to diligent elders; such honor is to be their reward just as the ox treading out grain is accorded the privilege of eating as he tramped along, just as the worker is accorded his pay. The *tertium* of the analogy lies in the worthiness and not in the identity of what the three are worthy of: the elders worthy of what naturally should go with their office—honor; the ox worthy of what naturally goes with the task for which he is employed—wisps of grain; the workman worthy of what naturally goes with his work—pay for his work (*Commentary on Saint Paul's Epistles to Timothy*, Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Publishing House, 1937 p.683).

D. If our churches truly implemented New Testament patterns of ministry, one wonders whether there would be any real need to support one, full-time "Sr. Pastor?" If the local church had a functioning priesthood of believers (as opposed to the passive, spectator event that is the mark of most churches) and an equally shared eldership, there simply would not be the urgency or necessity to hire someone on a so-called full-time basis. This is because (1) leadership responsibilities would be shared; (2) one man and his gifts would not become the focal-point of the meeting; (3) corporate teaching would be shared and not left to one sole pastor; and (4) each member would actively participate and contribute to the fellowship.

E. Even if, for the sake of argument, Paul refers to some form of monetary assistance, it seems all too clear it would have been in context of periodic compensation and not necessarily a permanent, full-time wage.

In spite of what has already been noted, Covenant Reformed Baptist Church shall not be against any congregation which chooses, in unique circumstances, to financially support a gifted leader (perhaps so

that he might devote more time to writing or teaching; or in assisting newly planted churches; or in instructing newly appointed elders, etc.). There are unique circumstances that may involve a loss of a job, health, and mitigating circumstances that may present challenges through which to accommodate a financial stipend for the Pastor-Teacher, but we believe, however, that such instances are intended to be the exception, not the norm.

The criteria set for Covenant Reformed Baptist Church to consider financial remuneration as a regularly allocated “gift” shall be explored in light of an ever increasing demand from the needs of the membership as the Lord pleases to increase our church family. In order for a vote to be taken to request an amendment of Section 5: the following rules must be applied:

- From no more than 50% of the retained resources for local missions/operations may consideration be given from which to provide remuneration in the form of a monthly “gift” to support the Pastor-Teacher
- A unanimous vote of the Elder body is required with a majority vote of the members
- If a decision has been made, and the Pastor-Teacher is gainfully employed (i.e. bi-vocational) in his status, the allocated “gift” from the church operational account may not exceed more than 50% of the median household income of a family in Cleveland County NC of the same size.
- In the same format, if the Pastor-Teacher is not gainfully employed, the allocated “gift” may not exceed 100% of the median household income of a family in Cleveland County NC of the same size.
- In the same format, if the Pastor-Teacher is retired from secular employment, but is receiving Social Security Income only, the allocated “gift” may not exceed 20% of the median household income of a family in Cleveland County NC of the same size.
- In the same format, if the Pastor-Teacher is retired and earns both Social Security income and a pension, the allocated “gift” may not exceed 10% of the median household income of a family in Cleveland County NC of the same size.
- At the liberty and conscious of the Pastor-Teacher, he may accept or decline this provision as authorized by the Constitution of Covenant Reformed Baptist Church.

Until such a time the time commitments of leadership including Elders, Deacons, or any other member in administering the vision of Covenant Reformed Baptist Church justifies the exploration of allocating financial support; we will approach the need prayerfully and in light the Word of God to ensure our motives do not conflict or compete with “thus saith the Lord.” We desire to avoid the conflict often found in churches that are careless in dealing with financial decisions as we are called to be good stewards of God’s provisions.

It is a sad truth that most church boards never bother to consider how much money could be saved for missionary support, the poor, and literature used to advance the furtherance of the Gospel, if they did not have to remunerate a full-time pastor-teacher. Covenant Reformed Baptist Church must establish, by faith, a true biblical model for being a “good steward” of God’s heritage. This official position places a pastor-teacher’s motives above reproach in an era of religious hirelings, many of which purposely fleece the flock in order to finance their lifestyles (Ezekiel 34:1-6).

In addition, creating a class of salaried ministers tends to elevate them above believing members while fostering an artificial distinction which too often resembles that of popery rather than being “all one in Christ Jesus, our Lord” (Galatians 3:28).

**"I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel. Yea, ye yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me. I**

have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. (Acts 20: 33-35).

## **SECTION 6: TENURE AND DISMISSAL OF THE PASTOR-TEACHER**

1. The tenure of the Pastor-Teacher shall be indefinite in length.
2. The Elder body has the authority to dismiss the Pastor-Teacher if he becomes physically unable, spiritually unqualified, or his inability to serve is unanimously established by the remainder of the elder body along with a majority vote of the members of CRBC
3. Any accusation against the Pastor-Teacher, as equally with any other Elder, Deacon, or individual member, must be in accordance with scripture (I Timothy 5:19-20).

## **SECTION 7: VACANCY OF THE PASTOR-TEACHER POSITION**

In the event that the church is without a Pastor-Teacher, the Elder body will:

1. Choose from among themselves an interim to serve as chairman, moderator, and spokesman for the Elders of the church.

# **ARTICLE IX: DEACONS**

The New Testament scripture teaches that Deacons were set apart by the church as servants to minister to the needs of the Body of Christ. This ministry allowed the elders to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word (Acts 6:1-7). The office of Deacon is one of a servant to the Body of Christ. Any other concept does injustice to the New Testament record found in Acts 6 and I Tim 3. It is not a position or office to give a man in order to honor him.

## **SECTION 1: PURPOSE OF DEACONS**

The purpose of Deacons in the church is as follows:

1. To work and serve alongside the Elders to support, encourage, promote, and uphold their ministry (Acts 6:3).
2. To exemplify spiritual leadership in the fellowship of the church, in their family, personal, and business relationships (I Tim 3:8-16).
3. To be men of prayer and students of the Word of God (I Tim 2:8, II Tim 2:14-15).
4. To seek to lead the lost to the Lord Jesus Christ (Matt 28:19-20).

## **SECTION 2: QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS**

### **A. ACTIVE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

A man must be an active member of this church for one year prior to the time of election to the Deacon body unless the Elder body approves a shorter time (I Tim 3:10).

### **B. BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS**

A Deacon must possess the qualifications described in scripture. He shall be:

1. A man of good reputation (Acts 6:3).
2. A man full of the Spirit and wisdom (Acts 6:3).
3. A man of dignity, not doubled tongued, not addicted to wine, or fond of sordid gain (I Tim 3:8).
4. A man who holds the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience (I Tim 3:9).
5. A man beyond reproach (I Tim 3:10).
6. A man who is a “one woman man” (I Tim 3:12).
7. A man whose wife is the wife of one husband (Matt 5:31-32).
8. A man who is a good manager of his children and his own house (I Tim 3:12).
9. A man whose wife does not have a malicious tongue (I Tim 3:11).

### **SECTION 3: DEACON SELECTION PROCESS**

The process by which Deacons are selected is as follows (Acts 6:1-7):

1. The Elder body shall determine if there is a need for additional Deacons for the church.
2. When the Elder body determines that there is a need for additional Deacons, it shall select men qualified for service and allow the congregation to consult and interact with those men in view of installing them as Deacons for no less than four weeks.
3. After the period of review, the Elder body shall prayerfully consider each man and appoint those men that it determines are qualified for the office of Deacon.
4. A special service shall be held so that the Elders may present those men that they have appointed to the office of Deacon and that the men may be formally ordained to the office of Deacon by the laying on of hands.

### **SECTION 4: DEACON OFFICERS**

The tenure of a Deacon shall be indefinite in length. The Elder body has the authority to dismiss a Deacon if he becomes physically incapacitated, spiritually unqualified, or his inability to serve is unanimously established by the remainder of the Elder body. Any accusation against the Pastor-Teacher must be in accordance with scripture (I Timothy 5:19-20).

The Deacon body may choose from among themselves men to serve in leadership positions as follows:

1. Chairman of deacons.
2. Vice-chairman of deacons.
3. Secretary

### **SECTION 5: DEACON MEETINGS**

The Deacon body shall meet as needed for the carrying out of its ministry in the church. The chairman of Deacons or the Elder body may call a meeting of the Deacons.

## **ARTICLE X: MINISTRY TEAMS**

## **SECTION 1: PURPOSE OF MINISTRY TEAMS**

It is fitting, in keeping with our understanding that every member of this church is an active, participating member that the service of the church be organized. The following system will allow for cooperation among different members, allowing all to utilize their gifts in service to the Lord. As each member participates underneath godly leaders, the result will be a coordinated effort with increased efficiency. There is no time for slackness on the part of the church. This will provide accountability and a broad range of opportunities for members to be involved.

## **SECTION 2: STRUCTURE OF MINISTRY TEAMS**

The ministry teams shall be subdivided into categories in keeping with the church's purpose, with each category being led by an elder. Therefore, the following three umbrella categories will group together all of the other teams under the acronym MAX:

### **MINISTRY/EVANGELISM**

Community Evangelism Ministry  
Foreign Missions Ministry  
Women's Ministry  
Men's Ministry  
Youth Ministry  
Prison Ministry  
Homeless Shelter Ministry  
Orphan's Ministry  
Armed Forces Ministry  
Nursing Home Ministry

### **ADMINISTRATION**

Doctrine/Teaching  
Baptism & The Lord's Supper  
Biblical Counseling  
Conferences  
Teaching Series  
Licensing/Ordination  
Church Budget/Finances

### **X-TRA SPECIAL**

Church Family Outings  
Youth Events  
Special Events/Celebrations

The ministries listed are for example only as we wait upon the Lord to lead us in the areas He would have us go. Great flexibility will be offered within these categories for expansion and transition, as needs arise and members answers God's call on their lives to serve. Everyone is valuable in the body of Christ, and each member of CRBC is gifted by the Lord to serve with his or her unique spiritual gifting. An organizational flowchart will be maintained by the elder body to ensure accountability and a healthy, active church, all to God's glory!

## **ARTICLE XI: FORMATION AS A "FREE CHURCH"**

### **508(c)(1)(A) Free Church vs. 501(c)(3) State Church**

Since 1954, when churches were added to the 501(c)(3) section of the IRS tax code (IRC), churches have been stripped of their freedom of speech. In doing so; churches have both voluntarily and ignorantly silenced themselves concerning anything touching politics and the government, even in spiritual matters important to believers. If the Church had not lost its freedom of speech to influence the government, maybe prayer would have not been removed from schools on June 25, 1962 with what seems like without a fight at all.

The Bible teaches that Christians should not be unequally yoked with unbelievers (2 Cor. 6:14-7:1). This not only covers marriage and personal relationships, but also all associations or "partnerships." As the Church, this includes our partnerships with the State and Federal government in pursuit of a 501(c)(3)

status. The Church, or individual groups of the Church, should not incorporate on a state level, due to becoming creatures of the State which are subject to the State.

A church that incorporates under section 501(c)(3), become an entity created under the sovereignty of both the State and Federal government rather than operating under the only sovereign – the Lord Jesus Christ. This is not a statement of rebellion, but a clear response to Scripture in rendering “unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s and to God the things that are God’s.” (Matthew 22:21). The Church belongs to the Lord Jesus Christ alone for whom he said “I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” (Matthew 16:18). When the Lord said that “my people perish for a lack of knowledge”, it serves as a warning to the testimony of so many churches who may preach separation of church and state while hypocritically being a very creature of it while submitting to it as its ultimate authority.

Some have asked “but what about tax-exemptions?” First, if that is of any concern or paramount to anyone’s convictions for giving financially to a church, I would have to respond as Peter did to the man who wanted to buy the gift of the Holy Spirit, “thy money perish with thee!” (Acts 8:20). The fact of whether our contributions are tax-deductible or not should never factor into the equation of our financial support of the church. God forbid it!

As a matter of practical affirmation; however, Section 508(c)(1)(A) in fact states that “**churches, their integrated auxiliaries, and conventions or associations of churches**” are a mandatory exception to section 501(c)(3), they are already tax- exempt without notifying or applying to the government under section 501(c)(3). Churches receive the same tax exempt status and benefits as a 501(c)(3) organization, without the partnership with the government.

#### **Sec. 508...Special rules with respect to section 501c3 organizations**

(a) New organizations must notify Secretary that they are applying for recognition of section 501(c)(3) status Except as provided in subsection (c), an organization organized after October 9, 1969, shall not be treated as an organization described in section 501(c)(3)

**(c) Exceptions . . . (1) Mandatory exceptions . . . (A) churches, their integrated auxiliaries, and conventions or associations of churches**

In IRS Publication 526, Charitable Contributions, the IRS once again states that churches are qualified organizations and do not need to apply to the IRS: “You can deduct your contributions only if you make them to a qualified organization. To become a qualified organization, most organizations **other than churches** and governments, as described below, must apply to the IRS.”

And according to IRS Publication 557, Tax-Exempt Status for Your Organization: “**Churches**. Although a **church**, its integrated auxiliaries, or a convention or association of churches **is not required to file Form 1023 to be exempt** from federal income tax or to receive tax deductible contributions, the organization may find it advantageous to obtain recognition of exemption.”

As shown in the examples above and the IRS code itself, a church does not have to apply to or notify the government (state or federal) of its tax exempt status therefore:

- **CRBC** is established as a separate entity from the state.

- CRBC shall and must remain separated from the state and not join in any type of “partnership” that would create a yoke between the church and government, no matter what the perceived “benefits” are.
- CRBC, as described under IRC 508(c)(1)(A), shall be known as and maintain the status of a “Free Church”.

## ARTICLE 12: LAST THINGS: ESCHATOLOGY & MILLENIALISM

The term “eschatology” is the study of last-things. The various eschatological systems result from different ways of interpreting the symbolic language of Revelation 20:1-7. This is the only passage to mention a period of one thousand years (millennium, from the Latin word *mille*, meaning thousand). For this reason, each system is called millennialism.

Many faithful brothers and sisters-in-Christ have and can hold different interpretations that may fall into one of the following positions:

<b>Historic Premillennialism</b>	
<b>History</b>	Only a few ancient church fathers held this view based upon Jewish ideas (the cosmic week of 1,000 years for each day, the millennium being the 7 <sup>th</sup> day). The idea was opposed during the Reformation and later held by very few Puritans. It rose in popularity in the 19 <sup>th</sup> century and exploded in the 20 <sup>th</sup> .
<b>The End</b>	A time of apostasy and a great tribulation.
<b>Christ’s Second Coming</b>	Just before (‘pre’) the millennium, which it ushers in. [Post tribulation]
<b>Thousand Years</b>	Literal and future.
<b>Millennial Kingdom</b>	An earthly kingdom.
<b>Proponents</b>	George Eldon Ladd, Ellicott, H. Grattan Guinness, S.H. Kellog, Millard Erickson.
<b>Dispensational Premillennialism (Dispensationalism)</b>	
<b>History</b>	No mention of this idea in history at all. No church father held this view, not one reformer or Puritan and no evangelical until the middle of the 19 <sup>th</sup> century. It was based on the ideas of two Jesuits (Lacunza and Ribera), mixed up with occultic ramblings of an immature, sick young girl whose ‘prophecy’ was taken up by the heretical church of Edward Irving in 1830. After proclaiming this new revelation, the ideas were shaped by John Darby and popularized by William Kelly and CI Scofield. It took firm hold in America and was popularized in the UK

	by Brethren and US preachers in the 20 <sup>th</sup> century.
<b>The End</b>	A time of apostasy and a great tribulation lasting 7 years.
<b>Christ's Second Coming</b>	<b>Pre-tribulational</b> - Christ appears before the great tribulation to take away saints in a secret rapture. <b>Mid-tribulational</b> - Christ appears after three and a half years (several variations). <b>Post-tribulational</b> - Christ appears at the end of the tribulation.
<b>Thousand Years</b>	Literal and future.
<b>Millennial Kingdom</b>	An earthly and Jewish kingdom.
<b>Other ideas</b>	The key tenet is that there is a separation between Israel and the church resulting in: two covenants, two ways of salvation, two people of God, two (or more) judgments, various dispensations of church history etc.
<b>Proponents</b>	Hal Lindsey, Tim LaHaye, Harry Ironside, R.A. Torrey, A.T. Pierson, E. W. Bullinger, C. I. Scofield, L. S. Chafer, John Darby, C.H.M. (Mackintosh), William Kelly, Moody, Charles Ryrie, John Walvoord, Arno Gaebelein
<b>Postmillennialism</b>	
<b>History</b>	Not at all common in early church history but fairly widespread after the Reformation and amongst Puritan groups.
<b>The End</b>	A time of success in evangelization. Brief apostasy at the end of the millennium.
<b>Christ's Second Coming</b>	After ('post') the 1,000 years of church success.
<b>Thousand Years</b>	Not necessarily exactly 1,000 years.
<b>Millennial Kingdom</b>	A future golden church age, but an earthly kingdom.
<b>Varieties</b>	In history the doctrine was mild and held by some sound men. A modern variety has emerged which is rampant and dangerous. This teaches that the church will become very powerful and will rule the world. One aspect is held by Charismatics who believe that supernatural gifts will lead them to political power and glory (Dominionism, Triumphalism). Some reformed extremists believe that a renewal of Mosaic law will be used as international law (Reconstructionism or Theonomy).
<b>Proponents</b>	Reformed theologians: Lorraine Boettner, David Brown, Charles Hodge, W.G.T. Shedd, B.B. Warfield, Jonathan Edwards, Matthew Henry's Commentary, (also Adam Clarke's Commentary). Theonomists: Rousas Rushdoony & co. Charismatics: Rob Joyner etc.

<b>Amillennialism</b>	
<b>History</b>	The amillennial (lit. 'no-millennium') position can be clearly traced from the apostles, through the early and later church fathers, through the medieval church, the Reformation, the Puritan movements, the evangelical leaders and revivals of the 18 <sup>th</sup> -19 <sup>th</sup> century and to most sound theologians of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century. It declined with the rise of premillennialism in the latter half of the 20 <sup>th</sup> century.
<b>The End</b>	A time of apostasy, deception and a great tribulation.
<b>Christ's Second Coming</b>	Is at the end of time and will usher in the last judgment followed by the renewal of the earth and unification with heaven.
<b>Thousand Years</b>	The 1,000 years is a symbolic statement meaning the fullness (10×10×10) of God's kingdom.
<b>Millennial Kingdom</b>	There is no literal millennial kingdom. The millennium is spiritual and is a reference to the age of grace, the church age.
<b>Proponents</b>	Most reformed theologians e.g.: Augustine, O.T. Allis, Louis Berkhof, W. Hendriksen, Abraham Kuyper, Leon Morris, G. Vos, Herman Hoeksema, Anthony Hoekema.

### **Some key facts to bear in mind**

- Christ's kingdom is not earthly: (Jn 3:3, 5, 18:36; Lk 11:20, 17:20-21; 1 Cor 15:50).
- Symbolic books must be very carefully interpreted and compared to the rest of scripture.
- Numbers are often symbolical (Ps 50:10)
- The millennium starts when Satan is bound which occurs at Christ's first coming (Matt 12:29). Satan is bound from deceiving the world to join in battle against the church, but is released at the end to foment rebellion (2 Thess 2:6-7). Dispensationalism and Premillennialism teach that it has yet to occur since this is what enables the millennium to take place.
- Is it possible for the Lord of glory (Jesus is now raised, ascended and glorified as King in heaven) to be able to reign on a material throne in a fleshly kingdom over men full of sin for 1,000 years? All sin will be obliterated in the presence of a holy God. Rev 21 shows that God and the church dwell together in the new heaven and new earth.
- The words for Christ's second coming are all synonymous and interchangeable. There is no support, based on Greek words, for a second coming (for the saints) before the tribulation and then a 'second' second-coming (with the saints) later.
- The separation of Jewish and Gentile Christians is unbiblical (Eph 2:11-16). The idea of a postponed Jewish kingdom with a temporary Gentile one has no basis in scripture.
- The notion of a material temple built in Israel with sin offerings is blasphemy (Heb 10:10-14).
- There is no NT indication of the re-establishment of the OT Jewish theocracy, rather the opposite. At his ascension, Jesus sat on David's throne: (Rev 3:7; Acts 2:29-36, 3:13-15, 4:25-28, 5:29-

31; Heb 10:12-13), therefore, the OT prophecies predicting this kingdom must refer to the present ruling and reigning, not a future reign of Christ on earth.

- The enforced literal interpretation technique vital to Dispensationalism is untenable. (Isa 54:13, 61:6; Jer 3:16,31:31-34; Hos 14:2; Mic 6:6-8) for instance point to a spiritual fulfillment. The contention that 'Zion' and 'Jerusalem' always refer literally to a mountain and a city is not true: (Isa 49:14, 51:3, 52:1-2) both refer to Israel as the OT church also (see Gal 4:26; Heb 12:22; Rev 3:12, 21:9).
- The second coming, final judgment and the end of the world occur at the same time (2 Pt 3:7-13; Rev 20:11,21:1). There is no indication that they are separated by literal, consecutive 1000 years (Mt 13:37-43,47-50). The separation of the good and evil is at '*the end*' not a 1000 years before (Matt 24:29-31, 25:31-46; Jn 5:25-29; 1 Cor 15:22-26; Phil 3:20-21; Rm 2:5,6,16; 1 Thess 4:15-16; Rev 20:11-15).
- It is not possible for people to be converted after Christ returns since he only comes when the full number of the elect is saved (Rm 11:25-26, Matt 24:31).

## **Amillennial – CRBC’s Eschatological Position**

Unless otherwise amended by a unanimous vote of the elders in addition to a majority vote of the membership; the official eschatological position of **CRBC** will be Amillennial. Holding other systems of eschatology will not prevent membership nor should be a divisive subject when discussed among the brethren.

While the dispensational position has been a dominant position among many Baptists particularly over the course of the last century, a clear understanding of the differences between the amillennial position and the dispensational position is vital. What about the experts? While the only expert for **CRBC** will be the Bible, it is a known fact that every major dispensational theologian from Walvoord to Pentecost to Ryrie and MacArthur, insist that God has two distinct redemptive programs—one for national Israel and one for Gentiles. Amillennialism most clearly rejects that understanding of God's redemptive purposes.

In taking Amillennialism as our eschatological position, **CRBC** testifies that God’s purpose is not to save two distinct peoples (divided by ethnicity), but to save his people (the elect), a multitude which no man can number (Revelation 7:9), and which includes each and every one of those whom God has chosen from every nation, whether they be Jew or Gentile. Amen.