

# The Constitution of Tucson Reformed Baptist Church, Tucson, AZ

Adopted 11/10/2013

## PREAMBLE

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

### ARTICLE 1 – NAME

The name of this church will be Tucson Reformed Baptist Church of Tucson, Arizona.

### ARTICLE 2 – PURPOSE

The aim of this church is to glorify God and to enjoy Him forever. To this end we are committed to a threefold purpose:

- To worship the **triune God**.
- To minister to **God's people** through the ministry of the Word, shepherding, and the exercise of our talents and spiritual gifts fulfilling our Scriptural responsibilities to one another.
- To minister to the **world** by evangelism, foreign missions, and community outreach.

### ARTICLE 3 – CONFESSION OF FAITH

We adopt as the fullest expression of our faith the 2<sup>nd</sup> London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689. Although the ultimate authority in all matters of faith, order and morals is and must be the Bible alone, we find this historic confession to be an excellent summary of what we believe the Bible teaches.

### ARTICLE 4 – MEMBERSHIP

A) ELIGIBILITY FOR MEMBERSHIP – Any person will be eligible for membership

- 1) who gives a credible profession of repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ
- 2) who has been baptized upon profession of faith
- 3) whose life and doctrine do not deny his profession

- 4) who is willing to assume the responsibilities of members set forth in Section B of this article.
- 5) who is not deservedly under the corrective discipline of another church.

## B) RESPONSIBILITIES OF MEMBERS

- 1) Every member agrees to give unreserved subjection to the Lord Jesus Christ in every area of his life. This subjection is lived out through willing obedience to the Word of God, which expresses the mind of Christ our Lord (Matt 28:20; Rom 14:8-9).
- 2) Every member agrees to give willing submission to Christ's appointed overseers in the church whose duty is to shepherd the church according to the will of God as contained in the Scriptures (Acts 20:28; Heb 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:2-3; 1 Thes. 5:12-13).
- 3) Every member is urged to attend to the means of grace through all public and private means, such as keeping the Lord's Day, regular attendance at the services of the church (Acts 2:42; Heb 10:24-25), daily systematic reading of the Bible, and private and family prayers
- 4) Every member is expected to attend all member meetings, unless providentially hindered.
- 5) Every member agrees to be willing to serve the local body of Christ according to his natural talents, spiritual gifts, and God-given responsibilities.
- 6) The members must actively seek to cultivate acquaintance with one another so that they may be better able to pray for one another; love, comfort, and encourage one another; and help one another materially as necessity may require (1 Cor 12:12-31; Eph 4:11-16).
- 7) They must refrain from speaking ill of one another. Their differences and offenses with each other must be handled in the manner taught in Scripture (Matt 5:23 -24; 18:15 -16; Col 3:12 -15; 1 Pet 4:8). This applies as well to their relationship with the office bearers of the church.
- 8) Every member agrees to submit to the corrective discipline of the church (Matt 18:15 -17; Heb 3:12 - 13). Such discipline is mandated in the Scriptures for the threefold purpose of:
  - a) recovering the straying and fallen member
  - b) maintaining the purity of the church
  - c) upholding the honor of Christ's name in the earth.

- 9) Every member agrees to give wholehearted cooperation in the outreach of the church, seeking to extend the Gospel to the ends of the earth (Matt 28:18-20) through the means of:
  - a) Bearing witness to Christ through deed and word (Matt 5:14 -16; Col 4:5-6; 1 Pet 2:12; 3:15).
  - b) Praying. This is one way we enter into the labors of others (2 Cor 1:11; Col 4:2-4; 2 Thes 3:1-2).
  - c) Giving. Members are responsible to maintain the ongoing life and ministry of the church by their regular financial gifts (1 Cor 9:13 -14; 16:2; 2 Cor 8-9).

### C) CHRISTIAN LIBERTY

We shall require of each other in our daily walk and lifestyle loyal obedience to all those moral precepts established in the Word of God (Hebrews 10:24-25). However, where God has not prohibited certain practices in His Word the Christian has liberty to participate in them. The following principles must always guide the Christian's exercise of liberty:

#### 1) Fear of God

The exercise of Christian liberty must at all times be governed by an earnest desire to walk in the fear of God and to glorify Him in all things (1 Pet 1:17; 1 Cor 10:31). The term "liberty" is often used as a cloak of malicious self-indulgence, which is sin (I Corinthians 10:3 1; I Timothy 4:4-5; 1 Peter 2:15-16; Pv 2:5-7).

#### 2) Love of the Brethren

Though no man may dictate to the Christian's conscience, the welfare of fellow-saints must always deeply affect his decisions. In a spirit of serving the brethren, he must do that which he judges will edify them and prevent their stumbling (Galatians 5:13; 1 Corinthians 10:23; 1 Corinthians 8:9).

#### 3) Compassion for Sinners

Use of liberty must always be regulated by its effect upon sinners, and that behavior chosen which is likely to win some (I Corinthians 9:19-22).

#### 4) Watchfulness over the Soul

Though free in conscience to use all of God's creation, carefulness in practice is demanded because of remaining lusts. Where the Christian judges himself weak through lust, he must abstain in order to persevere (I Corinthians 9:23-27).

- 5) Full agreement with the church confession is not required of any new disciple before being admitted to church membership. It is necessary however, that any disciple being admitted to church membership manifest

a general agreement with the doctrinal position of the church. And so far as he understands it, he must promise not to spread doctrine contrary to the Confession and be willing to be taught so as to more fully understand it as God enables.

D) ADMISSION TO MEMBERSHIP – While we recognize that the true spiritual condition of an individual is infallibly known only to God, we also recognize that the New Testament places upon the local church the responsibility of carefully guarding the admission and exclusion of its members. Therefore, the membership will determine who shall be members of this church and the conditions of such membership.

- 1) Each person desiring membership in the church will submit an application for membership and a written testimony of his understanding and experience of salvation. Following review by the elders, each applicant will meet with the elders who will examine him as to his eligibility prescribed in Section A of this section.
- 2) Each person desiring membership must complete new members' classes which will cover the requirements and privileges of church membership, the church's confession of faith, and constitution. Exceptions to this may include minors (See Special Cases below) and those transferring from sister churches of like doctrine and practice.
- 3) At the completion of the class, the elders will confirm each prospective member's commitment to the responsibilities of church membership and substantial agreement with and cheerful submission to the doctrines and practices of the church. Those whom the elders believe are qualified will be recommended to the church for membership.
- 4) If the applicant is or has been a member of another church, his standing in that church and his reasons for leaving will be discussed. At the discretion of the elders, the former church may be contacted concerning these matters.
- 5) Upon satisfactory examination of the person, the elders will announce the same to the congregation at a called member meeting of the church. The person's application and written testimony will be made available to the members and at least 2 weeks' time will be allowed for members to talk with the applicant and, if necessary, to raise questions with the elders concerning the applicant's manner of life or doctrine. If no objection is raised of such a serious nature as to unfit the candidate for membership, or upon satisfactory resolution of the problem, the applicant will be presented by the elders for a vote of the members to receive them into membership at a called member meeting of the church.
- 6) The prospective member will be received publicly by the members at a worship service.

- 7) The procedure for receiving a candidate for baptism will be the same as for membership, with the addition of completing a class on baptism besides the membership classes. A candidate for baptism shall also be a candidate for membership.

## E) SPECIAL CASES OF MEMBERSHIP

- 1) Minor Members – Believing that all those who credibly profess faith in Christ ought to be baptized and joined to the church, Tucson Reformed Baptist Church will receive into membership those who make a credible profession of faith who have not yet reached the age of eighteen. The light of nature and Christian prudence teach that it is inappropriate to allow such members to vote in meetings of the church. Accordingly, after their eighteenth birthday, those originally received as minor members must complete the new members' class to be received as voting members of the church. If those originally received as minor members do not take this step upon reaching their eighteenth birthday, then, after a reasonable period of time, the elders will speak with them about the matter. If after pastoral encouragement they do not apply for voting church membership, the elders will recommend their removal from the membership of the church as prescribed in Section E of this Article.
- 2) Other Special Circumstances – The membership status of any whose relationship to the church involves abnormal circumstances preventing them from fulfilling membership responsibilities will be considered and determined as each case arises (invalids, missionaries, students, members in transit, improper or invalid baptism, etc.).
- 3) Associate Membership - In certain cases of special circumstances an associate membership may be granted. In such cases the member will not be able to vote or hold office in the church, but will be admitted to all other membership duties and privileges.

## F) TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

- 1) BY TRANSFER – Letters of recommendation shall be granted by the Eldership to churches which request them, provided the member in question is in good standing and not subject to or under discipline at the time of the application. When such letters have been granted, the relationship to this church shall be considered terminated. Letters of dismissal shall be forwarded and given only to other evangelical churches (*Philemon 2*).
- 2) Resignation - If a member wants to resign his membership, he should exercise his Christian responsibility by requesting a meeting with the elders to discuss his actual reasons for desiring to leave. If he is not subject

to or under discipline, then upon the approval of the elders his request will be granted.

- 3) Exclusion - (See Article 5, Section B, Paragraph 3)
- 4) Excommunication - (See Article 5, Section B, Paragraph 4)

## **ARTICLE 5 – CHURCH DISCIPLINE**

### **A) FORMATIVE DISCIPLINE**

- 1) God has ordained that the members of the church have a mutually sanctifying effect on one another. Each is called to participate in the full-orbed life of the church in order that the body may build itself up in love. There is to be mutual edification as each member exercises his gifts and graces, and seeks to promote the holiness of the rest (Heb 3:12 -13; 10:24; See Article 4.b.4).
- 2) This mutual concern for one another's sanctification will aid us in being kept from sin, in recovering from sin, and in growing in likeness to Jesus Christ. The lack of this formative discipline or the spurning of it makes the application of a more formal corporate discipline necessary.

### **B) CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE**

- 1) General Statement
  - a) Corrective discipline becomes necessary when disorderly conduct or heretical doctrine appears which is contrary to the church's standard of life and doctrine. All reasonable efforts will be made to resolve difficulties, remove offenses and correct errors through counsel and admonition before more drastic steps are taken (Gal 6:1; Jas 5:19-20). No offenses will be brought before the church until the instructions of Christ have first been followed or at least attempted (Matt 5:23 - 24; 18:15 -16).
  - b) Corrective discipline always aims:
    - (1) to recover the straying and fallen,
    - (2) to maintain the purity of the church,
    - (3) to uphold the honor of Christ's name in the earth.
- 2) Suspension
  - a) Any conduct on the part of a member which disturbs the peace of the church or damages its testimony may require that the offending member be suspended from certain rights and privileges of membership. Although such a person is considered to be walking disorderly, and is therefore under this discipline, he must still be

regarded as a member and not as one cut off from the church (2 Thes 3:15).

- b) If a member has publicly sinned, but shows hopeful signs of repentance, including submission to the admonitions of the elders, severe discipline (such as excommunication) would be improper. Nevertheless, serious offenses will not be overlooked altogether, lest God's enemies be given opportunity to blaspheme, lest other saints be encouraged to sin and lest the offender be harmed by a failure to test his own soul and realize the seriousness of his offense.
  - c) Therefore, at the discretion of the elders, lesser terms of discipline may be imposed upon a member such as public rebuke or suspension of certain rights and privileges of membership. An attitude of acceptance and compassion should especially be communicated by the membership in its discipline of one showing hopeful signs of repentance.
  - d) In the case where a member is accused or suspected of gross sin and absents himself from the congregation, refusing to meet with the elders that the matter may be investigated, he may be suspended from certain rights and privileges of membership.
  - e) All suspensions will be reported to the church by the elders and will remain in force until the suspended member gives evidence of true repentance and change of conduct. The lifting of the suspension will be done at the discretion of the elders and reported to the church.
- 3) Exclusion – If a member in good standing relocates to another church without resigning his membership, or if a member is habitually absent from the fellowship of this church without just cause, or requests severance of membership, he or she may be excluded from the membership at the discretion of the Board of Elders.
- 4) Excommunication
- a) Some types of conduct are inconsistent with profession of faith in Christ (Matt 18:15 -17; Rom 16:17; 1 Cor 5:11; 6:9-10). A member who persists in such conduct must be cut off from the membership of the church and treated as an unbeliever (Matt 18:17; 1 Cor 5:3-5,13). Before such action is taken, earnest efforts must be made to bring the offender to repentance (Matt 18:15 -17; Tit 3:10 -11). If these efforts fail, and the elders believe the accused is guilty and deserving of severe discipline, then at a properly called meeting of the membership, they will state the charges against the offender and recommend that he be excommunicated.
  - b) In the same way, some wrong opinions regarding the doctrines of Scripture are so serious that they must be regarded as "heretical" and inconsistent with Christian profession (Rom 16:17-18; Gal 1:6-9; 1 Tim 1:19-20; 4:1-3; Rev 2:2,14-16,20). A member who persists in propagating

or holding any such opinion, in spite of earnest and patient admonition by the elders, will be excommunicated in the same manner as the person in “a” above.

- c) An act of excommunication must have the approval of two-thirds of the members present and voting at a properly called member meeting.
- d) It is the duty of the church to forgive and restore to membership those who give satisfactory evidence of repentance (Luke 3:8; 2 Cor 2:6-8). Upon recommendation of the elders, the members will have the right to restore an excommunicated person by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a properly called member meeting.

## **ARTICLE 6 – CHURCH OFFICERS**

A. GENERAL STATEMENT – Jesus Christ alone is the Head of His Church (Col 1:18). He rules his individual churches through officers whom He appoints and equips by His Spirit with the abilities and godliness needed to accomplish their work. In the New Testament church there remains only two offices: elders and deacons (Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1-13). These offices will be held by men only.

### **B. ELDERS**

1. Those who have been called of God to lead and oversee the church are called “elders”, “pastors”, or “bishops” (overseers). These are interchangeable names designating one and the same office (Acts 20:17, 28; Eph 4:11, 12; Tit 1:5,7).
2. The elders are responsible for the general oversight of all the church’s affairs, the spiritual nurture, the implementation of discipline, and the keeping watch over the souls of the church’s members “as men who must give an account” to God (Acts 20:28; 1 Tim 5:17; Tit 1:9; Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 5:2-3). These are the “pastors and teachers” given to the church “to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Eph 4:11 -12). The elders will seek to maintain the peace and purity of the congregation in doctrine and life.
3. While every elder must be “able to teach”, some may be more engaged in the formal and public teaching of the congregation, while others give themselves more to private teaching and governing. The authority of every elder is the same. Thus, every elder has equal rule in the church. Though gifts possessed and functions performed will vary from elder to elder, this diversity must never undermine real parity among the elders. Gifted and godly men who are not recognized as elders may also engage in such public preaching and teaching under the supervision of the elders as approved and called by the congregation (1 Tim 3:2; 2 Tim 2:2; Acts 20:17,28).

4. In view of the fact that the responsibilities of this office are many and of supreme importance, it is highly desirable that at least one elder should devote his full time to the work of the ministry. These elders should be given adequate financial support to free them from the cares of another vocation. Though every elder has equal authority in the church this does not mean that all should therefore receive full financial support. Such a decision should take into consideration the needs and ministerial responsibilities of the man as well as the needs and capability of the church (1 Tim 5:17 -18).
5. Any man being considered for the office of elder must demonstrate to God's people the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications that are set forth in the Scriptures (1 Tim 3:1-7; Tit 1:5-9). He must be able to conscientiously affirm his agreement with the church's Confession of Faith and his willingness to uphold this constitution. If he should at any time move from this position, he is under spiritual and moral obligation to immediately make this known to the church in an orderly manner.
6. The church may call a qualified man from outside the local congregation for this office.
7. While elders are overseers of the flock, they are themselves members of the flock. Therefore, each individual elder is under the oversight of his fellow elders and is subject to the same discipline as are all the other members of the church.
8. The number of elders will be determined in accordance with the needs of the church and the leading of the Holy Spirit.
9. Though a plurality of elders is the New Testament norm for every church, the New Testament does not specify the number of elders each church should have, nor does it dictate the length of an elder's term of office. One truly called to this office is usually called to it for life as a gift of Christ to the church.
10. Only when an elder fails to meet the necessary Scriptural qualifications for his office does he disqualify himself from being an elder. An elder may honorably resign from his office for a time if he believes he is providentially hindered from properly discharging his pastoral responsibilities. He may at the discretion of the elders and without re-examination by the congregation re-assume the office when able.

#### C. DEACONS

1. Deacons are responsible for the physical needs of the church:
  - its ministry to those with material needs,

- its business and financial affairs,
  - the maintenance of its building and grounds.
2. Their diligent service should enable the elders to devote themselves without distraction to the ministry of the Word and prayer (Acts 6:1-4).
  3. Though a deacon may be given a specific area of responsibility, he is to work in conjunction with the other deacons in carrying out the overall diaconal ministries.
  4. Though deacons attend to material needs, their work is to be done with spiritual grace and in cooperation with and subjection to the elders.
  5. Each man chosen to fulfill the office of deacon must evidence the qualifications set forth in Acts 6:3 and 1 Tim 3:8-13. He must be able to conscientiously affirm his agreement with the church's Confession of Faith and his willingness to uphold this constitution.
  6. The number of deacons will not be fixed. The church may choose as many as are needed for the work to be done from among the men who give evidence of having the Scriptural qualifications for that office.
  7. Their term of office will be indefinite, terminating only upon resignation of a deacon or by disqualifying himself. A deacon may honorably resign from his office for a time if he believes he is providentially hindered from properly discharging his diaconal responsibilities or needs a time of refreshment away from them. He may at the discretion of the elders and without re-examination by the congregation re-assume the office when able.

#### D. APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS

1. General Statement – It is Christ, the Head of the church, who equips and calls those He wants to serve as officers in His church. The Lord's appointment is recognized both by the conviction of the individual that he is called, and by the conviction of the church that Christ has indeed given him the necessary godliness and ability for office bearing. So the church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit and according to the principle of need, should be endeavoring to discover and formally recognize all the men whom Christ by the Holy Spirit is setting over it (Acts 20:28).
2. Procedure:
  - a. Nomination – Officers will be nominated for their office by the existing elders. Any member may make recommendations to

the elders at any time for their consideration, but it is the existing elders who must approve their recommendations and bring them to the membership for a vote. In no case may a man be nominated by the elders without his knowledge and prior consent.

- b. Election - Each nominee must be voted on individually. This will take place only after sufficient time has been given for careful evaluation of the man's fitness for office in light of the individual abilities and godliness required by Scripture. This evaluation is the responsibility of each member of the church and should be performed in a serious and prayerful manner (Acts 6:3-6). A nominee will be elected by a three-fourths vote of the members present and voting at a properly called member meeting. Any vote regarding the evaluation or election of officers will require a three-fourths majority to pass.
- c. Installation - The newly selected office bearer will be formally set apart for his responsibilities at a regular worship service by prayer and the laying on of hands by the existing elders (Acts 6:6; 1 Tim 4:14; 5:22).

#### E. REVIEW OF OFFICERS

1. Officers should hold office as long as in the esteem of the church they meet the biblical qualifications for their office.
2. In the case of a man no longer meeting the Scriptural qualifications for his office, he may be brought up for re-evaluation at any time either by one of the elders or upon the written request signed by one-third of the members in good standing. This request must be presented to the elders, who will in turn call a member meeting. The officer in question will have opportunity to answer the charges made against him. He may be removed from office by a majority vote of those members present and voting.

F. OFFICIAL BOARD OF DIRECTORS – In order to “render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s,” this church will be incorporated under the laws of the state of Arizona and therefore has an official Board of Directors. This board of no less than three shall consist of the current elders and deacons of the church. If, at any time there are not three elders and deacons, the remainder of the Board of Directors shall be elected for three year terms from among the male voting members of the church.

The Directors will perform such legal and business transactions as are designated to them by the laws of the State of Arizona and as are agreeable with our Confession of Faith and Constitution.

## ARTICLE 7 – MEMBER MEETINGS

- A. ANNUAL MEETING – There shall be an annual member meeting for the hearing of reports, the passing of the annual budget, and the transaction of such other business as may properly be brought before the members. This meeting shall take place within the first two months of the year.

Prior to the approval of the annual budget and subject to the elders' discretion, expenditures may continue at the prior year's level.

Other member meetings may be called at other times at the discretion of the elders.

- B. CALLING OF MEETINGS – All member meetings shall be called by the elder(s). If at any time there are no elders, or the elder(s) refuses to call a member meeting mandated in this constitution, a member meeting may be called by joint resolution of 1/3 of the members in good standing.
- C. NOTICE OF MEETINGS – Notice of all member meetings shall be given at regular worship services on two successive Lord's Days immediately prior to the meetings. However, in the case of an emergency, a meeting may be called on shorter notice by notifying local members of the time, place and purpose of the meeting. A member unable to attend an emergency meeting because of previous commitments may cast a written absentee vote with an elder prior to the meeting. Other meetings may be called on shorter notice when no vote is to be taken or business transacted.
- D. QUORUM – A quorum at any meeting where business is to be transacted shall consist of fifty percent of the local voting members in good standing. Members are asked to notify the elders if they are unable to attend.
- E. VOTING – Any member present at a member meeting who is in good standing, has attended at least two Worship services within the previous 90 days and is eighteen years of age or over may vote on any matter brought before the members. Because the church is one body in Christ, unanimity of heart and mind shall at all times be sought and prayed for (Acts 6:5), but when unanimity is not realized, at least a two-thirds majority of members present and voting shall be required to make a resolution valid. In other matters wherein the Constitution requires a different proportion of the vote, this two-thirds figure will be overridden by the express statements of the Constitution regarding those categories of business.

## ARTICLE 8 – ASSOCIATIONS

- When it is thought desirable to have fellowship, consultation and cooperation with local churches of like faith and order, this church may join itself to associations of churches.

- Upon recommendation of the elders, such affiliations may be entered by a two-thirds vote of the membership.
- Withdrawal from associations may be affected by a majority vote of the membership.
- Although we may seek the assistance and counsel of other churches in matters of special concern to us, the decision of no other church or group of churches shall at any time be acknowledged as binding on this church.

## **ARTICLE 9 – FINANCES**

The work of this church is financially dependent upon the voluntary gifts of God's people. Before the annual member meeting, the elders shall obtain from the treasurer a prepared budget detailing the proposed expenditures for the coming year.

When this budget is approved by a vote of the membership, every effort shall be made to operate within it. However, it is recognized that unforeseen providences may arise that require additional, unbudgeted spending. In these cases, the elders and deacons must approve the additional expenditures, with a goal of keeping such expenditures to a minimum.

## **ARTICLE 10 – DISSOLUTION**

In the event of the dissolution of Tucson Reformed Baptist Church as a non-profit corporation, the assets of the corporation shall be given and paid over to a non-profit corporation(s) of like faith and practice as determined by the Board of Directors.

## **ARTICLE 11 – AMENDMENTS**

This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority of the members present and voting at a properly called meeting of the membership, provided that the amendment was distributed to the membership in written form at least two weeks prior to such a meeting.