

# CLIFTON BAPTIST CHURCH

## CONSTITUTION

REVISED AUGUST 9, 2015

### **Preamble**

Since it pleased Almighty God, by His Holy Spirit, to call certain of His servants to unite here under the name Clifton Baptist Church of Louisville, Kentucky, for the worship of God and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we, the members of Clifton Baptist Church do hereby organize ourselves and adopt this Constitution as our articles of governance, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of and bring glory to Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Bible and articulated in the Statement of Faith and Covenant of this church.

### **Article 1 - Name**

1.1 This church shall be known as Clifton Baptist Church.

### **Article 2 - Affiliations**

2.1 Clifton Baptist Church is voluntarily cooperating with the Southern Baptist Convention, the Kentucky Baptist Convention, and the Long Run Association.

### **Article 3 - Purpose**

3.1 The foundation of this church is the Lord Jesus Christ (1 Cor. 3:11; Eph. 2:20), and He guides His church in all affairs through the Holy Scriptures (Psalm 119; 2 Tim. 3:15-17). Therefore the purpose of this church is to glorify God through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit (Isa. 43:7; Eph. 1:6, 12, 14).

3.2 The priorities of ministry of this church flow from the vision of God's glory revealed in Jesus Christ. We exist to savor this vision in worship (John 4:23), strengthen the vision in nurture (1 Cor. 14:26; 2 Peter 3:18), and spread the vision in evangelism, missions, and loving deeds (Matt. 5:16; 28:18-20; 1 Pet. 2:9; 3:15).

3.3 In order to remain true to our Lord and His word, this church must be marked by preaching the whole counsel of God (Acts 20:27; 2 Tim. 4:1-2), administering baptism (Matt. 28:19; Rom. 6:1-4) and the Lord's Supper (Luke 22:19; 1 Cor. 11:17-34), loving one another (John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:11-24; 4:7-12), and practicing formative (1 Thess. 5:14; 1 Tim. 5:1-2; Tit. 2:15) and corrective discipline (Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 5:1-5).

### **Article 4 - Membership**

#### Section 1 - Qualifications

4.1.1 To qualify for membership in this church, a person must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration, who has been baptized in obedience to Christ, following his or

her regeneration, and who wholeheartedly believes in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible. Each member must sustain the doctrines of our church and not hold any settled convictions contrary to them, in accord with our Statement of Faith, and must promise to keep the commitments expressed in the Church Covenant.

4.1.2 The normal process for becoming a member is completion of all sessions of the New Members' Class, an assessment of a person's qualification for membership in an interview with at least two elders, and a vote by the entire church on the basis of the person's profession of faith.

## Section 2 - Admission of Members

4.2 To be admitted into church membership, applicants shall be recommended by the elders for admission and accepted by vote of at least 75% of the members present at any regular or special meeting of the members. At that point newly elected members shall relinquish their membership in other churches.

## Section 3 - Duties and Privileges of Membership

4.3.1 In accord with the duties enumerated in the Church Covenant, each member shall be privileged and expected to participate in and contribute to the ministry and life of the church, consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God. Only those who are members of this congregation shall be entitled to lead in the ministries of the church.

4.3.2 It is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend all members' meetings and vote on the election of officers, on decisions regarding membership status, and on such other matters submitted to a vote.

## Section 4 - Watchcare Membership

4.4.1. Persons temporarily residing in the Louisville area who are members of an evangelical church may apply for watchcare membership. Qualifications are identical to those for full membership as set out above, except that home church membership must be retained. A letter of commendation will be sought from the applicant's home church.

4.4.2 Duties and privileges of watchcare members are the same as for other members except that:

1. when absent from the Louisville area for extended periods of time they are released from the responsibility to attend our church services;
2. while they will be encouraged to participate in members' meetings, they will not be eligible to stand for any office or to vote.

4.4.3 Termination of watchcare membership as a disciplinary measure will be as it is for other members, except that the elders shall notify the pastor of the home church of that termination. Watchcare membership will normally terminate immediately upon the ending of the period of temporary residence in the Louisville area.

## Section 5 - On Church Discipline

4.5.1 Formative discipline is inherent in the preaching, teaching, and exercise of other ministries in the church. When formative discipline fails due to sin, corrective discipline is then necessary. Corrective discipline is for the good of the church and the member who has sinned. It is never to be entered into lightly or quickly. The goal of corrective discipline is always remedial, that is, the goal is always the salvation and holiness and good of the one being disciplined.

4.5.2 Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so opposing the welfare of the church, shall be subject to the admonition of the elders and the discipline of the church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and the example of Scripture. Church discipline, then, should ordinarily be contemplated after individual private admonition has failed. Church discipline can include admonition by the elders or congregation, removal from office, and excommunication (see Matthew 18:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; 1 Timothy 5:19-20; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5).

4.5.3 The purpose of such discipline should be:

1. For the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined (Heb. 12:1-11; Matt. 18:15-17; 1 Cor. 5:5; Gal. 6:1);
2. For the instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to them (1 Cor. 5:11; 1 Tim. 5:20; Heb. 10:24-25);
3. For the purity of the church as a whole (1 Cor. 5:6-7; Eph. 5:27; Rev. 21:2);
4. For the good of our corporate witness to non-Christians (Matt. 5:13-16; John 13:35; Acts 5:10-14); and
5. Supremely for the glory of God by reflecting His holy character (Deut. 5:11; John 15:8; Eph. 1:4; 1 Pet. 2:12).

4.5.4 It is desirable in the case of public sin that a confession be made before the church in a specially called meeting, so that the church can freely extend forgiveness. Such public confession is especially necessary in the case of elders and deacons (1 Tim. 5:19-20; Gal. 2:11-14).

## Section 6 - Termination of Membership

4.6 Termination of membership shall be recognized by the church following the death, transfer of membership, or voluntary resignation of any church member who is in good standing. Membership may also be terminated as an act of church discipline (ordinarily, but not necessarily, at the recommendation of the elders) and with the vote of 75% of the members present at any regular or special meeting of the members. The church shall have authority to refuse a member's voluntary resignation or transfer of membership to another church, either for the purpose of proceeding with a process of church discipline or for any other biblical reason.

## **Article 5 - Meetings**

### Section 1 - Worship Meetings

5.1 Worship services shall be held each Lord's Day, and may be held throughout the week as the church determines.

### Section 2 - Members' Meetings

5.2.1 In every meeting together, members shall act in that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

5.2.2 There shall be a regular members' meeting at least every quarter, at some time apart from the Sunday morning service, and at a time acceptable to the membership. The elders shall see that the stated meetings of the church are regularly held and that required reports are submitted to the church by the responsible members.

5.2.3 Special members' meetings may be called as requested by the elders, or at the written request, submitted to the elders, of ten percent of the voting membership. In the event of a written request from the members, the elders shall call a special meeting to be held within one month of their receipt of the request.

5.2.4 There shall be an annual members' meeting, at which normally officers are elected, positions filled, and a budget approved by the membership no more than three nor less than one month prior to the start of the fiscal year. The fiscal year will commence on January 1.

5.2.5 The chairman of the elders shall preside as moderator at all members' meetings of the church. In the absence or incapacity of the chairman of the elders, another elder appointed by the elders shall perform these duties. The date, time, and purpose of any regular or special meeting shall be announced at all public services of the church at least two weeks preceding the meeting. Provided all constitutional provisions for notification have been met, a quorum shall be understood to be met by those members present.

5.2.6 Meetings shall be run according to Robert's Rules of Order. On any matter that is brought to vote, a two-thirds vote is needed for it to pass (unless this constitution specifies otherwise). Abstentions will not be considered as votes cast. Only votes cast by members present at the time of the meeting will be counted.

5.2.7 Resolutions adopted by the elders shall be reported to the church at members' meetings and may be reversed by the church by a majority vote of the members present.

## Article 6 - Officers

### Section 1 - Summary

6.1.1 Jesus Christ is the Lord and head of this church and He rules primarily through the Scriptures.

6.1.2 The biblical offices in the church are elders and deacons, but the church is governed by the congregation. The biblical terms “elder,” “pastor,” and “overseer” are understood to refer to the same biblical office. In addition, our church recognizes the administrative positions under this constitution of clerk and treasurer, as well as paid ministerial staff as occasion may require. All officers must be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

### Section 2 - Elders

6.2.1 Subject to the will of the congregation, the elders shall provide broad oversight to the ministry, financial management, and resources of the church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 5:17; Tit. 1:5-9; Jas. 5:14; and 1 Pet. 5:1-4, the elders shall seek the mind of Christ through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the word of God as they undertake the work of shepherding God's flock. The elders shall teach and exhort; refute those who contradict the truth; pray for the sick; care for the church's members; devote themselves to prayer, to the government of the church and to ministry. The elders shall provide oversight of the congregation and lead the church to fulfill its ministries.

6.2.2 The elders shall be comprised of not less than three men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of elder set forth in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Tit. 1:6-9. Only men may serve as elders in accord with 1 Tim. 2:12; 3:2. At least one-third of the elder board must consist of those who receive no financial compensation from the church. No elder shall hold the office of deacon during his tenure. Those elders not receiving compensation from the church will be called “lay elders” for the purpose of this constitution, although biblically and functionally there is no difference among the elders.

6.2.3 The church shall recognize men gifted and willing to serve in this calling, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as elders. This recognition shall be reaffirmed by the church triennially. After a lay elder has served two consecutive three-year terms, he shall not be eligible for re-election to the eldership for at least one year. Staff elders, however, are not subject to term limits. In the event that a staff elder resigns his staff position, yet retains an active and involved membership, at the elders' discretion he may continue service in his office as a lay elder until the second regularly scheduled members meeting after his staff resignation, at which time he is eligible for recommendation from the elders for re-election for service as a lay elder. Upon the completion of that term, he shall be eligible for another term if so elected by the membership.

6.2.4 An elder's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members with reason to believe that an elder should be dismissed should express such concern to the elders and, if need be only afterwards, to the congregation. Any such action shall be done in

accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matt. 18:15-17 and 1 Tim. 5:17-21. Any elder may be dismissed by a two-thirds vote of the members at any formally called members' meeting of the church.

6.2.5 The elders shall take particular responsibility to oversee worship services; administer the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper; equip the membership for the work of the ministry; encourage and teach sound doctrine; admonish and correct error; oversee the process of church discipline; coordinate and promote the ministries of the church; mobilize the church for world missions; examine and instruct prospective members; examine and recommend all prospective candidates for offices and positions; receive, hold and disburse a fund for benevolence (reporting to the church the total receipts and disbursements for the overall benevolence fund); and oversee the work of the deacons and appointed church agents and committees. The elders are further to ensure that all who minister the word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share our fundamental convictions.

6.2.6 The elders may establish and oversee ministry positions and committees to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities. The elders shall also have primary responsibility for the employment, supervision, and evaluation of staff members. The outworking of this responsibility may, on a case-by-case basis, be delegated to deacons or another staff member.

6.2.7 A paid staff or volunteer ministry position does not in and of itself constitute an elder's position.

6.2.8 In proposing new paid ministerial staff positions, the elders shall present a job description for each position to the membership for approval. The membership may approve all candidates to fill such positions or may delegate this responsibility, on a position-by-position basis, to the elders, deacons, or other staff members. The elders shall present a request to dismiss paid ministerial staff (i.e., those paid to do ministry) to the congregation. The elders may hire and fire non-ministerial staff, or delegate that responsibility on a case-by-case basis. The elders will report job descriptions, hiring decisions, and firing decisions for non-ministerial staff, or delegate that responsibility on a case-by-case basis. The elders shall report to the congregation all changes to any job description.

6.2.9 The elders may choose to operate among themselves by consensus, but they must have at least 75% approval of the elders in order to proceed with an action.

6.2.10 The elders shall elect a chairman who shall serve as chairman of elders' meetings and as moderator of members' meetings. The chairman shall be a lay elder. In his absence, the elders shall appoint another elder to fulfill these duties.

6.2.11 For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the state of Kentucky, the chairman of the elders shall serve as the president of the corporation.

### Section 3 - A Preaching Elder

6.3.1 A preaching elder shall perform the duties of an elder described in Section 2, above. He shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the ministry of preaching and teaching the word of God.

6.3.2 In the absence or incapacity of a preaching elder, the other elders shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which can be delegated.

### Section 4 – Deacons

6.4.1 The office of deacon is described in 1 Tim. 3:8-13 (cf. Acts 6:1-7). The church shall recognize, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections, men and women who are giving of themselves in service to the church, who possess gifts of ministry, and who are called to further service and care for the church's members. The number of deacons shall be determined by the needs of the ministry and the call and qualifications of men and women in the church. These members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as deacons. This recognition shall be reaffirmed by the church biannually. After a deacon has served three consecutive two-year terms, he or she shall not be eligible for re-election to the deaconate for at least one year.

6.4.2 Deacons shall advise and assist the elders in any service that shall support and promote the ministry of the word, new and existing ministries of the church, and the care of the members of the congregation. The deacons may be organized in the most fitting way to accomplish the mission of the church. Thus the ministry of deacons may involve several diaconal committees. There is no requirement that the deacons meet as a committee of the whole.

6.4.3 The responsibilities of deacons do not include preaching, teaching, or spiritual oversight, which are the responsibilities of the elders, or financial control of the church. Deacons exercise a ministry of service, not a ministry of spiritual leadership. Although they may teach and preach in contexts in which they are not infringing upon the oversight duties of elders (Acts 6-7:53; Titus 2:3), the responsibilities of deacons include the following:

1. The ministry of mercy is a particular responsibility of deacons. They shall see that the sick, the sorrowing, the aged, and the infirm receive spiritual and physical comfort.
2. Deacons shall attend to the accommodations for public worship. Deacons may assist in providing for the elements during the Lord's Supper.
3. Deacons shall attend to the normal care and maintenance of church properties.
4. Deacons shall attend to the welcoming and greeting ministries of the church.
5. Deacons of finance shall attend to the budgeting process of the church.
6. At the elders' recommendation, the church may recognize deacons to serve in other specific capacities as needs arise in the church.

6.4.4 Each year the deacons of finance, with the approval of the elders, shall present to the church an itemized budget at the regular members' meeting preceding the annual members meeting. This budget shall be presented for discussion at that time and called up for a vote at the annual members' meeting.

6.4.5 No money shall be solicited by or on behalf of the church or any of its ministries without the approval of the elders or the deacons responsible for the church's finances.

#### Section 5 - Clerk

6.5.1 It shall be the duty of the clerk to record the minutes of all regular and special members' meetings of the church, to preserve an accurate roll of the membership, and to render reports as requested by the elders, deacons or the church.

6.5.2 In the absence or incapacity of the clerk, the elders shall appoint a member to perform the duties of the church clerk.

6.5.3 For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the state of Kentucky, the clerk shall serve as the secretary of the corporation.

6.5.4 The church clerk shall ensure that dated copies of the most recent revision of this constitution shall be available for all church members.

#### Section 6 - Treasurer

6.6 The treasurer, who shall not be an active elder or a paid church staff member, shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as designated by the church. The treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church. The treasurer shall render to the elders annually, or whenever they may require it, an account of all transactions as treasurer and of the financial condition of the church. The treasurer shall also be responsible for presenting regular reports of the account balances, revenues, and expenses of the church at regular members' meetings.

### **Article 7 - Elections**

#### Section 1 - Principles

7.1 The process for church elections shall be interpreted and carried out to fulfill the following principles:

1. Substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, shall be an integral part of the election process.
2. Nominations shall proceed with the support of the elders.
3. All candidates for church office shall be treated with the grace, kindness, and honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow members.
4. The election process shall express that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration which is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## Section 2 - Selection of Officers

7.2.1 The election of officers shall be held as needed in a members' meeting of the church. Two months prior to the election the elders should seek recommendations and involvement from the general membership in the nomination process.

7.2.2 A slate of names of nominees to serve as elders, deacons, ministerial staff, clerk, and treasurer shall be presented by the elders and made known to the church at least one month prior to voting. Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for an office should express such concern to the elders. Members intending to speak in opposition to a candidate should express their objection to the elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant church members' meeting at which the church votes on the candidates.

7.2.3 The chairman of the elders shall declare as elected those persons receiving a 75% majority of all votes cast for any office.

7.2.4 The persons elected shall assume their respective offices at the beginning of the fiscal year (unless another date has been specifically designated). Elections to fill any need that may occur during the course of the year may be held at any members' meeting, upon recommendation of the elders.

## Section 3 - Calling of Staff Elders

7.3.1 In the calling of any man to a staff elder position, the same basic process of calling an elder must be followed, and the elders shall encourage members of the congregation to submit names. The elders shall nominate a staff elder candidate to the congregation, after which the church shall be given adequate opportunity to assess the gifts and spiritual life of the potential staff elder.

7.3.2 In selecting a staff elder who is not a current member of the church, the same biblical qualifications for all elders, as listed in 6.2.2, will be prerequisite. The ability to preach will be assessed with particular care when selecting a potential preaching elder. In addition, the church shall receive assurance from the elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Statement of Faith and Church Covenant.

7.3.3 The elders shall bring only one recommendation to the church at a time.

7.3.4 Notice of the nomination of a man to be elected to membership and called as a staff elder shall be given at two Sunday morning services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a members' meeting. The call of a staff elder shall take place at a members meeting set aside for that purpose. The extension of a call shall be made upon an affirmative vote of 75% of the members present, upon which he shall be a member of the church, an elder, and a staff elder, whom the church shall publicly recognize as such.

## **Article 8 - Indemnification**

### Section 1 - Mandatory Indemnification

8.1 If a legal claim or criminal allegation is made against a person because he or she is or was an officer, employee, or agent of the church, the church shall provide indemnification against liability and costs incurred in defending against the claim if the elders determine that the person acted (a) in good faith, (b) with the care an ordinarily prudent person in a similar position would exercise under similar circumstances, and (c) in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the church, and the person had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful. The church shall purchase appropriate insurance to meet these potential liabilities.

#### Section 2 - Permissive Indemnification

8.2 At the discretion of the elders, the church also may indemnify any person who (a) acted in good faith and reasonably believed that his or her conduct was in the church's best interest and (b) either believed that his or her conduct was not unlawful or failed to abide by a law that the elders determine to be in contradiction to biblical obligations.

#### Section 3 - Procedure

8.3 If a quorum of the elders is not available for an indemnification determination because of the number of elders seeking indemnification, the requisite determination may be made by the membership or by special legal counsel appointed by the membership.

### **Article 9 - Dispute Resolution**

9.1 Believing that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian church (see, e.g., Matt. 18:15-20; 1 Cor. 6:1-8), the church shall urge its members to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblically based principles, without reliance on the secular courts. Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the church shall encourage the use of biblically based principles and the avoidance of suits of law to resolve disputes between itself and those outside the church, whether Christian or pagan and whether individuals or corporate entities. The elders shall adopt policies and procedures to effect these aspirations.

### **Article 10 - Amendments**

10.1 The Statement of Faith and Church Covenant may be amended by a three-quarters vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous members' meeting, and shall have been announced from the pulpit at church services two successive Sundays prior to such vote.

10.2 This constitution may be amended by a two-thirds vote of the members present and voting at a members' meeting, provided the amendment shall have been offered in writing at the previous members' meeting, and shall have been announced from the pulpit at church services two successive Sundays prior to such vote.