

# CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

Central Baptist Church SBC, Inc.

Lewistown, Montana

August 24, 2020

We declare and establish this Constitution for the preservation and security of the principles of our faith. Desiring to continue adherence to the historic Baptist position of the sovereignty of the local church, which means full freedom of deliberation, decision and deportment under God, without coercion, restriction, supervision, or domination from any outside individual, organization or institution. This Constitution will also preserve the liberties of each individual member of this church.

We do, therefore, band together as a body of immersed believers in Jesus Christ and adopt, ordain, and establish for our government and plan of worship and service the following Constitution and By-Laws and rescind all the previous actions contrary to the provisions herein, and we do declare that this local church shall affiliate only with Evangelical Churches whose interests are sound and true to the Word of God.

## I. NAME

This church body shall be known as the Central Baptist Church of Lewistown, Montana, which is affiliated with the Southern Baptist Convention.

## II. ARTICLES OF FAITH

Central Baptist Church embraces the doctrinal statement of *The Baptist Faith and Message* as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention, June 14, 2000. The sole authority for our faith and practice are the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. All of its 66 books are the inspired, inerrant, and infallible word of God to mankind.

### I. **The Scriptures**

The Holy Bible was written by men divinely inspired and is God's revelation of Himself to man. It is a perfect treasure of divine instruction. It has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth, without any mixture of error, for its matter. Therefore, all Scripture is totally true and trustworthy. It reveals the principles by which God judges us, and therefore is, and will remain to the end of the world, the true center of Christian union, and the supreme standard by which all human conduct, creeds, and religious opinions should be tried. All Scripture is a testimony to Christ, who is Himself the focus of divine revelation.

*Exodus 24:4; Deuteronomy 4:1-2; 17:19; Joshua 8:34; Psalms 19:7-10; 119:11,89,105,140; Isaiah 34:16; 40:8; Jeremiah 15:16; 36:1-32; Matthew 5:17-18; 22:29; Luke 21:33; 24:44-46; John 5:39; 16:13-15; 17:17; Acts 2:16ff.; 17:11; Romans 15:4; 16:25-26; 2 Timothy 3:15-17; Hebrews 1:1-2; 4:12; 1 Peter 1:25; 2 Peter 1:19-21.*

### II. **God**

There is one and only one living and true God. He is an intelligent, spiritual, and personal Being, the Creator, Redeemer, Preserver, and Ruler of the universe. God is infinite in holiness and all other perfections. God is all powerful and all knowing; and His perfect knowledge extends to all things, past, present, and future, including the future decisions

of His free creatures. To Him we owe the highest love, reverence, and obedience. The eternal triune God reveals Himself to us as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, with distinct personal attributes, but without division of nature, essence, or being.

### **A. God the Father**

God as Father reigns with providential care over His universe, His creatures, and the flow of the stream of human history according to the purposes of His grace. He is all powerful, all knowing, all loving, and all wise. God is Father in truth to those who become children of God through faith in Jesus Christ. He is fatherly in His attitude toward all men.

*Genesis 1:1; 2:7; Exodus 3:14; 6:2-3; 15:11ff.; 20:1ff.; Leviticus 22:2; Deuteronomy 6:4; 32:6; 1 Chronicles 29:10; Psalm 19:1-3; Isaiah 43:3,15; 64:8; Jeremiah 10:10; 17:13; Matthew 6:9ff.; 7:11; 23:9; 28:19; Mark 1:9-11; John 4:24; 5:26; 14:6-13; 17:1-8; Acts 1:7; Romans 8:14-15; 1 Corinthians 8:6; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 4:6; Colossians 1:15; 1 Timothy 1:17; Hebrews 11:6; 12:9; 1 Peter 1:17; 1 John 5:7.*

### **B. God the Son**

Christ is the eternal Son of God. In His incarnation as Jesus Christ He was conceived of the Holy Spirit and born of the virgin Mary. Jesus perfectly revealed and did the will of God, taking upon Himself human nature with its demands and necessities and identifying Himself completely with mankind yet without sin. He honored the divine law by His personal obedience, and in His substitutionary death on the cross He made provision for the redemption of men from sin. He was raised from the dead with a glorified body and appeared to His disciples as the person who was with them before His crucifixion. He ascended into heaven and is now exalted at the right hand of God where He is the One Mediator, fully God, fully man, in whose Person is effected the reconciliation between God and man. He will return in power and glory to judge the world and to consummate His redemptive mission. He now dwells in all believers as the living and ever present Lord.

*Genesis 18:1ff.; Psalms 2:7ff.; 110:1ff.; Isaiah 7:14; Isaiah 53:1-12; Matthew 1:18-23; 3:17; 8:29; 11:27; 14:33; 16:16,27; 17:5; 27; 28:1-6,19; Mark 1:1; 3:11; Luke 1:35; 4:41; 22:70; 24:46; John 1:1-18,29; 10:30,38; 11:25-27; 12:44-50; 14:7-11; 16:15-16,28; 17:1-5, 21-22; 20:1-20,28; Acts 1:9; 2:22-24; 7:55-56; 9:4-5,20; Romans 1:3-4; 3:23-26; 5:6-21; 8:1-3,34; 10:4; 1 Corinthians 1:30; 2:2; 8:6; 15:1-8,24-28; 2 Corinthians 5:19-21; 8:9; Galatians 4:4-5; Ephesians 1:20; 3:11; 4:7-10; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 1:13-22; 2:9; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 1 Timothy 2:5-6; 3:16; Titus 2:13-14; Hebrews 1:1-3; 4:14-15; 7:14-28; 9:12-15,24-28; 12:2; 13:8; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 3:22; 1 John 1:7-9; 3:2; 4:14-15; 5:9; 2 John 7-9; Revelation 1:13-16; 5:9-14; 12:10-11; 13:8; 19:16.*

### **C. God the Holy Spirit**

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of God, fully divine. He inspired holy men of old to write the Scriptures. Through illumination He enables men to understand truth. He exalts Christ. He convicts men of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. He calls men to the Saviour, and effects regeneration. At the moment of regeneration He baptizes every believer into the Body of Christ. He cultivates Christian character, comforts believers, and bestows the spiritual gifts by which they serve God through His church. He seals the believer unto the day of final redemption. His presence in the Christian is the guarantee that God will bring the believer into the fullness of the stature of Christ. He enlightens and empowers the believer and the church in worship, evangelism, and service.

*Genesis 1:2; Judges 14:6; Job 26:13; Psalms 51:11; 139:7ff.; Isaiah 61:1-3; Joel 2:28-32; Matthew 1:18; 3:16; 4:1; 12:28-32; 28:19; Mark 1:10,12; Luke 1:35; 4:1,18-19; 11:13; 12:12; 24:49; John 4:24; 14:16-17,26; 15:26; 16:7-14; Acts 1:8; 2:1-4,38; 4:31; 5:3; 6:3; 7:55; 8:17,39; 10:44; 13:2; 15:28; 16:6; 19:1-6; Romans 8:9-11,14-16,26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:10-14; 3:16; 12:3-11,13; Galatians 4:6; Ephesians 1:13-14; 4:30; 5:18; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; 1 Timothy 3:16; 4:1; 2 Timothy 1:14; 3:16; Hebrews 9:8,14; 2 Peter 1:21; 1 John 4:13; 5:6-7; Revelation 1:10; 22:17.*

### **III. Man**

Man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. He created them male and female as the crowning work of His creation. The gift of gender is thus part of the goodness of God's creation. In the beginning man was innocent of sin and was endowed by his Creator with freedom of choice. By his free choice man sinned against God and brought sin into the human race. Through the temptation of Satan man transgressed the command of God, and fell from his original innocence whereby his posterity inherit a nature and an environment inclined toward sin. Therefore, as soon as they are capable of moral action, they become transgressors and are under condemnation. Only the grace of God can bring man into His holy fellowship and enable man to fulfill the creative purpose of God. The sacredness of human personality is evident in that God created man in His own image, and in that Christ died for man; therefore, every person of every race possesses full dignity and is worthy of respect and Christian love.

*Genesis 1:26-30; 2:5,7,18-22; 3; 9:6; Psalms 1; 8:3-6; 32:1-5; 51:5; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 17:5; Matthew 16:26; Acts 17:26-31; Romans 1:19-32; 3:10-18,23; 5:6,12,19; 6:6; 7:14-25; 8:14-18,29; 1 Corinthians 1:21-31; 15:19,21-22; Ephesians 2:1-22; Colossians 1:21-22; 3:9-11.*

### **IV. Salvation**

Salvation involves the redemption of the whole man, and is offered freely to all who accept Jesus Christ as Lord and Saviour, who by His own blood obtained eternal redemption for the believer. In its broadest sense salvation includes regeneration, justification, sanctification, and glorification. There is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.

**A. Regeneration**, or the new birth, is a work of God's grace whereby believers become new creatures in Christ Jesus. It is a change of heart wrought by the Holy Spirit through conviction of sin, to which the sinner responds in repentance toward God and faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Repentance and faith are inseparable experiences of grace.

Repentance is a genuine turning from sin toward God. Faith is the acceptance of Jesus Christ and commitment of the entire personality to Him as Lord and Saviour.

**B. Justification** is God's gracious and full acquittal upon principles of His righteousness of all sinners who repent and believe in Christ. Justification brings the believer unto a relationship of peace and favor with God.

**C. Sanctification** is the experience, beginning in regeneration, by which the believer is set apart to God's purposes, and is enabled to progress toward moral and spiritual maturity through the presence and power of the Holy Spirit dwelling in him. Growth in grace should continue throughout the regenerate person's life.

**D. Glorification** is the culmination of salvation and is the final blessed and abiding state of the redeemed.

*Genesis 3:15; Exodus 3:14-17; 6:2-8; Matthew 1:21; 4:17; 16:21-26; 27:22-28:6; Luke 1:68-69; 2:28-32; John 1:11-14,29; 3:3-21,36; 5:24; 10:9,28-29; 15:1-16; 17:17; Acts*

2:21; 4:12; 15:11; 16:30-31; 17:30-31; 20:32; Romans 1:16-18; 2:4; 3:23-25; 4:3ff.; 5:8-10; 6:1-23; 8:1-18,29-39; 10:9-10,13; 13:11-14; 1 Corinthians 1:18,30; 6:19-20; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:17-20; Galatians 2:20; 3:13; 5:22-25; 6:15; Ephesians 1:7; 2:8-22; 4:11-16; Philippians 2:12-13; Colossians 1:9-22; 3:1ff.; 1 Thessalonians 5:23-24; 2 Timothy 1:12; Titus 2:11-14; Hebrews 2:1-3; 5:8-9; 9:24-28; 11:1-12:8,14; James 2:14-26; 1 Peter 1:2-23; 1 John 1:6-2:11; Revelation 3:20; 21:1-22:5.

## **V. God's Purpose of Grace**

Election is the gracious purpose of God, according to which He regenerates, justifies, sanctifies, and glorifies sinners. It is consistent with the free agency of man, and comprehends all the means in connection with the end. It is the glorious display of God's sovereign goodness, and is infinitely wise, holy, and unchangeable. It excludes boasting and promotes humility.

All true believers endure to the end. Those whom God has accepted in Christ, and sanctified by His Spirit, will never fall away from the state of grace, but shall persevere to the end. Believers may fall into sin through neglect and temptation, whereby they grieve the Spirit, impair their graces and comforts, and bring reproach on the cause of Christ and temporal judgments on themselves; yet they shall be kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

*Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-8; 1 Samuel 8:4-7,19-22; Isaiah 5:1-7; Jeremiah 31:31ff.; Matthew 16:18-19; 21:28-45; 24:22,31; 25:34; Luke 1:68-79; 2:29-32; 19:41-44; 24:44-48; John 1:12-14; 3:16; 5:24; 6:44-45,65; 10:27-29; 15:16; 17:6,12,17-18; Acts 20:32; Romans 5:9-10; 8:28-39; 10:12-15; 11:5-7,26-36; 1 Corinthians 1:1-2; 15:24-28; Ephesians 1:4-23; 2:1-10; 3:1-11; Colossians 1:12-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-14; 2 Timothy 1:12; 2:10,19; Hebrews 11:39-12:2; James 1:12; 1 Peter 1:2-5,13; 2:4-10; 1 John 1:7-9; 2:19; 3:2.*

## **VI. The Church**

A New Testament church of the Lord Jesus Christ is an autonomous local congregation of baptized believers, associated by covenant in the faith and fellowship of the gospel; observing the two ordinances of Christ, governed by His laws, exercising the gifts, rights, and privileges invested in them by His Word, and seeking to extend the gospel to the ends of the earth. Each congregation operates under the Lordship of Christ through democratic processes. In such a congregation each member is responsible and accountable to Christ as Lord. Its scriptural officers are pastors and deacons. While both men and women are gifted for service in the church, the office of pastor is limited to men as qualified by Scripture.

The New Testament speaks also of the church as the Body of Christ which includes all of the redeemed of all the ages, believers from every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation.

*Matthew 16:15-19; 18:15-20; Acts 2:41-42,47; 5:11-14; 6:3-6; 13:1-3; 14:23,27; 15:1-30; 16:5; 20:28; Romans 1:7; 1 Corinthians 1:2; 3:16; 5:4-5; 7:17; 9:13-14; 12; Ephesians 1:22-23; 2:19-22; 3:8-11,21; 5:22-32; Philippians 1:1; Colossians 1:18; 1 Timothy 2:9-14; 3:1-15; 4:14; Hebrews 11:39-40; 1 Peter 5:1-4; Revelation 2-3; 21:2-3.*

## **VII. Baptism and the Lord's Supper**

Christian baptism is the immersion of a believer in water in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It is an act of obedience symbolizing the believer's faith in a

crucified, buried, and risen Savior, the believer's death to sin, the burial of the old life, and the resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. It is a testimony to his faith in the final resurrection of the dead. Being a church ordinance, it is prerequisite to the privileges of church membership and to the Lord's Supper. [NOTE: Central Baptist Church SBC, Inc. considers baptism as an act of obedience to God and a requirement for church membership, we do not see it as required for salvation or for partaking of the Lord's Supper.]

The Lord's Supper is a symbolic act of obedience whereby members of the *body of Christ*, through partaking of the bread and the fruit of the vine, memorialize the death of the Redeemer and anticipate His second coming.

*Matthew 3:13-17; 26:26-30; 28:19-20; Mark 1:9-11; 14:22-26; Luke 3:21-22; 22:19-20; John 3:23; Acts 2:41-42; 8:35-39; 16:30-33; 20:7; Romans 6:3-5; 1 Corinthians 10:16,21; 11:23-29; Colossians 2:12.*

### **VIII. The Lord's Day**

The first day of the week is the Lord's Day. It is a Christian institution for regular observance. It commemorates the resurrection of Christ from the dead and should include exercises of worship and spiritual devotion, both public and private. Activities on the Lord's Day should be commensurate with the Christian's conscience under the Lordship of Jesus Christ.

*Exodus 20:8-11; Matthew 12:1-12; 28:1ff.; Mark 2:27-28; 16:1-7; Luke 24:1-3,33-36; John 4:21-24; 20:1,19-28; Acts 20:7; Romans 14:5-10; 1 Corinthians 16:1-2; Colossians 2:16; 3:16; Revelation 1:10.*

### **IX. The Kingdom**

The Kingdom of God includes both His general sovereignty over the universe and His particular kingship over men who willfully acknowledge Him as King. Particularly the Kingdom is the realm of salvation into which men enter by trustful, childlike commitment to Jesus Christ. Christians ought to pray and to labor that the Kingdom may come and God's will be done on earth. The full consummation of the Kingdom awaits the return of Jesus Christ and the end of this age.

*Genesis 1:1; Isaiah 9:6-7; Jeremiah 23:5-6; Matthew 3:2; 4:8-10,23; 12:25-28; 13:1-52; 25:31-46; 26:29; Mark 1:14-15; 9:1; Luke 4:43; 8:1; 9:2; 12:31-32; 17:20-21; 23:42; John 3:3; 18:36; Acts 1:6-7; 17:22-31; Romans 5:17; 8:19; 1 Corinthians 15:24-28; Colossians 1:13; Hebrews 11:10,16; 12:28; 1 Peter 2:4-10; 4:13; Revelation 1:6,9; 5:10; 11:15; 21-22.*

### **X. Last Things**

God, in His own time and in His own way, will bring the world to its appropriate end. According to His promise, Jesus Christ will return personally and visibly in glory to the earth; the dead will be raised; and Christ will judge all men in righteousness. The unrighteous will be consigned to Hell, the place of everlasting punishment. The righteous in their resurrected and glorified bodies will receive their reward and will dwell forever in Heaven with the Lord.

*Isaiah 2:4; 11:9; Matthew 16:27; 18:8-9; 19:28; 24:27,30,36,44; 25:31-46; 26:64; Mark 8:38; 9:43-48; Luke 12:40,48; 16:19-26; 17:22-37; 21:27-28; John 14:1-3; Acts 1:11; 17:31; Romans 14:10; 1 Corinthians 4:5; 15:24-28,35-58; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Colossians 1:5; 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:14-18; 5:1ff.; 2 Thessalonians 1:7ff.; 2; 1 Timothy 6:14; 2 Timothy 4:1,8; Titus 2:13; Hebrews 9:27-*

28; James 5:8; 2 Peter 3:7ff.; 1 John 2:28; 3:2; Jude 14; Revelation 1:18; 3:11; 20:1-22:13.

## **XI. Evangelism and Missions**

It is the duty and privilege of every follower of Christ and of every church of the Lord Jesus Christ to endeavor to make disciples of all nations. The new birth of man's spirit by God's Holy Spirit means the birth of love for others. Missionary effort on the part of all rests thus upon a spiritual necessity of the regenerate life, and is expressly and repeatedly commanded in the teachings of Christ. The Lord Jesus Christ has commanded the preaching of the gospel to all nations. It is the duty of every child of God to seek constantly to win the lost to Christ by verbal witness undergirded by a Christian lifestyle, and by other methods in harmony with the gospel of Christ.

*Genesis 12:1-3; Exodus 19:5-6; Isaiah 6:1-8; Matthew 9:37-38; 10:5-15; 13:18-30, 37-43; 16:19; 22:9-10; 24:14; 28:18-20; Luke 10:1-18; 24:46-53; John 14:11-12; 15:7-8,16; 17:15; 20:21; Acts 1:8; 2; 8:26-40; 10:42-48; 13:2-3; Romans 10:13-15; Ephesians 3:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 1:8; 2 Timothy 4:5; Hebrews 2:1-3; 11:39-12:2; 1 Peter 2:4-10; Revelation 22:17.*

## **XII. Education**

Christianity is the faith of enlightenment and intelligence. In Jesus Christ abide all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. All sound learning is, therefore, a part of our Christian heritage. The new birth opens all human faculties and creates a thirst for knowledge. Moreover, the cause of education in the Kingdom of Christ is co-ordinate with the causes of missions and general benevolence, and should receive along with these the liberal support of the churches. An adequate system of Christian education is necessary to a complete spiritual program for Christ's people.

In Christian education there should be a proper balance between academic freedom and academic responsibility. Freedom in any orderly relationship of human life is always limited and never absolute. The freedom of a teacher in a Christian school, college, or seminary is limited by the pre-eminence of Jesus Christ, by the authoritative nature of the Scriptures, and by the distinct purpose for which the school exists.

*Deuteronomy 4:1,5,9,14; 6:1-10; 31:12-13; Nehemiah 8:1-8; Job 28:28; Psalms 19:7ff.; 119:11; Proverbs 3:13ff.; 4:1-10; 8:1-7,11; 15:14; Ecclesiastes 7:19; Matthew 5:2; 7:24ff.; 28:19-20; Luke 2:40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; Ephesians 4:11-16; Philippians 4:8; Colossians 2:3,8-9; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:14-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 1:5; 3:17.*

## **XIII. Stewardship**

God is the source of all blessings, temporal and spiritual; all that we have and are we owe to Him. Christians have a spiritual debtorship to the whole world, a holy trusteeship in the gospel, and a binding stewardship in their possessions. They are therefore under obligation to serve Him with their time, talents, and material possessions; and should recognize all these as entrusted to them to use for the glory of God and for helping others. According to the Scriptures, Christians should contribute of their means cheerfully, regularly, systematically, proportionately, and liberally for the advancement of the Redeemer's cause on earth.

*Genesis 14:20; Leviticus 27:30-32; Deuteronomy 8:18; Malachi 3:8-12; Matthew 6:1-4,19-21; 19:21; 23:23; 25:14-29; Luke 12:16-21,42; 16:1-13; Acts 2:44-47; 5:1-11; 17:24-25; 20:35; Romans 6:6-22; 12:1-2; 1 Corinthians 4:1-2; 6:19-20; 12; 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9; 12:15; Philippians 4:10-19; 1 Peter 1:18-19.*

#### **XIV. Cooperation**

Christ's people should, as occasion requires, organize such associations and conventions as may best secure cooperation for the great objects of the Kingdom of God. Such organizations have no authority over one another or over the churches. They are voluntary and advisory bodies designed to elicit, combine, and direct the energies of our people in the most effective manner. Members of New Testament churches should cooperate with one another in carrying forward the missionary, educational, and benevolent ministries for the extension of Christ's Kingdom. Christian unity in the New Testament sense is spiritual harmony and voluntary cooperation for common ends by various groups of Christ's people. Cooperation is desirable between the various Christian denominations, when the end to be attained is itself justified, and when such cooperation involves no violation of conscience or compromise of loyalty to Christ and His Word as revealed in the New Testament.

*Exodus 17:12; 18:17ff.; Judges 7:21; Ezra 1:3-4; 2:68-69; 5:14-15; Nehemiah 4; 8:1-5; Matthew 10:5-15; 20:1-16; 22:1-10; 28:19-20; Mark 2:3; Luke 10:1ff.; Acts 1:13-14; 2:1ff.; 4:31-37; 13:2-3; 15:1-35; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 3:5-15; 12; 2 Corinthians 8-9; Galatians 1:6-10; Ephesians 4:1-16; Philippians 1:15-18.*

#### **XV. The Christian and the Social Order**

All Christians are under obligation to seek to make the will of Christ supreme in our own lives and in human society. Means and methods used for the improvement of society and the establishment of righteousness among men can be truly and permanently helpful only when they are rooted in the regeneration of the individual by the saving grace of God in Jesus Christ. In the spirit of Christ, Christians should oppose racism, every form of greed, selfishness, and vice, and all forms of sexual immorality, including adultery, homosexuality, and pornography. We should work to provide for the orphaned, the needy, the abused, the aged, the helpless, and the sick. We should speak on behalf of the unborn and contend for the sanctity of all human life from conception to natural death. Every Christian should seek to bring industry, government, and society as a whole under the sway of the principles of righteousness, truth, and brotherly love. In order to promote these ends Christians should be ready to work with all men of good will in any good cause, always being careful to act in the spirit of love without compromising their loyalty to Christ and His truth.

*Exodus 20:3-17; Leviticus 6:2-5; Deuteronomy 10:12; 27:17; Psalm 101:5; Micah 6:8; Zechariah 8:16; Matthew 5:13-16,43-48; 22:36-40; 25:35; Mark 1:29-34; 2:3ff.; 10:21; Luke 4:18-21; 10:27-37; 20:25; John 15:12; 17:15; Romans 12-14; 1 Corinthians 5:9-10; 6:1-7; 7:20-24; 10:23-11:1; Galatians 3:26-28; Ephesians 6:5-9; Colossians 3:12-17; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; Philemon; James 1:27; 2:8.*

#### **XVI. Peace and War**

It is the duty of Christians to seek peace with all men on principles of righteousness. In accordance with the spirit and teachings of Christ they should do all in their power to put an end to war.

The true remedy for the war spirit is the gospel of our Lord. The supreme need of the world is the acceptance of His teachings in all the affairs of men and nations, and the practical application of His law of love. Christian people throughout the world should pray for the reign of the Prince of Peace.

*Isaiah 2:4; Matthew 5:9,38-48; 6:33; 26:52; Luke 22:36,38; Romans 12:18-19; 13:1-7; 14:19; Hebrews 12:14; James 4:1-2.*

## **XVII. Religious Liberty**

God alone is Lord of the conscience, and He has left it free from the doctrines and commandments of men which are contrary to His Word or not contained in it. Church and state should be separate. The state owes to every church protection and full freedom in the pursuit of its spiritual ends. In providing for such freedom no ecclesiastical group or denomination should be favored by the state more than others. Civil government being ordained of God, it is the duty of Christians to render loyal obedience thereto in all things not contrary to the revealed will of God. The church should not resort to the civil power to carry on its work. The gospel of Christ contemplates spiritual means alone for the pursuit of its ends. The state has no right to impose penalties for religious opinions of any kind. The state has no right to impose taxes for the support of any form of religion. A free church in a free state is the Christian ideal, and this implies the right of free and unhindered access to God on the part of all men, and the right to form and propagate opinions in the sphere of religion without interference by the civil power.

*Genesis 1:27; 2:7; Matthew 6:6-7,24; 16:26; 22:21; John 8:36; Acts 4:19-20; Romans 6:1-2; 13:1-7; Galatians 5:1,13; Philippians 3:20; 1 Timothy 2:1-2; James 4:12; 1 Peter 2:12-17; 3:11-17; 4:12-19.*

## **XVIII. The Family**

God has ordained the family as the foundational institution of human society. It is composed of persons related to one another by marriage, blood, or adoption.

Marriage is the uniting of one man and one woman in covenant commitment for a lifetime. It is God's unique gift to reveal the union between Christ and His church and to provide for the man and the woman in marriage the framework for intimate companionship, the channel of sexual expression according to biblical standards, and the means for procreation of the human race.

The husband and wife are of equal worth before God, since both are created in God's image. The marriage relationship models the way God relates to His people. A husband is to love his wife as Christ loved the church. He has the God-given responsibility to provide for, to protect, and to lead his family. A wife is to submit herself graciously to the servant leadership of her husband even as the church willingly submits to the headship of Christ. She, being in the image of God as is her husband and thus equal to him, has the God-given responsibility to respect her husband and to serve as his helper in managing the household and nurturing the next generation.

Children, from the moment of conception, are a blessing and heritage from the Lord. Parents are to demonstrate to their children God's pattern for marriage. Parents are to teach their children spiritual and moral values and to lead them, through consistent lifestyle example and loving discipline, to make choices based on biblical truth. Children are to honor and obey their parents.

*Genesis 1:26-28; 2:15-25; 3:1-20; Exodus 20:12; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Joshua 24:15; 1 Samuel 1:26-28; Psalms 51:5; 78:1-8; 127; 128; 139:13-16; Proverbs 1:8; 5:15-20; 6:20-22; 12:4; 13:24; 14:1; 17:6; 18:22; 22:6,15; 23:13-14; 24:3; 29:15,17; 31:10-31; Ecclesiastes 4:9-12; 9:9; Malachi 2:14-16; Matthew 5:31-32; 18:2-5; 19:3-9; Mark 10:6-12; Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 7:1-16; Ephesians 5:21-33; 6:1-4; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Timothy 5:8,14; 2 Timothy 1:3-5; Titus 2:3-5; Hebrews 13:4; 1 Peter 3:1-7.*

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\*\*End of *The Baptist Faith and Message* as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention, June 14, 2000.

## **Further Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality**

We believe that God wonderfully and immutably creates each person as male or female. These two distinct, complementary sexes together reflect the image and nature of God (Gen. 1:26-27). Rejection of one's biological sex is a rejection of the image of God within that person.

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of Central Baptist Church as the local Body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to its members and the community, it is imperative that all persons employed by Central Baptist Church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, agree to and abide by this Statement on Marriage, Gender, and Sexuality (Matt 5:16; Phil 2:14-16; 1 Thess 5:22).

We believe that any form of sexual immorality (including adultery, fornication, homosexual behavior, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, or use of pornography) is sinful and offensive to God (Matt. 15:18-20; 1 Cor. 6:9-10).

### **III. CHURCH COVENANT**

The Church Covenant, as published by the Sunday School Board of the Southern Baptist Convention, and widely accepted by Southern Baptist Churches, shall be honored by this church. This Covenant is as follows:

- “Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Saviour,
- And on the profession of our faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit.
- We do now, in the presence of God, angels, and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another, as one body in Christ.
- We engage, therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church, in knowledge, holiness, and comfort;
- To promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, discipline, and doctrines;
- To contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through all nations.
- We also engage to maintain family and secret devotions; to religiously educate our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances;
- To walk circumspectly in the world; to be just in our dealings; faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our deportment;
- To avoid all tattling, backbiting, and excessive anger;
- To abstain from drunkenness, and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.
- We further engage to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember each other in prayer; to aid each other in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech;
- To be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the rules of our Savior to secure it without delay. We moreover engage that when we remove from this place we will, as soon as possible, unite with some other church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of God's Word.”

#### IV. CHARACTER

##### Section One: POLITY

Its government is vested in the body of believers who compose it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body, but it recognizes and sustains the obligations of mutual counsel and cooperation, which are common among Southern Baptist Churches.

##### Section Two: DOCTRINE

It receives the Scriptures as its authority in matters of faith and practice.

### **BY-LAWS**

#### ARTICLE 1: MEMBERSHIP

##### Section One: QUALIFICATIONS

Any person may become a member of this church upon recommendation of the Body of Deacons and by vote of the church:

1. Upon profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, and after baptism (immersion).
2. By letter from another Baptist Church of like faith and order.
3. Upon statement of Christian experience, if previously baptized by immersion.

##### Section Two: DUTIES

Members are expected, first of all, to be faithful in all the duties essential to the Christian Life; to attend regularly the services of the Church; to give regularly for its support and its causes, and to share in its organized work. Members upon moving should unite with an Evangelical Church of like faith and order as soon as it is possible

##### Section Three: RIGHTS

All whose names appear upon the rolls of this church are members, but only those upon the "Active" list are considered in good and regular standing. Those whose names appear upon the "Inactive" list have no right of franchise and may not be granted a letter of good and regular standing. Members who have not reached their eighteenth (18<sup>th</sup>) birthday shall not have the right of franchise in legal or financial matters of over \$50.00, but may vote on regular church business after their sixteenth (16<sup>th</sup>) birthday. All members have the right to come to the regular scheduled Deacons meetings to discuss matters pertinent to the welfare of the church.

##### Section Four: TERMINATION

The continuance of membership shall be subject to the following:

1. Any member in good and regular standing who desires a letter of dismissal and recommendation to another church of like faith and order is entitled to receive it upon request. In case of moving to another community, the request should be made promptly.
2. Should a member become an offense to the church and to its good name by reason of immoral or unchristian conduct, as contained in the Scriptures, the church may terminate his or her membership only after the Pastor and/or Deacons have visited and faithfully tried to restore and reclaim him or her for Christ and His Church. After all possible efforts to restore the erring one(s) has failed, they shall be dismissed from the membership of the church upon the recommendation of the Pastor and Deacons, and by vote of the church.
3. The membership of no person shall be terminated (except by letter) at the meeting when the recommendation for such action is made.

4. The name of a deceased person shall be removed from the roll of the Church.
5. Resident members who absent themselves from regular church attendance for (6) months and who otherwise manifest indifference to church obligations, may upon the request of the Pastor and/or Deacons and by vote of the church have their names placed upon an Inactive list and shall not be reported as regular members of this Church. Inactive members shall not have a vote in the affairs of the Church. In case an Inactive member returns to the church and its work, the Church shall authorize the Church Clerk to place the said member on the “Active” membership roll.

Section Five: RESTORATION

Any person whose membership has been terminated by any offense may be restored by vote of the church, upon evidence of his or her repentance. This does not refer to inactive resident members.

Section Six: QUORUM

A quorum shall consist of the following:

1. For regular monthly or special called Business Meetings:  
25% of the number on the active voting membership roll.
2. For the election of Church officers:  
30% of the number on the active voting membership roll.
3. For the calling of a Pastor  
55% of the number on the active voting membership roll.

ARTICLE 2: CHURCH OFFICERS

Section One: Pastor

1. The requirements for a Pastor shall be according to the Scripture as found in I Timothy 3:1-7.
2. Upon recommendation of the Pulpit Committee, and by vote of the Church, the Pastor shall be called for an indefinite period of time.
3. Election shall be by a Quorum (Article One; Section Six; Paragraph 3) and an affirmative vote of 90% of those present by ballot at a regular or special business meeting of the church.
4. The Pastor is the leader of Pastoral Ministries of the Church. As such he works with the Deacons and Church Staff to:
  - a. Lead the church in performing its tasks.
  - b. Lead the Church to engage in a fellowship of worship, witness, education, ministry and application.
  - c. Proclaim the Gospel to believers and nonbelievers.
  - d. Care for the members of the Church and other persons in the community.
5. The pastor shall give at least thirty (30) days notice at such time as he may be terminating his responsibilities as Pastor.
6. The dismissal of the Pastor shall be on this wise:
  - a. Dismissal shall be by a Quorum (Article One; Section Six; Paragraph 3) and an affirmative vote of 90% of those present by ballot at a regular or special business meeting of the church.
  - b. The action of such a business meeting shall be upon the recommendation of the Deacons.
  - c. Public notice of the special meeting shall be given two (2) Sundays in advance.
7. A Pulpit Committee shall be appointed by the Church to seek out a suitable Pastor when such a vacancy occurs, and their recommendation shall constitute a nomination.

Section Two: PAID STAFF – HELPERS

This Church shall call or employ such staff members, as the Church shall need. A job description shall be written when the need for additional staff members is determined. Vocational Staff Members other than the Pastor shall be recommended to the church by the Deacons and Trustees and employed by the Church. Secretaries and Custodians will likewise be recommended by the Deacons and Trustees and then employed by the church.

Section Three: DEACONS

1. In accordance with the meaning of the work and the practice of the New Testament, Deacons are to be servants of the church. Their work and their lives should conform to the Scriptures as recorded in Acts 6:3 and I Timothy 3:8-13. The task of the Deacon is to serve with the Pastor and staff in performing Pastoral Ministry tasks: proclaim the gospel to believers and nonbelievers; care for church members and other persons in the community; lead the Church to engage in a fellowship of worship, witness, education, ministry, application and to lead the church in performing its tasks, and assist with the Ordinances of the Church.
2. There shall be no less than three (3) Deacons or as many as the Church deems necessary.
3. When there is a need for other Deacons or a replacement for any reason, members of the Church should discuss this with the Pastor and the Deacons. Every such recommendation shall be brought up for discussion and action at the next regular Deacons Meeting. When affirmative action is deemed necessary, the Chairman of the Deacons shall report such decisions to the church in regular Business Meeting. A general discussion shall be called for and if the church votes to consider other Deacons then nominations from the floor may be added to those recommended by the Deacon Body. These persons may not be recommended unless their consent has been received prior to the meeting, nor can any vote be taken until the next regular meeting. Those persons considered for the office of Deacon must meet all the qualifications of a Deacon as set forth in Acts 6:3 and I Timothy 3:8-13.
4. Election shall be by a Quorum (Article One; Section Six; paragraph 2) and an affirmative vote of 90% of those present by ballot at a regular or special business meeting of the Church.
5. Rotation System – Their term of office shall be for three (3) years and shall be arranged to end alternately; the Chairman shall be the one serving the last year of the three (3) year term of office.
6. Dismissal shall be by a Quorum (Article One; Section Six; Paragraph 2). Public notice of the special meeting shall be given two (2) Sundays in advance.

Section Four: MODERATOR

The Moderator shall be the Pastor.

In the absence of the Pastor, the Chairman of the Deacons shall preside; or in the absence of both, the Church Clerk shall call the Church to order and a Moderator Pro-Tem shall be elected.

Section Five: CLERK OF THE CHURCH

1. Term of Office: The Church shall elect annually a Church Clerk.
2. Duties: The Church Clerk shall keep a correct and permanent record of all the Business Meetings of the Church, sign all letters of dismissal, take charge of all Church records, and maintain a register of members in which shall be noted such changes as may occur, such as the dates of admission of all members, dismissals or deaths, together with a record of all baptisms. The Clerk shall enter upon the records

of the Church current events in the life of the Church that are likely to be of historical value, thus making the Church records a continuous History of the Church.

**Section Six: TREASURER**

1. Term of Office: The Church shall elect annually a Church Treasurer.
2. Duties: It shall be the duty of the Treasurer to:
  - a. Receive and preserve all money received by the Church, keeping at all times an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements.
  - b. Payment of all bills as authorized by the Church shall be made promptly.
  - c. All monies received for Denominational or other causes shall be remitted at least monthly.
  - d. Submit to the Church at each monthly business meeting an itemized report of receipts and disbursements for the preceding month.
  - e. Within thirty (30) days after the end of each fiscal year submit to the Church an annual report showing the total amount of receipts and an itemized statement of all the disbursements.
  - f. All books, records, and accounts kept by the Treasurer shall be considered the property of the Church.
  - g. The books are to be audited annually by an auditing Committee or by a Public Accountant.

**Section Seven: TRUSTEES**

1. Term of Office: The membership of the Board of Trustees shall consist of no less than three (3) elected persons; their term of office shall be for three (3) years and shall be arranged to end alternately; the Chairman shall be the person serving the last year of the three (3) year term of office.
2. Duties: It shall be the duty of the Trustees to care for the property; to hold, repair, invest and preserve the same; to superintend any improvements that are not entrusted to any special committee and to perform such business concerns of the Church as shall be assigned to them from time to time by the Church. The Trustees are at all times servants of the Church and subject to its corporate action. The trustees shall not have any authority to sell, lease, give away or dispose of in any manner property, not to mortgage or encumber the same with debt only as the Church shall order by corporate action.

**Section Eight: SUNDAY SCHOOL TEAM LEADER**

1. Term of Office: The Sunday School Team Leader shall be elected by the Church to serve for one (1) year.
2. Duties: The Sunday School Team Leader shall be responsible for the total overall Bible Teaching program of the Sunday school.

**Section Nine: LEADER OF DESIGNATED CHURCH TEAMS**

All designated teams of the Church shall operate within the authorization of the Church, with all team leaders being elected by the Church, and reporting to the Church regularly. All designated Church team positions, leadership and otherwise, shall be recommended by the Nominating Team and elected by the Church unless otherwise authorized by the Church. It is understood that the Pastor may participate as an ex-officio member of any Church team.

## ARTICLE 3 MINISTRY TEAMS

### Section One: Purpose

Jesus Christ established the church to reach the lost, disciple the believer, and to equip the Saints for works of service in building up the body of Christ to maturity and unity. To fulfill this mission, Central Baptist Church shall establish/authorize ministries called "Teams".

### Section Two:

1. Teams are ad hoc groups of individuals dedicated to fulfill the call of Christ and mission of the church to meet various needs (physical and/or spiritual) either in the Church or outside the Church or both.
2. Team members must exhibit sound moral character as befitting a disciple of Christ and as determined by the ordained and paid ministers of Central Baptist Church.
3. All Team Leaders and Bible teachers must be active members of Central Baptist Church. (See Article I, Section 3). The only exception to this is for the AWANA ministry where non church members will be allowed to teach if they sign they will abide by the AWANA Doctrinal statement and SBC Baptist Faith and Message 2000.
4. Membership on a Team may also be subject to other requirements, such as background checks when working with youth, etc., as deemed necessary by the Church body or Ordained and paid pastoral leadership.
5. It is understood that Ordained and paid ministers of Central Baptist Church may participate as ex officio members of all teams.
6. Teams may be dissolved when the team lacks sufficient members to maintain its efforts, or when the ministry need is no longer present.

## ARTICLE 4: AMENDMENTS

### Section One:

This Constitution and By-Laws may be amended providing that any said amendment is presented to the Church in writing two (2) weeks in advance and that it is read when it is presented to the Church at a meeting of the Church.

To amend this Constitution, the vote shall be by a Quorum as found in Article One; Section Six; Paragraph One; with a 90% affirmative vote of those present.

To amend any part of Article 2: ARTICLES OF FAITH, the vote shall be by a unanimous vote of the necessary Quorum as per Article One; Section Six; Paragraph One.