

REFORMED BIBLE CHURCH

of Stone County, Missouri

March 21, 2021

Preamble

We believe it has pleased Almighty God, by His Holy Spirit, to unite certain of His servants here under the name Reformed Bible Church, for the worship of God, the edification of the Saints, and the spread of the gospel of Jesus Christ. We, the members of Reformed Bible Church, do hereby organize ourselves and adopt these bylaws as our articles of governance, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of and to bring glory to Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Old and New Testaments of the Holy Bible and as articulated in our Statement of Faith.

Statement of Faith

Our Mission

God is the only Sovereign, the King of kings, and Lord of lords, and we recognize our existence is to bring glory to God the Father through our Lord Jesus Christ and by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Who We Are

1. Reformed

We adhere to the reformed tradition of the protestant Christian faith. We affirm vital doctrines such as Sola Scriptura and Sola Fide. Sola Scriptura refers to the article that the Bible, as the inspired, infallible, and inerrant Word of God, is the sole written revelation that rules the faith and practice of the Christian community and alone can bind the conscience. Sola Fide refers to the doctrine of justification by faith alone whereby the believer is justified before God by the free grace of God by which He imputes the righteousness of Christ to the believer (Rom. 5:18-19). The sole ground of our justification is the merit of Jesus, which is imputed to all who put their trust in Him. Although good works flow necessarily and immediately from all justified persons, these works are not the meritorious grounds of our justification (Eph. 2:8-10).

We place great emphasis on the doctrine of God, which doctrine is central to the whole of its theology. In a word, Reformed theology is God-centered. The structure of the biblical Covenant of Grace is the framework for this theology. The concept of God's grace supplies the core of this theology.

We adhere to the five solas of the Reformation:

Sola Scriptura The Bible is the sole written divine revelation and alone can bind the conscience of believers absolutely.

Sola Fide Justification is by faith alone. The merit of Christ, imputed to us by faith, is the sole ground of our acceptance by God, by which our sins are remitted and imputed to Christ.

Solus Christus Jesus Christ is the only mediator through Whose work we are redeemed.

Sola Gratia Our salvation rests solely on the work of God's grace for us.

Soli Deo Gloria To God alone belongs the glory.

0. Confessional

We adhere to a written confession of faith that we believe to be a good and accurate summary of the Bible's teaching. Our confessional standards consist of the Westminster Confession of Faith and the Westminster Larger and Shorter Catechisms. While Scripture alone is to be the sole arbiter of our beliefs, we regard these standards as containing carefully worded summaries of the contents of sacred Scripture. Reformed Bible Church's theology affirms the doctrines of historic Christian orthodoxy including but not limited to the Apostle's Creed, and the ecumenical councils of Nicea and Chalcedon. These doctrines affirm the Trinity, the deity of Christ, the atonement work of Christ, and other doctrines that are integral to historic Christianity. Acceptance of every confessional distinctive is not required for membership at Reformed Bible Church. An individual may be a participating member by affirming the evangelical distinctive that salvation is accomplished by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone.

0. Covenantal

As Scripture indicates, God interacts with His people by means of covenant. A covenant is simply a legal agreement, or a binding contract, between two parties. Each party agrees to take upon him or herself the obligations of the covenant based upon the terms of the covenant. When God makes a covenant He is the One Who delineates the terms. The Westminster Confession (7.1) states,

The distance between God and the creature is so great, that although reasonable creatures do owe obedience unto Him as their Creator, yet they could never have any fruition of Him as their blessedness and reward, but by some voluntary condescension on God's part, which He hath been pleased to express by way of covenant.

God established the first covenant, the Covenant of Works, with Adam (Gen. 2:4-25). When Adam broke the covenant and fell out of fellowship with God, God promised to Adam a New Covenant—a covenant not based upon our own works but upon the work of another (Gen. 3:15). The Old Testament is a continued unveiling of God's character through covenants which express more fully God's righteous requirements, but also foreshadow and prophesy the coming Messiah. As one reads the pages of the Old Testament, one comes to the realization again and again that God keeps His covenant promises, while His people do not. The New Testament is the record of God's fulfillment of His promise given in Genesis—to provide a New Covenant for His people that is not based upon our own works but upon the work of a savior.

Jesus Christ is this Savior. He is the ultimate revelation of God's character because He is God Himself; and, thus, He perfectly fulfills the requirements of the Old Covenant, the Covenant of Works. To put it another way, God keeps His promises made to His people by means of Himself. The work of Christ Jesus satisfied the justice of God and ushered in the New Covenant, the covenant in which God's grace is poured out upon sinners who could not keep the Covenant of Works. Rather than His people standing condemned, God has saved His people unto Himself by the finished work of Jesus Christ. The New Covenant is based upon faith in the work of Christ rather than our own meritorious works (Jer. 31:31-34).

0. Ordinary Means of Grace

God sovereignly establishes and increases faith through His ordained means, often called ordinary means of grace, which are vital for believers' spiritual nourishment and growth. The means that God has appointed for our spiritual nourishment and growth in grace are namely, the Word, prayer, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord's Supper, and, necessarily joined to these, the church's discipline and care of souls. These means are appointed by God, are empowered by the Holy Spirit, and point us to Christ, and they sustain us and nourish us in our union with Christ as we rest in the sovereign ends of our triune God.

The Westminster Shorter Catechism question 88 asks, "What are the outward means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption?" The catechism's answer is:

The outward and ordinary means whereby Christ communicates to us the benefits of redemption are his ordinances, especially the word, sacraments and prayer; all which are made effectual to the elect for salvation.

God's people are therefore commanded to participate regularly in Lord's Day corporate worship, in dependence upon God's Spirit Who applies Christ's benefits through His Word and sacraments. We therefore practice systematic expository preaching of God's Word, recognize spoken and sung prayer as the chief means of gratitude and praise to God, and administer the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. We routinely celebrate the Lord's Supper. As such, we are a church governed by the ordinary means of grace. Although various ministries and fellowship opportunities certainly exist within our church community, we are not a program-driven church but an ordinary-means-of-grace-driven church.

0. Family Integrated

We believe in intergenerational discipleship as a core value, which means that we seek the biblical model where the responsibility for disciple-making within the family relies primarily upon the parents, and particularly fathers, rather than on church programs. We do not have a segregated youth ministry, or children's ministry. Children attend all of the corporate worship gatherings with their parents rather than attending a separate children's ministry. Segregated children's or youth ministries can work against God's design. Parents relieved of their discipleship duties may become dependent on those who have taken over the job.

We teach parents to evangelize and disciple their children and their neighbors. We emphasize the ministry of hospitality, family worship, catechism, and family discipleship. We strive to equip the saints to do the work of this ministry.

What We Believe

[Link to Chicago Statement on Scriptural Inerrancy](#)

[Link to Chicago Statement on Hermeneutics](#)

[Link to the Westminster Confession of Faith](#)

Government

Our form of government is an elder led congregation.

Elder

Paul emphasized a plurality of elders in the early church (Titus 1:5; Acts 20: 17). We believe multiple elders are necessary for accountability in morality, accountability in teaching the Truth of Scripture, shared leadership to avoid burnout, shared responsibility for church discipline, as well as many other benefits for the local congregation. Church leadership should not rest on the decisions of one man. An elder is a biblically qualified man who has been nominated, trained, examined, and ordained to see to the affairs of the church. Scripture gives explicit qualifications for an elder (I Timothy 3: 1-7).

Deacon

Deacon means, literally, "one who waits on tables". Acts 6 records the Apostles appointing the first deacons so they could better attend to prayer and the ministry of The Word. A deacon is a biblically qualified man who has been nominated, trained, examined, and ordained to minister to the physical needs of the church. Scripture gives explicit qualifications for deacons (I Timothy 3: 8-13).

The Marks of the Church

The True Church is comprised of all whom God has saved throughout the world. The marks of the Church in her individual congregations are those described in Scripture and portrayed by the body of Christ through history. These marks are essentially: the right preaching of God's Word, the faithful declaration of the Gospel, the administration of the sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, the discipline of her members, and her submission to Christ as her only true and rightful head (I Corinthians 11: 24-26, Matthew 28: 19, I Timothy 3: 13). Without these characteristics, the Church will fall short in obedience to her Lord (Revelation 3: 14-22).

Bylaws

Article 1 – Name

1.1 This body shall be known as Reformed Bible Church, located in Stone County, Missouri.

Article 2 – Purpose

2.1 The foundation of this church is the apostles and the prophets, with Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone (Eph 2:20), and He guides His church in all affairs through His Holy Scriptures (Ps 119; 2 Tim 3:15-17). Therefore the purpose of the church is to glorify God through Jesus Christ, in the power of the Holy Spirit (Isa 43:7; Eph 1:6, 12, 14).

2.2 The priorities of ministry of this church flow from the vision of God's glory revealed in Jesus Christ. We exist to exalt the Savior (John 4:23), to edify the saints (I Cor 14:26; Eph 4:11-16), and to evangelize those that are lost (Matt 5:16; 1 Peter 2:9; 3:15).

2.3 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; I Cor 11: 17-34), loving one another (John 13: 34-35; I John 3: 11-24), and practicing formative (I Thess 5:14; 1 Tim 5:1-2; Tit 2:15) and corrective discipline Matt 18: 15-20; 1 Cor 5: 1-5).

Article 3 – Membership

Section 1 – Qualifications for Membership

3.1.1 To qualify for membership in this church, a person

1. must be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of salvation,
2. who has been baptized in obedience to Christ,
3. who believes in the infallibility and inerrancy of God's Holy Word,
4. who affirms the evangelical distinctive that salvation is accomplished by grace alone through faith alone because of Christ alone.

3.1.2 The normal process for becoming a member is

1. completion of the membership class,
2. an assessment of qualification for membership in a meeting or series of meetings with an elder or elders,
3. an affirmation by the church on the basis of the person's profession of faith. Normally, new members shall relinquish their membership in other churches.

Section 2 – Admission of Members

3.2 To be admitted into church membership, applicants shall be approved by the elders for admission. Once accepted for membership, new members shall relinquish their membership in other churches.

Those applying for membership will be received as members by baptism or letter of good standing. A statement of faith may suffice in the event that a letter of good standing is not obtainable.

Section 3 – Duties and Privileges of Membership

3.3.1 In accord with the duties enumerated in the Membership 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 the congregation shall be entitled to lead in the ministries of the church. At the discretion of the elders, non-members may serve the church for purposes that include but are not limited to administration, maintenance, professional consultation, and construction.

3.3.2 It is the privilege and responsibility of members to attend all member meetings and to vote on the annual budget, the acquisition of real property, and on such other matters that are submitted to a vote.

3.3.3 In the event that the members of Reformed Bible Church vote to dissolve as an organization, the members will determine by simple majority of votes cast what will happen to the assets of Reformed Bible Church. The assets shall be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of section 501(c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code, or the corresponding section of any future federal tax code. The vote will take place in the same meeting as the vote for dissolution.

Section 4 – Church Discipline

3.4.1 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, holiness, and good of the one being disciplined.

3.4.2 Any member who is 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 corrective discipline of the church, according to the instructions and examples in Matthew 18: 15-17, I Corinthians 5: 1-12, Galatians 6: 1-2, I Thessalonians 5:14, and other relevant biblical texts.

3.4.3 The purpose of discipline should be:

1. For the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual(s) disciplined (Hebrews 12: 1-11);
2. For the instruction in righteousness and good of other believers, as an example to them (I Timothy 5:20);
3. For the purity of the church as a whole (Ephesians 5:27);
4. For the good of our corporate witness to non-Christians (Matthew 5: 13-16); and
5. Supremely for the glory of God by reflecting His holy character (John 15:8; I Peter 2:12).

3.4.4 In the case of public sin, the member who sinned should confess before the church in a specially called Member Meeting, so that the church can freely extend forgiveness. Such public confession is especially necessary in the case of elders and deacons (I Timothy 5: 19-20; Galatians 2:11-14).

Section 5 – Termination of Membership

3.5 Termination of membership shall be recognized by the church following the death of a member. The church shall also recognize a transfer of membership of the voluntary resignation of a church member who is in good standing.

Membership may be terminated as an act of church discipline at the recommendation of the elders and with the vote of 75% of the voting members present at any regular or special Member Meeting.

Article 4 – Meetings

Section 1 – Corporate Worship Meetings

4.1 A regular corporate worship meeting shall be held at least once per week and other such meetings may be held throughout the week as the church determines necessary.

Section 2 – Member Meetings

4.2.1 There shall be an annual Member Meeting, at which normally a budget is approved by the voting membership. The elders shall ensure that these meeting are held and that required reports are submitted to the church by the responsible members.

4.2.2 Special Member Meetings may be called, as requested by the elders, at an acceptable time other than the regular weekly corporate worship time, or at the written request, submitted to the elders, of 10% 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.

4.2.4 All annual and special Member Meetings shall be announced at all regular corporate worship meetings of the church at least two weeks preceding such meetings. No business may take place if such notification has not been made.

4.2.5 On any matter that is brought to vote, a two-thirds majority is needed for the matter to pass unless otherwise specified in these Bylaws.

4.2.6 One of the elders shall preside at all Member Meetings of the church.

4.2.7 Emergency meetings may be called by a majority of the elders. All resolutions passed at emergency meetings are subject to review at the next regular Member Meeting.

Article 5 – Officers

Section 1 – Summary

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

5.1.2 The biblical offices of the church are elders and deacons. This church also recognizes the administrative positions of clerk and treasurer. The elders shall designate the clerk and treasurer. All officers must be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

5.1.3 For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the State of Missouri, one of the elders shall serve as president of the corporation. The elders shall serve as the board of directors.

Section 2 – Elders

5.2.1 Guided by the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6; I Timothy 3: 1-7; Titus 1;5-9; James 5:14; and I Peter 5:1-3, the elders shall oversee the ministries and resources of the church. They shall seek the mind of Christ through the guidance of the Holy Spirit and the Word of God as they joyfully undertake the work of shepherding God's flock. The elders shall teach and exhort, refute and admonish 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. They shall be responsible for examining and instructing prospective members, examining and recommending all candidates for offices, overseeing the work of the deacons and other church leaders, conducting corporate worship meetings, administering the ordinances of baptism and the Lord's Supper, encouraging sound doctrine, equipping the membership for the work of the ministry, coordinating and promoting the ministries of the church, mobilizing the church for world missions, and overseeing church discipline. The elders are further to ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share the fundamental convictions set forth in the Statement of Faith.

5.2.2 Each elder must sustain the doctrines set forth in the Statement of Faith and not hold any settled convictions contrary to them. Any man desiring to become an elder within the church shall be vetted and trained by the founding elders. After such review, these men shall be voted on by the members at a Members meeting and upon receiving two-thirds majority, shall be accepted as an elder.

5.2.3 The elders shall normally be comprised of no less than three men who satisfy the qualifications for the office of elder set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. Only men may serve as elders in accord with I Timothy 2:12; 3:2. No elder shall hold the office of deacon, treasurer, or clerk during his tenure.

5.2.5 An elder's term of office may be terminated by resignation or dismissal. Any member 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 in Matthew 18: 15-17 and I Timothy

5:17-21. Any elder may be dismissed by a two-thirds majority vote of the voting members at any formally called Member Meeting of the church.

5.2.6 The elders may establish paid and non-paid ministry positions and teams to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities. A paid or volunteer staff position does not in and of itself constitute an elder's position.

5.2.7 The elders may hire and fire non-ministerial staff or delegate that responsibility on a case-by-case basis. The elders shall 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 the deacons or another staff member.

5.2.8 The elders must have at least a two-thirds approval among themselves before submitting matters to a congregational vote unless otherwise specified in these bylaws.

Section 3 – Deacons

5.3.1 The office of deacon is described in I Timothy 3:8-13 (cf. Acts 6:1-7). The church shall recognize men, in accordance with the provisions on elections in these bylaws, 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 church members. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as deacons.

5.3.2 Deacons shall advise and assist the elders/pastors 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 church. The deacons may be organized in the most fitting way to accomplish the mission of the church. The responsibilities of deacons do not include preaching, teaching, or spiritual oversight, which are the responsibilities of the elders, although they may teach and preach in contexts in which they are not infringing upon the oversight duties of the elders (Acts 6-7:53; Titus 2:30). As servants of the church, deacons are set apart for service but shall not be ordained.

5.3.3 A deacon's term of office may be terminated by resignation or dismissal or when the elders determine that a particular deacon's area of ministry is no longer needed. Any member with reason to believe that a deacon should be dismissed should express such concern to the elders and, if need be only afterward, to the congregation. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions in Matthew 18:15-17 and other relevant biblical texts. Any deacon may be dismissed by a two-thirds majority vote of the voting members at any formally called Member Meeting of the church.

Section 4 – Clerk

5.4 The elders shall appoint a clerk who will record the minutes of all regular and special Member Meetings. The clerk will serve a one year term. For the purpose of compliance with the non-profit corporation laws of the State of Missouri, the clerk will serve as the secretary of the corporation.

Section 5 – Treasurer

5.5 The treasurer, who shall not be an elder or a paid church staff member, shall 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 collaborate with the elders to ensure that regular financial reports of the church are presented, when appropriate, at regular Member Meetings. The treasurer shall work with the elders as the elders manage all unbudgeted funds. For the purpose of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the State of Missouri, the treasurer will serve as the treasurer of the corporation.

Article 6 – Appointment/Election of Elders and Deacons

To be revised. See copy of Christ's Covenant Church or other sources.

Article 7– Indemnification

7.1 If a legal claim or criminal allegations made against a person because he or she is or was an officer, employee, or agent of the church, the church may provide indemnification against liability and cost incurred in defending against the claim if the elders determine that the person acted (a) in good faith, (b) with the care of 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.

7.2 At the discretion of the elders, the church also may indemnify any person who acted in good faith and reasonably believed that his or her conduct was in the church's best interest and not unlawful.

7.3 If at least two elders are 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 8 – Dispute Resolution

8.1 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 church (Matthew 18:15-20; I Corinthians 6:1-8), the church shall urge its members to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblically based principles, without reliance of the secular courts. Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the church shall encourage the use of biblically based principles and the avoidance of lawsuits to resolve disputes between itself and those outside the church, whether Christian or non-Christian and whether individuals or corporate entities. The elders shall direct the church in carrying out these aspirations.

Article 9 – Marriage and Sexuality

9.1 Reformed Bible Church believes that the term "marriage" has only one meaning and that meaning is sanctioned by God which joins one man (male) and one woman (female) in a single, exclusive union, as delineated by Holy Scripture.

We believe that God intends sexual intimacy to only occur between man (male) and a woman (female) who are united in marriage to one another. We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity is to be engaged outside of a marriage between a man and a woman.

We believe that any form of sexual immorality, such as adultery, fornication, homosexuality, bisexual conduct, bestiality, incest, pornography, or any attempt to change one's sex, or disagreement with one's biological sex is sinful and offensive to Holy God.

We believe that in order to preserve the function and integrity of the church as a local body of Christ, and to provide a biblical role model to the church members and the community, it is imperative that all person employed by the church in any capacity, or who serve as volunteers, should abide by and agree to this statement on Marriage and Sexuality and conduct themselves accordingly.

We believe that God offers redemption and restoration to all who confess and forsake their sin, seeking His mercy and forgiveness through Jesus Christ.

We believe that every person must be afforded compassion, love, kindness, respect, and dignity. Hateful and harassing behavior or attitudes directed toward any individual are to be repudiated and are not in accord with Scripture or the doctrine of the church. This does not imply that certain parts of God's Holy Word are not to be preached or taught. We believe that the full counsel of Scripture must be preached and taught to reveal sin and the consequences of sin even if some individuals may find it offensive. As with all things, this is to be done in love.

Article 10 – Amendments

10.1 These bylaws may be amended by a 75% majority vote at a Member Meeting.

10.2 All proposed amendments to these bylaws must be offered in writing at least thirty days prior to the Member Meetings at which they are submitted to a vote and shall be announced at all regular corporate worship meetings at least two weeks preceding such votes.