

Redeemer Baptist Church Constitution

PREAMBLE

We, the members of Redeemer Baptist Church of Macon, Georgia, do ordain and establish the following articles, to which we voluntarily submit ourselves.

ARTICLE I – NAME

The name of this church shall be Redeemer Baptist Church of Macon, Georgia.

ARTICLE II- AFFILIATION

- A. We acknowledge no ecclesiastical authority other than our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Head of the Church (Ephesians 5:23) and who directs the affairs of the local church through elders chosen and ordained according to the precepts of Holy Scripture. The elders themselves at all times and in all their activities stand under the authority of Holy Scripture.
- B. The church may and does cooperate with other like-minded churches in matters of mutual interest and concern. We may seek the assistance and counsel of other churches in matters of special concern to us, but the decision of no other church or group of churches shall at any time be acknowledged as binding on this church.

ARTICLE III – PURPOSE

The purpose of this church is to glorify the God of the Scriptures in promoting his worship, evangelizing sinners and edifying saints. Therefore, we are committed to the proclamation of God's perfect Law and the glorious Gospel of his grace through all the world and to the defense of the "faith which was once for all delivered to the saints" (Jude 3, New King James).

ARTICLE IV – ARTICLES OF FAITH

The ultimate authority in all matters of faith, order and morals is and must be the Bible alone, which truth is clearly set forth in the opening article of the London Confession of Faith of 1689. We adopt this confession as an accurate expression of our faith. This historic document is an excellent summary of "the things most surely believed among us", and we find it to be an assistance in controversy, a confirmation in faith, and a means of edification in righteousness. (We embrace the caveats to the confession underscored in *A Faith to Confess. The Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689*, Carey Publications Limited (1975).)

ARTICLE V – MEMBERSHIP

- A. **REQUIREMENTS FOR MEMBERSHIP** – Any person who professes repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ, who manifests a life transformed by the power of Christ, who has been scripturally baptized, who expresses substantial agreement with the doctrines and aims of this church and who is willing to submit to its government shall be eligible for membership.
- B. **PROCEDURES IN THE RECEPTION OF NEW MEMBERS**
 - 1. A person who desires to become a member of the church may apply to the elders and request to be interviewed by them. During the interview the elders will seek to determine whether that person has a creditable profession of faith, has been

scripturally baptized, is in substantial agreement with the doctrines of the church and intends to give wholehearted support to its ministry and submit to its discipline.

2. If the applicant is or has been a member of another church, special effort will be made to determine the person's standing in that church and his reasons for leaving. At the discretion of the elders, a letter of inquiry concerning the person's standing may be sent to that church before his acceptance as a member in this church is determined.
3. If the elders are satisfied that the applicant meets the requirements for membership, they shall announce the same to the congregation at a stated meeting of the church. Time will be allowed for objections or questions to be raised by any member concerning the applicant's manner of life or doctrine. If no objection is raised which the elders consider to be valid, the person will be publicly received into the membership at a stated meeting of the church. The elders may postpone the reception of a person into membership until proper investigation can be made concerning objections that in their judgment are sufficiently serious.

C. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

1. By physical death – When a person of this church is removed from our midst by death, his name shall automatically be removed from the membership roll.
2. By recommendation – When it is so requested, the elders may grant to a departing member in good standing (who desires to unite with another church) a letter of recommendation. No such letter may be given to a member who is at the time under the corrective discipline of this church.
The elders may refuse to grant a letter of recommendation for any church which is in their judgment disloyal to the “faith which was once delivered unto the saints” or which does not exercise godly care over its members.
3. By exclusion – If a member habitually absents himself from the stated meetings of the church without showing just cause, or if due to relocation he ceases to maintain a vital contact with the church, he may be excluded from the membership at the discretion of the elders. Also, any member who personally so requests may after due admonition be excluded from the membership. In such cases no congregational approval of the action is needed; the elders shall simply announce to the congregation that such a person is no longer a member.
4. By excommunication – According to the teaching of Holy Scripture a congregation must cut off from its fellowship and membership any person who teaches or insists on holding false and heretical doctrine, who blatantly and persistently conducts himself in a manner inconsistent with his Christian profession, or who persists in disturbing the unity or peace of the church (Matthew 18:15ff; I Corinthians 5:1ff). The procedure to be followed in such excommunication is set forth in Article VI.

D. CONDUCT OF MEMBERS

1. Attendance – Every member is expected to be faithful in attendance at all the stated meetings of the church unless providentially hindered (by illness, accident, unusual working conditions or other such circumstances). The stated meetings of the church are all the services on the Lord's Day, the business meetings of the membership and any special meetings which the elders may occasionally call (Acts 2:42; Hebrews 10:24-25).

2. Means of grace – All public and private means of grace, such as the regular reading of the Bible, regular private and family prayer, and a proper reverence for and observance of the Lord’s Day, shall be urged upon all our members.
4. Giving – It is the scriptural duty of Christians to financially support the work of the Lord by systematic and proportionate giving made through the local church (Malachi 3:8-10; I Corinthians 16:1-2; 2 Corinthians 8 & 9). All the members of this church are expected to conform to this rule of Scripture.
5. Family life and government – It is the duty of Christians (thus members of this church) to obey the teaching of Scripture with respect to family life and government. God requires that godliness in the home have a high priority in every life. The home holds a central place in God’s Law and is the object of frequent exhortations in the New Testament. Men are expected to rule their homes with gentleness and love, yet with wisdom and firmness. Women are to be subject to their husbands in everything as unto the Lord. Parents are to rear their children in the “training and admonition of the Lord” (Ephesians 6:4, NKJ) by setting a godly example before them, by instructing them consistently in the Scriptures, and by wise, loving, and firm discipline, including corporal punishment when it is needed (Proverbs 13:24; 22:15; 29:15; Hebrews 12:7). Children are to obey and honor their parents (Ephesians 6:1-2). These primary responsibilities, prayerfully executed, will honor the name of Christ in the community and strengthen the cause of Christ in generations to come.
6. Evangelism – It is the duty of every Christian individually and as a member of a local church to labor for the extension of the kingdom of God both at home and to the ends of the earth.
Therefore, every member of this church is expected prayerfully to recognize and to seize every opportunity to bear witness to his faith in Christ both by consistent Christian conduct and by the testimony of his lips.
7. Christian liberty – Each member of the church is required to render in his daily life loyal obedience to all the moral precepts established in the Word of God. If God has not condemned or forbidden a practice in his Word, a Christian is at liberty to participate in it. The exercise of Christian liberty, however, must at all times be governed by an earnest desire to walk in the fear of God and to glorify him in all things (I Peter 1:17; 1 Corinthians 10:31), a loving regard for the consciences of weaker brethren (I Corinthians 8:9; Romans 15:1-3), a compassion for the lost (I Corinthians 9:19-22) and a zealous regard for the health of one’s own soul (Romans 13:14; I Peter 2:16).
8. Duty to the elders – All who come into the membership of this church are expected to recognize and submit to the authority of the overseers of the church as they seek to lead them according to the Word of God (Hebrews 13: 17).
9. Duty to one another – Each member of the church is expected to strive and pray for the peace and purity of the church. Each member should love, comfort, encourage and pray for one another. It is their duty to be kind, compassionate and forgiving to one another while consciously putting away all bitterness and anger. Each one should look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. This love should be manifested not only by words, but also by deeds.

ARTICLE VI – CHURCH DISCIPLINE

GENERAL STATEMENT – “Discipline is the exercise of authority given the Church by the Lord Jesus Christ to instruct and guide its members and to promote its purity and welfare” (*The Book of Church Order – Presbyterian Church in America* (1988), paragraph 27-1).

A. **FORMATIVE DISCIPLINE** – Formative discipline is primarily positive through the teaching of God’s Word, the example of Christian living and the mutual ministry of the several members of the body of Christ. Mutual submission to one another and to the overseers whom the Lord has set over his church (Ephesians 5:21; I Peter 5:5) will result in the sanctification of each member individually and of the whole body collectively. There are occasions, however, when failure in the application of formative discipline makes the application of corrective discipline necessary.

B. **CORRECTIVE DISCIPLINE**

GENERAL STATEMENT – Corrective discipline becomes necessary when heretical doctrine or disorderly or scandalous conduct appears among the members of the church. In all such cases reasonable efforts must be made to resolve the difficulty, correct the error and remove the offense through counsel and admonition before more drastic steps are taken (Galatians 6:1; James 5:19-20). The principles given to us in Matthew 18:15-16 and I Corinthians 5:1-13 must be carefully followed in all cases of corrective discipline. When admonition is not heeded, suspension of some of the privileges of membership may need to be imposed, and if this measure fails, excommunication from the church may be necessary.

1. **Suspension**

- a. Any conduct on the part of a member that disturbs the peace of the church or prejudices its testimony may require that the offending brother or sister be debarred by action of the elders from participating in certain activities of the church according to the gravity of the offense. A suspension shall be announced to the congregation by the elders and shall remain in force until the suspended member gives evidence of true repentance and change of conduct. When a suspended member can be restored to full fellowship, the elders also shall announce this to the congregation. While a member is under such suspension, he shall be treated by the congregation according to the directions given in II Thessalonians 3:6-15. Although such a person is considered to be walking disorderly, he must still be regarded as a member and not as one cut off from the church.
- b. If a member has sinned publicly but shows hopeful sign of repentance, including submission to the admonition of the elders, it may still be necessary to suspend him for a time from some of the privileges of membership lest reproach be brought upon the church, others be emboldened to sin and the offender himself fail to test his soul and realize the gravity of his offense. Those who humbly submit to the imposed discipline shall afterwards be wholly forgiven and publicly received back into the full fellowship of the church.
- c. In the case of a person accused or suspected of gross sin, who absents himself from the congregation and refuses to meet with the elders so that the matter may be investigated, the elders shall announce to the congregation that that person is

suspended from membership. Such suspension shall continue in force as long as the conditions giving rise to it continue.

2. Excommunication

- a. Some types of conduct must be categorized as “immoral” (I Corinthians 5:9-11; 6:9-10), and a member guilty of such conduct must be cut off from the fellowship of the church (I Corinthians 5:3-5, 13; Matthew 18:17). In such a case the elders (and the church) shall make earnest efforts to bring the offender to true repentance and reformation. If these efforts fail, the elders shall report the same to the congregation at a regular or specially called meeting of the church membership. At the direction of the elders and in the presence of the membership the offender shall be excommunicated.
- b. Likewise, some wrong opinions regarding the doctrines of Scripture are so serious that they must be categorized as “heretical” (Galatians 1:6-9; I Timothy 4:1). A member who persists in propagating or holding any such opinion, in spite of earnest and patient admonition by the elders (or church), shall be excommunicated in the same manner as an immoral person.

3. Restoration

It is the responsibility of the church to forgive and restore to full membership a disciplined person who has given satisfactory evidence of his repentance and reformation (II Corinthians 2:6-8). The elders by their own action may restore a person whom they have to full membership privileges and shall report the same to the congregation.

ARTICLE VII – OFFICE- BEARERS

GENERAL STATEMENT – Jesus Christ alone is Head of the Church (Colossians 1:18; Ephesians 1: 22-23), and he governs his Church through office-bearers whom he appoints and who are endowed by his Spirit with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work. Office-bearers in the church are two kinds: elders and deacons (Philippians 1:1; I Timothy 3:1-13; Titus 1:5-9). It is the duty of the church to seek and discover among its male members those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the necessary gifts and graces for office-bearing and, after formally recognizing them by common suffrage, to set them apart by united prayer, and then to submit to their authority.

A. ELDERS

1. Whereas in new or small congregations only one man may have the gifts requisite to his being recognized as an elder (such a congregation may, in fact, invite a man who has the necessary gifts to come and labor among them), the Scriptures appear to indicate that normally there should be a plurality of elders in the local church (Acts 20:17; Philippians 1:1). These are also called “bishops” {meaning “overseers”} because they are charged with the oversight of the assembly (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2). They are “pastors and teachers” given to the church “for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of service, unto the building up of the body of Christ” (Ephesians 4:11-12).
2. In view of the fact that the responsibilities of this office are numerous and grave, it is highly desirable that at least one elder should devote his full time to the work of the ministry and the oversight of the church. The church is responsible to give adequate financial support to such men (I Corinthians 9:9-11; I Timothy 5:17-18), and it is free to

invite men from outside the local congregation to come into its midst and serve in this capacity. Any man called to this office must be able conscientiously to affirm his agreement with the Articles of Faith and the Constitution of the church. Should he at any time move from this position, he is under spiritual and moral obligation to make this fact known to the church.

3. Elders are responsible for the spiritual ministrations of the church, the implementation of discipline and the oversight of the souls of the church's members "as those that must give account" (Hebrews 13:17, NKJ) to God (Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:2-3). While every elder should be "apt to teach", some will be more engaged in formal and public teaching, while others will be more engaged in pastoring (that is, private teaching and admonishing) and governing. Gifted men who are not recognized as elders may engage in public preaching and teaching, provided they are godly in character and behavior and exercise their gift under the oversight of the elders.
4. While elders are overseers of the flock, they are themselves members of the flock. Therefore, each elder is under the oversight of his fellow elders and is subject to the same discipline as the other members of the church.
5. The church should endeavor to discover and formally recognize all the men whom the Holy Spirit has endowed with the requisite gifts and character to be set over the church, but only such men. Thus, when men have been ordained to this office, the church will have the confidence that it has recognized the overseers whom the Holy Spirit has set over it (Acts 20:28). Therefore, the church can fix neither the number of elders nor the length of their term of office.
6. The qualifications for a man chosen to fill the office of elder are clearly set forth in Scripture, particularly in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.

B. DEACONS

1. Deacons are responsible to administer the ordinary business, secular affairs and benevolent concerns of the church so that the elders may devote themselves without distraction to more spiritual matters (Acts 6:3-4). They must fulfill the duties of their office in cooperation with and subjection to the elders.
2. Neither the number of deacons nor the length of the term of their office shall be fixed. The church shall choose as many as are needed for the work to be done from among the men who give evidence of having scriptural qualifications for that office (Acts 6:3).
3. The qualifications for a man chosen to fulfill the office of deacon are particularly set forth in Acts 6:3 and I Timothy 3:8-13.

C. APPOINTMENT OF OFFICE-BEARERS

GENERAL STATEMENT – The local church, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, is responsible to appoint men to the office of elder and deacon. Each man involved should have an inward conviction that the Lord is calling him to the particular office, and the church should recognize that calling as it observes in the individual evidence of the gifts and graces which the Scriptures require for the particular office.

This is a matter of such gravity that it should be accompanied by prayerful waiting on God for guidance, careful perusal of the relevant passages of Scripture and a dispassionate

evaluation of each man's qualifications. These activities are the responsibilities of each member of the church as well as the church as a whole.

1. Nominations

- a. Nominations to the office of elder and deacon shall be made by a nominating committee consisting of the elders and, at the discretion of the elders, other selected members of the congregation. In accordance with Acts 6, the committee shall ask the congregation's help in seeking out scripturally qualified men for these offices. After earnest prayer and careful consideration of all the potential office-bearers, this committee shall place in nomination as many or as few as it sees fit. After making its report to the congregation, the nominating committee shall automatically be dissolved.
- b. The elders alone may at any time of year nominate a candidate or candidates to either or both offices and call a special congregational business meeting for their consideration.
A man may not be nominated to either office without his knowledge and prior consent.

2. Election – When the time comes to consider a nomination during a business meeting of the church, the candidate and any members of his immediate family who are present shall be requested to leave the room while his qualifications are openly discussed by the entire congregation in the fear of God and the light of Scripture. Then a written ballot shall be taken. It is hoped that the vote of the congregation will in such matters always be unanimous, but if unanimity is not realized, no less than a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting shall be required for the election of an office-bearer.

3. Installation – The newly elected office-bearer shall be publicly installed in his office at a regular worship service by the prayer of the whole congregation and the laying on of the hands of the existing elders (Acts 6:6; I Timothy 5:22).

4. The calling of a full-time pastor – Whenever the position of a full-time pastor becomes vacant, a pulpit committee shall be formed in the same manner as the nominating committee described in Article VII Section C Paragraph 1. a. The pulpit committee will be responsible for seeking candidates for the pastorate and will recommend its choice to the congregation. Prospective candidates will be presented to the congregation one at a time for their prayerful and careful consideration. A candidate must obtain at least a three-fourths majority of those present and voting before the church extends him a call.

5. Removal of officers

- a. Office-bearers are subject to the same rules of discipline as other members of the church. They shall hold office as long as they are faithful to their calling and have the confidence of the congregation. An office-bearer may honorably resign from his office if he feels he is providentially hindered from properly discharging his responsibilities or for other good and valid reasons.
- b. In the case of a man no longer meeting the Scriptural qualifications for his office, he may be brought for re-evaluation at any time by at least one of the elders or upon the individual written requests of one-third of the members in good standing. These requests must be presented to the elders, who will in turn call a special congregational

- meeting disclosing the nature and purpose of the meeting. The officer in question will have the opportunity to hear and answer any charges made against him. He may be removed from office by a majority vote of those members present and voting.
- c. The full-time pastor may be terminated by the pastor's resignation not less than thirty days in advance. Should it become necessary to dismiss a pastor, he shall be given at least sixty days notice of termination with salary, whether or not he continues to discharge the duties of his office during that period.
6. Appointment of Chairmen – The elders shall choose one of their number to be their chairman, and the deacons shall choose one of their number to be their chairman. These men shall be known as “chairman of the board of elders” and “chairman of the board of deacons” respectively.

ARTICLE VIII – TRUSTEES

In order to “render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s” (Matthew 22:21, NKJ) this church shall have an official Board of Trustees for legal purposes only. This official board shall consist of the Elders and Deacons with the chairmanship chosen from among the group.

ARTICLE IX – CONGREGATIONAL BUSINESS MEETINGS

GENERAL STATEMENT – There shall be an annual business meeting of the church for the hearing of reports, the election of officers and the transaction of such other business as may properly be brought before the meeting. Special business meetings may be called at other times at the discretion of the elders.

A. NOTICE OF MEETINGS

1. Notice of all congregational meetings shall be given at regular worship services on two successive Lord's Days immediately prior to the meetings. However, in the case of an emergency, a meeting may be called on shorter notice by notifying each regular member of the time, place and purpose of the meeting.
2. Meetings for the hearing of special reports or for seeking the counsel of the congregation may be called on shorter notice, but no vote may be taken or other business transacted at such meetings.

B. QUORUM – The regular members present at any properly convened congregational meeting shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of business.

C. CHAIRMANSHIP – The chairman of the Board of Elders shall preside at all business meetings. In the case of his absence or inability to serve, the elders shall appoint another, preferably of their number, to preside.

D. VOTING

1. All regular members who have reached the age of eighteen years and are in good standing in the church may vote on any question properly brought before the congregation.
2. Unanimity of heart and mind under God shall at all times be sought and prayed for (Acts 6:5), but when unanimity is not realized, not less than a two-thirds majority of the

members present and voting shall be required to make a resolution valid, except in the case of officer election and removal.

ARTICLE X – AMENDMENTS

This Constitution may be amended by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting at a duly called congregational meeting provided that amendments have been distributed by the Church Officers in written form at least two weeks prior to the congregational meeting.

ARTICLE XI – DOCUMENT HISTORY

Originally adopted March 25, 2001