

# **Prairie Baptist Church**

## **CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS**

Adopted: Sept. 6, 2009

Revised: Nov 11, 2018

### **PREAMBLE**

We declare and establish this constitution to preserve and secure the principles of our faith and to govern the body of this church in an orderly manner. This constitution will preserve the liberties of each individual church member and the freedom of action of this body in relation to other churches.

### **CONSTITUTION**

#### **I. NAME**

The name of this church shall be Prairie Baptist Church (hereafter referred to as Prairie Baptist Church or "this church" or "the church").

#### **II. BUSINESS LOCATION**

The address of this principal office of this church shall be *25 CR 306, Cleveland, Texas 77327*

#### **III. MISSION STATEMENT**

The Mission of Prairie Baptist Church shall be to honor and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ by making a great commitment to the great commandment and the great commission (Matthew 22:37-38 and Matthew 28:19-20).

#### **IV. ARTICLES OF FAITH**

The following Articles of Faith are consistent with the doctrinal statement of "The Baptist Faith and Message" as adopted by the Southern Baptist Convention in 2000 and to which we subscribe.

1. We believe the Holy Bible as the inspired Word of God, without any error, the all-sufficient authority in matters of faith, doctrine, and Christian living.
2. We believe in one God, eternally existing in three Persons: the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

3. We believe in the Virgin Birth of Jesus Christ, and that He is true God and Man. He died on the cross for our sins. He rose bodily from the dead, ascended into heaven, where He sits at the right hand of the Father, and is now our High Priest and Advocate.
4. We believe that man is the special creation of God, made in His own image. Man was created innocent but through his free choice sinned against God and brought sin into the human race and left man in need of forgiveness and Salvation.
5. We believe that eternal salvation is the free gift of God, entirely apart from man's works, and is possessed by any and all who have faith in and receive Jesus Christ as their personal Lord and Savior. We further believe that salvation was obtained by the blood Christ and that there is no salvation apart from personal faith in Jesus Christ as Lord.
6. We believe in a regenerated church membership: that is, persons old enough to understand their need for Jesus Christ, and of their own free will, accept Him as their personal Lord and Savior.
7. We believe that baptism is by immersion and 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 resurrection to walk in newness of life in Christ Jesus. We believe the Lord's Supper (Communion) is a memorial to His suffering and death on the Cross. These are the ordinances to be observed by the church in its present age. These are, however, not to be regarded as means for man's salvation.
8. We believe in the personal, bodily, imminent, and glorious return of the Lord Jesus Christ and that His Second Coming inspires believers for dynamic and zealous life and Service for Him while waiting for His return.
9. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead, the everlasting blessedness of the saved in heaven, and the everlasting punishment and separation from God of the unsaved in hell.
10. We believe in the autonomy of the local church. This church shall manage its own affairs and shall not be subject to any other religious body or organization.
11. We believe in the sanctity of marital union as described in scripture, God created the first marriage as a sacred covenant relationship between one man and one woman for the purpose of procreation, companionship, and dominion over creation, in keeping with the covenant relationship God himself established with his own creation (Genesis 2:15-24). We further believe that sexual relations are designed by God only to be experienced through the confines of marriage. This Church affirms that all marriage ceremonies performed in the name of this church and any related celebrations or activities allowed in its facilities shall be for unions that meet the standards named in this church constitution.

## V. CHARACTER

The government of this church is vested in the body of believers who compose it. It is subject to the control of no other ecclesiastical body. So far as may be consistent with the principles and teachings of God's Word and with the program of our church, we shall cooperate with and have representation in the denominational causes sponsored by the Southern Baptist Convention, the Baptist General Convention of Texas, and to the Tryon-Evergreen Baptist Association. The church will serve as a 501(c)(3) non-profit religious organization. In the event of the dissolution of the church, assets will be distributed for one or more exempt purposes within the meaning of the 501(c)(3) Internal Revenue Code, or corresponding section of any future federal tax code to the Grantor, "Rural Shade Baptist Church". In the event Rural Shade Baptist Church does not exist as a member of the Southern Baptist Convention the assets will go to the "Tryon-Evergreen Association".

## VI. CHURCH COVENANT

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God, to receive the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior and Lord, 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, the heavenly crowd of witnesses and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one-another as one body in Christ.

### *For the Advancement of This Church*

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.

### *As Christian Stewards*

To contribute cheerfully and regularly as each person purposes in his/her heart to the Support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor, and the spread of the gospel through the nations.

### *Alone and At Home*

We also engage to maintain family and personal devotions; to educate our children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances.

### *Before the World*

To walk with wisdom and purpose in the world; to be just in our dealings, faithful in our engagements, exemplary in our character and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the kingdom of our Savior.

### *Toward One Another*

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 teaching of our Savior, to secure it without delay.

### *When We Move*

We moreover engage that when we move from this church, 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.

## **BYLAWS**

### **I. CHURCH MEMBERSHIP**

This is a sovereign and democratic Baptist church under the Lordship of Jesus Christ. The membership retains unto itself the exclusive right of self-government in all phases of the spiritual and temporal life of this church.

**A. Qualifications:** The membership of Prairie Baptist Church shall consist of such persons who have made a profession of their faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord and who, having been scripturally baptized by immersion, are in agreement with the Articles of Faith.

**B. Reception:** Membership in this church may be attained in one of the following manners.

1. By scriptural baptism by immersion after profession of faith in Jesus Christ as personal Lord and Savior
2. By transfer of church letter from another Baptist church
3. By a statement of faith of prior experience of conversion and scriptural baptism

Members shall be approved at a business meeting by a simple majority vote. Should there be any disagreement about a candidate the pastor and deacon body will investigate and make a recommendation to the church within thirty days.

**C. Duties/Rights:** Members are expected to be faithful in all the duties essential to the Christian Life and to attend the services of this church, to give for its support and its causes, and to share in its organized work. Members in good standing shall have the right to a voice and vote in all church transactions and shall have the right and privileges to full participation in the life and work of the church. Members have a right to recommend a special business meeting to the Pastor, Pastor Advisory Board, or Deacon Body to consider special matters of a significant nature.

**D. Termination:** Membership in Prairie Baptist Church shall be terminated when a member:

- a) Requests a letter of transfer to join another Baptist Church;
- b) Is dropped from the roll of membership when he or she joins another kind of church For which a letter of transfer may not be necessary;
- c) Dies; or;
- d) Is dismissed by a vote of the church due to reasons presented by the Chairman of the Deacons or designee. The pastor and deacons will do all they can to counsel the Member for restoration prior to action of dismissal; or;
- e) A request from the member being dismissed from the church membership

## II. CHURCH OFFICERS & STAFF

All church officers must be members of Prairie Baptist Church in good standing. The officers of the church shall be the pastor, a moderator, a clerk, a treasurer, the deacons, and the trustees. The staff of the church shall be those persons employed or volunteering for positions i.e, the Music Minister, Education Minister, Youth Minister, nursery, secretarial, and custodial positions.

### E. The Pastor:

1. **Call:** A pastor shall be chosen and called by the church whenever a vacancy occurs. The qualifications for pastor shall be consistent with those listed in I Timothy 3:1-7. His election shall take place at a meeting called for that purpose, of which at least two (2) weeks written notice shall be given to the church membership and clearly stated at regular church meetings. The Deacons shall appoint a Pastor Search Committee. They will be responsible for finding an interim pastor as needed. The Pastor Search Committee shall seek out a suitable pastor, and their recommendation will constitute a nomination. The Committee shall bring to the consideration of the church membership only one man at a time. Election shall be by secret ballot, an affirmative vote of three-fourths (75%) of those voting being necessary to affirm a choice as counted by the Pastor Search Committee. If the pastor of choice is non-ordained the church shall assemble an ordination council for purpose of ordaining the individual. The pastor, thus elected, shall serve until the relationship is terminated.
2. **Termination:** The deacons may recommend a called meeting to request the resignation of the pastor. A majority of the deacons must agree. In cases where there are not at least 3 deacons, a petition by one-fourth of the resident church members is sufficient for a called meeting. An outside moderator shall be present for the meeting (preferably the Director of Missions of the Association). The vote to request the resignation of the pastor shall be by secret ballot and requires an affirmative majority to carry the motion for a forced resignation. The church will compensate the Pastor with six (6) weeks salary except in cases of gross misconduct (ie., failure to adhere to the articles of faith, sexual, and/or financial improprieties) where no compensation is required. The termination shall be immediate and compensation shall be within thirty days of termination.

## **F. Deacons:**

### **1. Number, Election, Terms of Service**

- a) The Church shall strive for a minimum of three (3) deacons.
- b) A committee made up of the deacon body and pastor shall meet each year to determine if recommendations are needed for additional deacons. A list of qualified candidates shall be compiled and brought before the Church during a regular business meeting for discussion of the nomination. A secret ballot shall be held at a called business meeting not less than two weeks from the meeting where nominations are made. These nominees shall be approved by a vote of three-quarters of those voting in the called business meeting. The nominations shall be limited to the number of deacons recommended by the pastor and deacon body. In the absence of an elected deacon body a Pastor Advisory Board will fulfill the functions and duties of the deacon board.

### **2. Qualifications**

- a) The qualifications for a deacon shall be consistent with those listed in I Timothy 3:8-13.
- b) A deacon must be at least eighteen (18) years of age and a member in good standing of this church for a period of at least one (1) year.
- c) If a member is elected as a deacon he agrees to fulfill the duties of the deacon and uphold the church constitution and bylaws defined by Article II Section F.4.
- d) If a member is elected to serve as a deacon, and has never served before in this or any other Baptist church, that deacon, upon election, shall be ordained within thirty (30) days. The Pastor shall assemble an ordaining council for the ordination of qualified and recommended candidates.

### **3. Method of Procedure**

- a) The standing officers of the deacons are: Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Secretary. These officers are subject to election or re-election by the Board of Deacons at the first regular deacons meeting of each church year.. Election shall be by secret ballot without nomination and by a majority vote. The pastor shall preside over the deacon's meeting in the event the Chairman has been rotated from the board and until a new Chairman is elected. The Chairman shall be elected first, the Vice-Chairman second, and the Secretary third.
- b) The whole body of deacons shall be organized as a unit for the consideration of all-larger problems and general policies, and shall meet monthly. They may organize themselves into any sub-committees, as they deem necessary.
- c) Each deacon shall freely confer with the pastor about all matters and problems of the church, and this shall be handled in a confidential manner.
- d) A majority of the deacons must be present for a meeting to be valid if church recommendations are to be made. The pastor is expected to attend all deacon body meetings.

### **4. Duties**

- a) Deacons are to be servants of the church. They are to guard the unity of the spirit within the bonds of peace.

- b) They shall serve as counsel to advise and confer with the pastor in all matters pertaining to the welfare and work of the church. With the pastor, they are to consider and formulate plans for the constant effort and progress of the church in all things pertaining to the saving of Souls, the development of Christians, and the growth of the Kingdom of God.
- c) They are to establish and maintain personal relationships with, and a watchful supervision of, all the membership of the church. They are to seek to know the physical needs, the moral needs, and the spiritual struggles of the members of the congregation. They are to serve the whole church in relieving, encouraging, and developing all that are in need.
- d) All active deacons should attend all scheduled and called business meetings of the board.
- e) In counsel with the pastor, the deacons are to have watchful supervision of the discipline of the church, in administering which they are to be guided by the principles set forth in Matthew 18:15-17, 1 Corinthians 5:9-13, and 1 Thessalonians 5:12-14. The deacons shall be free to call upon any member of the church to aid in disciplinary action.

## **5. Termination**

- a) Deacons may resign the deacon position with two (2) weeks written notice to the pastor and deacon body.
- b) The church may remove any deacon member from the Deacon Body by a majority vote of the voting members present at a special business meeting duly called, pursuant to the provisions of Article IV Section B.4 of these by laws.

**G. Moderator:** The Pastor shall be the moderator of the church. In the absence of the Pastor, the Chairman of the Board of Deacons shall preside, or in the absence of both, the pastor's designee shall preside. The Moderator shall preside over all regular and called business meetings of the church.

**H. Clerk:** The church clerk shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee and approved by the church membership at a regular business meeting and is responsible for keeping minutes of all business meetings of the church and preparing the annual as necessary. The Clerk shall keep a register of the names and addresses of the church members, with dates of admission, dismissal, and deaths of members of this church family. The clerk shall issue letters of dismissal voted by the church, write letters of transfer of membership, and keep an accurate history of this church.

**I. Treasurer:** The Treasurer shall be nominated by the Nominating Committee and approved by the church membership at a regular business meeting and is responsible to keep a record of all monetary transactions for the church, keeping at all times an itemized account of all receipts and disbursements. The Treasurer shall give an itemized report of receipts and disbursements monthly to the Pastor and Deacons, This report shall be printed for distribution to the members upon request. All books, records, and accounts kept by the Treasurer shall be considered the property of this church and except for individual accounts of contributions, shall be open for inspection at all times by the members of this church.

**J. Trustees:** The church shall elect a minimum of three or more Trustees to serve as legal officers for the church. They shall hold in trust the church property. Upon a specific vote

of the church authorizing each action, they shall have the power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease or transfer any church property. When the signatures of Trustees are required, they shall sign legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, or rental of property, or legal documents related to church-approved matters. Trustees shall be reviewed by the deacon body and pastor annually and make any changes or recommendations as needed.

**K. Church Staff:** The church shall employ, or call staff, as needed. Employed staff (i.e.: groundskeeper - Property & Grounds). Called Staff (i.e., Minister of Music, Minister of Youth) shall fall under the authority of the Pastor. All Staff members, other than that of the Pastor, shall be recommended for employment by the Personnel Committee. A written job description will be prepared by the personnel committee when the need for church staff is determined. The church, before implementation or revision, will approve all job descriptions.

### **III. COMMITTEES**

The committees of this church will consist of standing and non-standing committees. The pastor and nominating committee will assign the listed committees as the need arises. Standing committees shall be created to serve specific ongoing needs of the church. A standing committee may be dissolved by a majority vote of church members at a properly called business meeting when the church decides that its services are no longer warranted. A non-standing committee may be created by the church to serve specific temporary need of the church. A non-standing committee shall be dissolved by a majority vote of church members at a properly called business meeting when the committee's original purpose has been accomplished. Members of all church committees will be chosen from the membership of the church. No committee, standing or non-standing shall consist of less than three (3) members unless specified in the committee description below.

- A. Nominating Committee** Consists of not less than three (3) members who shall be nominated by the Deacons/Pastor Advisory Board, with the approval of the church at a regular business meeting, by majority vote, annually on the first Sunday in July. This Committee shall canvass the church rolls and seek to discover persons suitable for appointment as, teachers, or committee members. This Committee shall bring nominations for, teachers, , and committee members to the church for approval at the regular September business meeting each year, and the church shall approve these appointments with a majority vote. The Nominating Committee shall be responsible for filling any vacancies during the committee term.
- B. Property & Grounds Committee** Consists of not less than three (3) members. This Committee shall have general charge and upkeep of the buildings and property including interior and exterior. The cleaning of the buildings shall be the oversight of this Committee. This Committee shall have general charge and upkeep of the grounds and all landscaping.
- C. Budget & Finance Committee** Consists of the Treasurer, Chairman of the Deacons/Pastor Advisory Board, and three (3) members at large. A member must be at least eighteen (18) years of age and a member of this church for a period of at least one (1) year. This Committee shall prepare and submit to the Deacons/Pastoral Advisory

Board at their regular meeting in November of each year, for approval, an inclusive budget indicating by items the amount needed. After being reviewed and approved by the Board of Deacons/Pastoral Advisory Board, this budget shall be presented by the Moderator to the members of this church at the annual business meeting for final approval by the church. All Committee meetings shall be conducted in a confidential manner.

- D. Evangelism Committee** Consists of three (3) members. This Committee is to promote evangelism, being primarily concerned with revival arrangements such as publicity, housing, etc.
- E. Lord's Supper Committee** Consists of two (2) members. This Committee shall make all necessary arrangements for the observance of the Lord's Supper and shall render such assistance to the pastor and the church as may be necessary,
- F. Baptismal Committee** Consists of two (2) members (one man and one woman). This Committee shall make all necessary arrangements for baptismal services and shall assist the pastor and candidates, if needed.
- G. Youth Committee** Consists of four (4) members plus the Youth Director/Minister. This Committee is responsible in helping to plan as well as carry out youth programs and activities inside and outside the church. These activities are to be correlated with the activities of the church program organization in maintaining objectives set forth by the church.
- H. Kitchen Committee** Consists of three (3) members. This Committee shall have general supervision of the supplies, equipment, and use of the church kitchen suggesting to the church rules and regulations, as they deem wise. It shall enforce policies necessary to properly maintain the kitchen in a clean, orderly, and acceptable condition.
- I. Outreach Committee** Consists of a minimum of five (5) members, one of whom is to be a deacon. This Committee is under the immediate leadership of the pastor. He, along with the Nominating Committee, forms a committee to develop and implement a strategy for effective programs of community evangelism outreach such as visitation; Bible studies in homes, offices, places of work; special evangelistic meetings inside and outside the church; and other needed programs to reach people with the gospel.
- J. Personnel Committee** Consists of four (4) members picked by the nominating committee and voted on by the church. The committee will survey the need for additional staff positions, prepare and update as necessary job descriptions for all staff personnel. Assist the church staff in matters relating to the employment of a new non-called staff. Develop and recommend church policies for personnel administration. Develop, maintain and recommend salaries and benefits programs for employed staff. All employees and staff members shall be ultimately accountable to the staff committee. Problems, friction, or conflicts between employees or called-staff members shall, where possible, be reconciled by this committee. This committee shall have the responsibility to make recommendations to the church to dismiss any non-called or called staff member. The hiring or dismissal of any called or non-called staff member will be brought before the church for a vote during a regular or special called business meeting.

## IV. MEETINGS

### A. Worship

1. This church shall meet regularly on Sundays for worship of God, for preaching, instruction, and evangelism. These meetings will be open for the entire membership of the church and for all people, and shall be conducted under the direction of the pastor or his designee.
2. The Lord's Supper will be celebrated on the 5th Sundays and at additional times as the pastor or deacons may determine and is open to all believers in Christ who have been biblically baptized by immersion.

### B. Business

1. At any of the regular meetings for Worship, the church may, without special notice, receive new members and appoint messengers.
2. The church shall meet in regular business meeting at least once every quarter, or more frequently as the pastor or deacon body deem necessary during times of need.
3. The quorum consists of those who attend the business meeting, provided it is a stated meeting or one that has been properly called.
4. The Moderator may, and shall, when requested by the Pastor, Deacons, or a standing committee, call a special business meeting to consider special matters of a significant nature. A one (1) week verbal notice to the church must be given and clearly stated concerning the subject, date, time, and location.
5. *Robert's Rules of Order* (revised edition) is adopted as the authority for parliamentary rules of procedures for all business meetings of this church, and for all other meetings that demand voting of the church members, including committee meetings.

## V. FINANCIAL GIVING AND SPECIAL OFFERINGS

- A. Annie Armstrong, Lottie Moon, and other special offerings are to be observed as approved by the Deacons.
- B. It is understood that membership in the church involves the financial obligation to support the church and its causes with regular proportionate gifts.
- C. A special benevolence fund having been created by individual donations or included in the budget is to be administered by the pastor or his designee of this church and is to be used for the needs of any individual or other causes.

## **VI. AMENDMENTS**

- A.** Changes to the Constitution and Bylaws will be made at a business meeting. The proposed change(s) will be submitted in writing to the members at least fourteen (14) days prior to the time of the proposed vote. Passage requires a two-thirds (2/3) affirmative vote of those voting at a regular or called business meeting.
- B.** The Pastor and Deacons will appoint a Constitution/By-Laws review committee every five (5) years, or as deemed necessary.

## **VII. ADOPTION**

- A.** The foregoing Constitution and Bylaws of Prairie Baptist Church are so adopted this 6th day of September, 2009, by a vote in accordance with the Constitution and Bylaws in effect at the time of said vote, which required a “two-thirds vote of all members of the church present entitled to vote.”