

Port Cities Reformed Baptist Church Constitution

Our church operates under this charter.

Preamble

The members of Port Cities Reformed Baptist Church willingly submit themselves to the following articles.

Article I: Name

The name of this church is Port Cities Reformed Baptist Church of Lewiston, Idaho.

Article II: Purpose

The purpose of this church is: 1) to glorify God in the corporate gathering of His people by acceptable worship; 2) the proclamation of free grace in Christ to sinners; 3) the preaching of the whole counsel of God; 4) the nurture of God's people through instruction, fellowship, and pastoral care; and, 5) to function under Christ our Head as a local assembly of believers, in strict accordance with, and obedience to, every Scriptural directive bearing on the administration of such assemblies.

Article III: Covenant

A. Introductory Statement

God has graciously entered into a covenant relationship with His believing people (Jer. 31:31-34; 32:40; Heb. 8:7-13; 10:16,17; 13:20,21). Jesus Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant (Heb. 8:6). His blood is the blood of the New Covenant, which infallibly secures all the benefits of the covenant for all God's people (Matt. 26:26-28; Heb. 13:20,21). God has in this New Covenant made us members one of another (Rom. 12:4,5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:25). Therefore, we have covenant responsibilities to each other, as well as to God. God has promised in this covenant to write His laws in our hearts and to cause us to walk in His ways (that is, to enable us to keep our covenant responsibilities). The motivation and ability to obey God's laws spring from the atoning sacrifice of Jesus Christ, who, by His death, satisfied the holy wrath of God that was against us due to our sins. It is by the enablement of the Holy Spirit that we obey, in loving gratitude for Christ's righteousness which has been imputed to us, and not to establish our own righteousness before God. We obey with the confidence that the end of Christ's death will be realized in us (that is, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us," Rom.8:1-4, and that we should be a people "zealous of good works," Titus 2:14). The following paragraphs are a summary of what we believe are our covenant responsibilities toward God and toward one another.

B. *Summary of Our Covenant Responsibilities (the Law Written in Our Hearts)*

1. We agree to worship only the one true and living God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, who has revealed Himself to us in the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. We will have no other gods before Him.
2. We agree to worship God in His appointed way and to exclude from our worship anything that He has not appointed.
3. We agree not to use the name of our God empty or to take it upon ourselves carelessly, but to walk in the paths of righteousness for His name's sake.
4. We agree to be diligent in our vocations throughout the week, that we may provide for our own households, but we agree to set aside the Lord's Day for special exercises of public worship, unless providentially hindered.
5. We agree to honor and obey, within the bounds of Scripture, all our superiors, whether in family, church, state, or business; and, if we be superiors, to deal reasonably and lovingly with our subordinates and thus to teach them by word and example to fear God and keep His commandments.
6. We agree to avoid whatever tends to destroy us or our neighbor and to engage vigorously in all lawful endeavors to preserve our own lives and the lives of others. This includes mortifying any bitterness or anger toward others and being kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another.
7. We agree to possess our bodies in holiness as vessels joined to Christ and indwelt by the Holy Spirit and to avoid all uncleanness of thought, speech, or action.
8. We agree to avoid theft of time, money, or goods, but rather to freely and liberally give of ourselves in ministry to the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of others.
9. We agree to earnestly promote truth among men and to avoid anything that would prejudice the truth or injure our neighbor's good name.
10. We agree to be fully content with our own condition in life, to rejoice in the advancement of our neighbor, and to avoid envying him or coveting anything that is his.

Article IV: Articles of Faith

The Scriptures alone are the ultimate and final authority in all matters of faith and practice. However, we recognize the following Confessions of Faith to be an accurate summary statement of what the Scriptures do indeed teach. We find these historic documents to be useful for church discipline, for ecclesiastical fellowship, for the doctrinal evaluation of ministers, for evangelism, for Christian education, and for a sustained sense of our religious heritage.

- The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1689
- The Philadelphia Confession of Faith of 1742 (excluding Chapter 31 on the Laying on of Hands)
- The Westminster Confession (excluding Chapter 25-Paragraph 2 regarding Children; Chapter 28 on Baptism; and Chapter 31 on Synods and Councils)

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 baptized upon the confession of his/her faith; who expresses substantial agreement with the doctrines and aims of this church; and, who is willing to submit to its government is eligible for membership in it.

B. *Recognition of New Members*

1. Persons desiring to be formally received into the membership of this church are to make application to the elders. The elders are to determine to the best of their ability if the applicant meets the requirements found in the preceding section.
2. If the elders are satisfied that the applicant meets the requirements for membership, the church is to be informed of the applicant's desire. A sufficient time is to be allowed for the church to prayerfully consider the applicant's qualifications. Any objections should be directed to the elders privately. If no objection is raised which the elders consider to be valid, the applicant is to be formally received into membership by the action of the whole church.

C. *Conduct of Members*

1. Each member is to punctually attend all stated meetings of the church unless providentially hindered or for reasons understood by the elders (Heb.10:25). The stated

meetings of the church are all those on the Lord's Day, business meetings, and other meetings in which the whole church is called upon to gather as the officers deem necessary.

2. It is the duty of each member to make disciplined use of the means of grace and to conduct themselves according to the precepts of the Word of God (see Article III) so that the name of Christ and the church be not justly criticized by those without.

3. Each member is to give regularly, proportionately, and cheerfully in support of the church's financial concerns. This is not imposed upon the people of God as a tax but is rather a practical participation in the work of the gospel. To this regular giving, additional gifts and offerings may be made according to each person's ability and willingness of heart. Charitable giving to other good and honorable causes is the private business of each and every member, provided that he/she does not diminish his/her ability to fulfill this primary responsibility of giving to the local church.

4. Where the Word of God does not forbid a practice by specific reference or inference, a member has liberty with respect to it. The exercise of this liberty, however, ought at all times to be governed by an earnest desire to walk in the fear of God and to glorify Him in all things. A regard for the consciences of weaker brethren, a compassion for the lost, and a zealous regard for the health of one's own soul is required.

5. Each member is to endeavor to be useful in the extension of God's Kingdom. It is to be his/her concern to recognize and seize opportunities both by word and conduct for the gospel of Christ according to the full measure of his/her peculiar gifts and calling. As believers do not all possess the same gifts and callings, their specific efforts may be expected to differ.

6. Each member is to seek the welfare of all the other members by cultivating their acquaintance, praying for them and their children, responding to their practical necessities, refraining from all gossip and evil speaking, encouraging them, exhorting them, and lovingly rebuking them when necessary and appropriate.

7. All members are expected to recognize and submit to the authority of its elders and deacons in their respective spheres of responsibility.

8. Members are to use the utmost discretion in speaking of those matters which concern the private business of the church or its members.

D. *Special Forms of Membership*

The membership status of any whose relationship to the church involves abnormal circumstances shall be determined in each case by the action of the elders, subject to the approval of the congregation.

E. *Termination of Membership*

1. By Physical Death.

2. By Dismissal/Transfer.

When it is so requested, the elders may grant to a departing member in good standing a letter of dismissal to the fellowship of another church. 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 dismissal to any church which is in their judgement disloyal to "the faith which was once for all delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

3. By Exclusion.

Occasionally, a member whose conduct does not warrant corrective discipline might request termination of his/her membership. If circumstances make it improper for the church to terminate his/her membership by dismissal/transfer (see Paragraph 2 above), such a member would be excluded.

While there is no explicit precedent for exclusion in the New Testament, it is consistent with and necessitated by Biblical principles. Even though such a member may not be transferred, neither may the sanctions accompanying corrective discipline (1 Cor.5:9-13; 2 Thess.3:6-15) be properly applied to him/her.

Exclusion may be warranted for the following reasons: 1) a member may conclude that he himself or she herself is not truly converted; or 2) a member may, out of conscience, wish to terminate his/her membership for reasons that do not contradict his/her Christian profession.

Because of the seriousness of church membership, members shall be excluded upon their request only after due counsel and admonition. This request shall be made in writing to the elders and include the reason for which exclusion is desired. If after prayerful counsel the member insists on being excluded, the name of the member and his/her reason(s) for desiring exclusion shall be announced at a church business meeting. If no compelling objections are raised, then the member shall be excluded. No congregational vote is necessary. If an excluded member again applies for membership, the normal procedures shall be followed as set forth in Sections A and B of this Article.

4. By Excommunication.

According to the teaching of Holy Scripture, a congregation must cut off from its visible membership any person who teaches or insists on holding to false and heretical doctrine, or who blatantly or persistently conducts himself in a manner inconsistent with his/her Christian profession, or who purposely persists in disturbing the unity or peace of the church (Matt.18:15ff; 1 Cor.5:1ff; Rom.16:17; Titus 3:10,11).

Article VI: Church Discipline

Church discipline arises from the responsibilities of membership. Its purpose is: to uphold the glory and rule of Christ in His church, to maintain its purity, to protect the whole flock, and to reclaim those who err.

A. Formative (Ordinary) Discipline

The church is to continuously discipline itself by diligent application of the Word preached, the mutual care and exhortation of the members, and the watchfulness of the elders over the flock.

B. Corrective (Extraordinary) Discipline

Where formative discipline fails and members become disorderly in conduct, default in their resolve to fulfill their duties as members, or embrace destructive doctrines which threaten the peace of the church or expose it to scandal, corrective discipline is first to take the form of admonition and rebuke, either private or public, according to the nature of the offence. If the offence is private, the pattern taught by our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 is to be conscientiously followed.

If the offending member does not repent after due admonition and rebuke, there is no recourse but that the person be removed from membership. Upon the advisement of the elders, excommunication is to be the action of the entire church.

In some cases, great discretion is required, and therefore, the elders are not obliged to divulge to the members every detail but are to be trusted with the government of the church. Where public discipline is deemed necessary by the elders, the church shall be informed. Members may approach the elders privately to gather further information or make opinions known.

At the discretion of the elders, discipline may involve exclusion from the Lord's Supper and from meetings where business is conducted. Restoration to membership or the privileges thereof may occur only where repentance is fully in evidence.

Disciplinary excommunication from membership requires a two-thirds affirmation of the members present and voting at a church meeting convened for that purpose.

Article VII: Ordinances

A. General Statement

There are two ordinances of special significance that our Lord has commanded us to observe, namely, Baptism and the Lord's Supper. (These are sometimes referred to as "sacraments.") Neither of them has saving merit, nor is any grace imparted to the recipient through the water of Baptism or through the bread and the wine of the Supper. These ordinances are not means of "special grace," but they are special "means of grace" and powerful aids to the faith of the believers who participate in them.

B. Baptism

Only confessed disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ are proper candidates for Baptism, and all such persons should be baptized and joined to a local church (Acts 2:38,41,47; 5:13,14). Believing that Baptism is the God-ordained sign of one's personal union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection, and the door of entrance into the visible community of the people of God, we shall receive into the membership of the church only those who have been baptized in the Biblical manner, which is by immersion and "into the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit" (Matt. 28:19).

C. The Lord's Supper

Whereas Baptism is the initiatory ordinance by which one enters the visible church, and should be observed only once by each believer, the Lord's Supper should be celebrated frequently by the assembled church (1 Cor.11:26). While this is a most holy ordinance and should be observed with solemnity and dignity, the bread and the wine of the Supper are and remain only symbols of the broken body and the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. In order to maintain the purity of this ordinance, the presiding elder will "fence the table" by publicly issuing a general invitation to the congregation as a whole, inviting all those, but only those who are true believers, to partake. The responsibility for partaking "unworthily" ultimately rests upon the individual, and no action other than the aforementioned "fencing" will be exercised toward those present.

Article VIII: Government

A. Offices

Jesus Christ alone is Head of the church. The government of the church is entrusted to men who are called to exercise oversight in the church. According to the New Testament, there are only two offices: elder and deacon. Those that hold the office of elder or deacon are to be men, recognized by the church as having gifts and graces to

teach and rule, and to care for the church's practical and physical concerns. They that hold these offices do so by the consent of the church. The number of deacons is determined by the church's requirements and common sense (Acts 6:1-3). The number of elders is determined by however many the ascended Lord is pleased to give to His church (Eph.4:11,12).

B. Recognition of Officers

The recognition of men as elders or deacons is the responsibility of the whole church. The existing elders and deacons shall recommend men to the church for office and seek the prayer and counsel of the membership, after which their appointment to office requires a two-thirds affirmation of the members present and voting at a meeting convened for that purpose. It is highly desired, however, that this vote be unanimous.

Elders and deacons shall continue in their respective offices so long as they are willing and able to function in that capacity, and so long as they continue to meet the Scriptural requirements for their respective offices. Furthermore, the same rules of discipline apply to them as to other members.

C. Specific Matters Related to Elders

The qualifications for elders are set forth in Scripture (1 Tim.3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). The responsibilities of elders are such that God may be expected to give them in plurality to the church, but if there be but one, this is not to be considered abnormal. A plurality of elders may be necessary for the well-being of a church, but not for the being of a church. All elders are subject to one another, none having superior authority, but, as men differ in gifts, some will teach while others may rule only.

Elders who are set apart by the church to give themselves exclusively to their office are to be financially supported by the church in such measure as is necessary that their families' welfare is fully provided for, including provision for adequate retirement.

It is the duty of the church to discover, formally recognize, and submit to its elders; and it is the duty of elders to faithfully order the church's affairs and labor for its maturity and security.

D. Specific Matters Related to Deacons

The qualifications of deacons are set forth in Scripture (Acts 6:3; 1 Tim.3:8-13). Deacons are responsible to administer the ordinary business, physical upkeep, and benevolent concerns of the church so that the elders may devote themselves, without distraction, to their pastoral duties.

The deacons have a real authority in these matters. They are entrusted with the financial disbursement of the church's funds and are to keep such in order so as to present a report before the church at its Annual General Business Meeting. Major

decisions may be submitted to the church for its approval, but the ordinary business of the church is entrusted to the discretion of the deacons.

Article IX: Affiliation

This church may cooperate with other churches of like faith in matters of mutual interest and may request the assistance and counsel of those churches in matters of special concern. However, this church shall at no time be subject to the authority, oversight, or discipline of another church, agency, or denomination.

Article X: Church Business Meetings

A. Decency and Order

The officers shall summon the church for consideration of important matters such as: the recognition of officers, receiving members, discipline, and other major concerns. The church's business is to be conducted in a gracious spirit of unity and order. The officers may appoint one of their number to chair each meeting depending upon the nature of the business to be conducted. A vote is to be taken when officers deem it necessary, or as it is required elsewhere in this constitution. A quorum consists of those members present and voting at a regularly called business meeting of the church.

B. Confidentiality

All business meetings of the church are confidential. Members shall not publish matters of the church's business meetings to non-members. Non-members, however, may be permitted to attend a church business meeting at the discretion of the elders.

C. Prior Notice

Meetings for informal discussion may be called at any time by the officers. Under normal circumstances, where a vote is required, one week's notice shall be given to the membership.

D. The Agenda

The agenda for each meeting shall be fixed by the officers, and no other business shall be conducted at that particular meeting other than that which has been scheduled. Members may approach the officers to suggest matters for formal discussion at a future meeting.

E. *The Annual General Business Meeting*

All the business and financial activity of the church is to be reviewed at the Annual General Business Meeting scheduled as early in the year as practical.

F. *Amendments to the Constitution*

Amendments to this constitution shall require a two-thirds affirmation of the membership present at a meeting called for that purpose, provided that the proposed amendments are circulated at least two weeks prior to the meeting.

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