

# **Wichita Falls Baptist Church**

## **Wichita Falls, Texas**

**Constitution**  
**December 2009**

*Including: Covenant, Statement of Faith, and By-laws*

### **Preamble:**

Having placed our faith wholly and solely in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation, and believing that the Bible is the inspired, inerrant Word of the living God, we have affiliated ourselves with one another as a body of believers. Therefore we adopt this Constitution as a declaration of our convictions so that we may carry on the Lord's work decently and in order.

### **Article 1: Name**

The legal name of this organization shall be *Wichita Falls Baptist Church* as recorded in the Articles of Incorporation in the state of Texas. It shall be incorporated as a non-profit corporation under the laws of the state of Texas. The church address is 1001 8th Street, Wichita Falls, Texas 76301.

### **Article 2: Mission**

Our ministry exists to glorify God by fashioning authentic disciples of Christ who manifest their growth through (1) the exaltation of God in worship, (2) the edifying and equipping of saints for service, and (3) the evangelization of the lost. Our ministry aims to preach and teach the whole counsel of God in the firm belief that through submission and obedience to the Scriptures, sinners will be saved, believers will be disciplined, the church will grow, and other churches of like faith and order will be established throughout the world. The practical outworking of our ministry is guided by specific Biblical convictions that serve as boundaries so that God's work is done God's way, with motives and methods that are pleasing to Him. Our guideposts are as follows:

- Doctrinal purity (Titus 2:7-8), The Bible stands as our only authoritative rule for life and belief. Therefore any error in preaching, teaching, music, associations, or programs which stray from clearly inscripturated truth, must not be tolerated. To maintain pure doctrine, we must earnestly contend for the faith.
- Integrity in our relationships with God and man (Mark 12:29-31), We must give attention to the development, maintenance, and growth of our personal relationship with God and men. This process of creation and cultivation extends to our family, our church, our neighbors, and our world.
- Ecclesiastical unity centered on Scripture (Philippians 3:13-17), While acknowledging

diversity and individuality the church as a whole must be committed to unity. While exercising creativity, flexibility, and personal giftedness, we must have a common purpose in pursuit of a common goal maintaining the authority of a common guide (Scripture). Although we are all different in perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences, we must discipline ourselves to be single in our focus having one mind, and being in one accord.

- Reproductive servant leadership (2 Timothy 2:2), We must strive to develop servant leadership in all areas and at all levels of ministry. A servant leader must selflessly lead under authority and accountability to Christ and His church. He must be a biblically qualified leader structured within the framework of pastoral leadership and congregational government. A servant leader must be a good steward of resources entrusted to his care including: authority, talent, opportunity, finances, and facilities.
- An awareness of the centrality of the church (1 Timothy 3:15), New Testament ministry is body ministry, accomplished in and through the body of Christ, the church. Church ministry must not be confused with church buildings, since much of our mission is actually accomplished as we are scattered within our communities.
- A family emphasis (Ephesians 6:1-4), Our church ministry must never suppress or try to replace the family. Our goal is to encourage and equip members of individual families to serve Christ within the setting of their homes, and assist them in developing holy, healthy, and happy relationships within their families. The church is not in competition with the home. The two must be viewed as complementing institutions. God has not intended the church to replace the home, nor the home the church. Scripture teaches that our homes must be built around serving Christ through His church.
- Financial integrity and stewardship (2 Corinthians 8:20-21), Since we will give an account to God for what we have done with his gifts, we must be wise stewards of our finances and facilities. Care must be taken, and accountability provided for the collection, accounting, and distribution of all church receipts. Our financial dealings must reflect honesty and openness, planning for the future, emphasis on people over things, and the judicious use of debt as a tool and not a crutch.
- A practice of Biblical separation (Romans 16:17), As a church, we must strive to be culturally sensitive and yet spiritually distinct. The Bible clearly teaches separation from sin and error as an indispensable part of a holy life and ministry. Separation from error and those who promote it, is also an essential demonstration of our love for the truth and our Holy God. God warns that sinful associations will corrupt good behavior. As we plan, prepare, and practice ministry we must avoid association with unbelieving ministers and ministries. We must also avoid ministries of fellow believers who are making moral, doctrinal, or associational compromises. By conviction we are a church that is fundamental, separatist, and Baptist. While loving all men, saved or lost, we will only participate in joint ministry with those in harmony with our moral and doctrinal convictions.
- A pursuit of excellence (Colossians 3:23), We must commit ourselves to the patient and progressive pursuit of excellence in the preparation for and the execution of ministry. Concerning ministry, we may never be *the* best, but our commission as believers clearly demands *our* best.
- A heart focus (Luke 6:45), Scripture makes it clear that the true problems of mankind are internal rather than external, matters of the heart, not merely outward behavior. Therefore, our ministry must focus on addressing the true cause of problems rather than just treating the

symptoms. The symptoms of sin must be addressed, but our priority focus must be on the weightier matters of the heart (Matt. 23:23).

- Christ-like compassion (1 Peter 3:8), As we strive to model Christ in life and ministry we must recognize that He had an uncompromising passion for the truth, but also an empathy and passion to redeem and reclaim those who did not. Jesus saw sinners as needing a Savior and suffering saints as needing a Comforter. We must never become tolerant of sin, but we must never become indifferent toward the sinner. Our ministry must reflect that we care about what Christ cared about. Certainly that includes the lost, wayward Christians, and suffering and struggling brothers. We will not confine our love to *lovely* people, but rather strive to reach all types, all colors, from all backgrounds, through all the world.

### **Article 3: Church Covenant**

Having been led, as we believe, by the Spirit of God to receive Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior, and on the profession of our faith, having been baptized by immersion in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, we do now in the presence of God and this assembly most solemnly and joyfully enter into covenant with one another as one body in Christ.

We pledge therefore, by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to walk together in Christian love; to strive for the advancement of this church in knowledge and holiness; to promote its prosperity and spirituality; to sustain its worship, ordinances, doctrines and discipline; and to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, and the spread of the gospel throughout the world.

We also pledge to maintain family and personal devotions; to scripturally educate our children in the things of Christ; to actively seek the salvation of our kindred, our acquaintances, and our community; to walk wisely in the world; to be just in our dealing, faithful in our engagements, and exemplary in our conduct; to pursue peace with all men and holiness before our God; and to be zealous in our efforts to advance the cause of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We further pledge to watch over one another in brotherly love; to remember one another in prayer; to aid one another in sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian compassion and courtesy in our activities and speech; to be slow to take offense, but always ready for reconciliation being mindful of our Savior's instruction, to secure it without delay.

To these and all other Christian duties we do humbly and cheerfully submit ourselves, striving to faithfully perform them not in our own strength, being aware of our weakness, but in the strength of our Lord.

### **Article 4: Abbreviated Statement of Faith**

We believe that the Bible is the absolute authority in matters of faith and practice. We believe that every word of Scripture is inspired; in one God eternally existing in three Persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit); in the creation of all things, including man, as the direct act of God; in eternally secure salvation by grace through faith in the shed blood of the Lord Jesus Christ; in the incarnation and virgin birth of Christ, and in His bodily resurrection; in the personal, bodily, immanent return of the Lord Jesus Christ, and His millennial reign on earth. We believe in a literal Heaven and a literal Hell, and that Satan is a fallen angelic being, able to possess the lost and oppress both the saved and the lost. We believe in the bodily resurrection of the dead. We believe in the autonomy of the local church, in baptism by immersion, and in the observance of the Lord's Supper by all obedient believers. We further believe that personal spiritual growth comes only through learning the truth, and faithfully applying it. We are a fundamental, biblically moral, separated, missionary-minded

group of Bible-believing Christians striving to maintain balanced, Spirit-filled lives.

### **Human Sexuality**

We believe that God has commanded that no intimate sexual activity be engaged in outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. We believe that any form of homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, bestiality, incest, fornication, adultery, and pornography are sinful perversions of God's gift of sex. We believe that God disapproves of and forbids any attempt to alter one's gender by surgery or appearance. (Genesis 2:24; 19:5, 13; 26:8-9; Leviticus 18:1-30; Romans 1:26-29; 1Corinthians 5:1; 6:9; 1Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4). We believe that the only legitimate marriage is the joining of one man and one woman (Genesis 2:24; Romans 7:2; 1Corinthians 7:10; Ephesians 5:22-23).<sup>1</sup>

### **Article 5: Standard of Conduct:**

Ministry functions and services are private meetings held on private property according to the policies and procedures followed by the ministry and should not be considered open to the general public under all circumstances. The ministry leadership reserves the right to remove any participant for any reason in the leadership's sole discretion. A member/participant/student may be dismissed/removed from any ministry function or asked not to return if he/she demonstrates by conduct or spirit that he/she is out of harmony with the Constitution, the spirit, or the policies of the ministry whether on or off property as determined in the sole discretion of the ministry leadership. Readmission considerations following dismissal/removal will be determined on a case-by-case basis.

### **Article 6: Associations:**

Wichita Falls Baptist Church shall be an autonomous, independent, Baptist church, subject to Jesus Christ and the mandates of His Word. The membership retains the exclusive right of self-government in all spheres of its ministry, remaining free from outside interference. The church has the right to associate or disassociate with any group on its own volition. There will be no cooperation or fellowship with apostates or apostasy. Wichita Falls Baptist Church reserves the exclusive right to determine who may be members of this church and the conditions of such membership.

### **Article 7: Membership:**

Membership in a local New Testament church is the responsibility and privilege of every believer. Membership in Wichita Falls Baptist Church is predicated upon a common belief in doctrine, moral principle, and practice. Candidates for membership of Wichita Falls Baptist Church shall consist of any person professing faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as the sole basis of his/her salvation, who has been baptized by single immersion following his/her personal profession of faith, and who affirms his/her agreement with the Constitution of this church. Children who become members do not have voting privileges in congregational meetings, until they are 18 years old.

### **Reception of Members**

After having met with the Pastor (or Deacons when the church is without a Pastor) and having been recommended to the church, a person may be individually submitted for membership after offering (1) a testimony of salvation, (2) a testimony of baptism by immersion, (3) a testimony declaring an absence of discipline from another church, and (4) a testimony of agreement with the Constitution of Wichita Falls Baptist Church. A written testimony and a signed affirmation of baptism, no discipline,

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<sup>1</sup> Note "Human Sexuality" section under Statement of Faith article 4 as well as "Automatic Removal of Membership" section under Membership article 7.

and constitutional agreement, will be obtained for church records. The candidate shall be approved for membership by a majority vote of the members present at any regularly scheduled service.

### **Removal Of Members**

Members may be removed from this assembly by one of the following ways with a majority vote of members present at any regularly scheduled service.

- By death – the clerk shall remove from the church roll all names of deceased members.
- By membership with another congregation – the membership of any member of Wichita Falls Baptist Church will immediately terminate with an application for membership in any other congregation.
- By request – any member may request in writing to be withdrawn from the membership of Wichita Falls Baptist Church, thus terminating all legal obligations and rights as a member. The church recognizes however, that a moral and spiritual relationship continues to uphold, pray for, encourage, exhort, and admonish the one who has requested removal.
- By inactivity – membership in the church carries with it responsibility to attend and support the ministry. Members who cease to attend the church for a period of three months may be removed from the membership roll, thus relinquishing all rights and privileges of membership.
- By discipline – membership may be withdrawn from any member after the exercise of Scriptural church discipline. All membership privileges shall be immediately suspended in such cases, and all tokens of Christian fellowship with the excluded member shall immediately cease (1 Corinthians 5:11; Romans 16:17; 2 Thessalonians 3:11; Titus 3:10; Matthew 18:15-20; Galatians 6:1-2).

The objective of the church in all instances of church discipline is to seek reconciliation and restoration God's way.

### **Automatic Removal Of Membership Concerning Special Cases**

In accordance with the ministry's statement of faith and in recognition of Biblical commands, no immoral conduct will be tolerated. The Bible strictly forbids such conduct which includes immoral actions as well as advocating sinful behavior. The following will not be tolerated in any form and will constitute grounds for automatic removal of membership without the necessity of church vote or congregational meeting: any immoral actions<sup>2</sup> or identifying statements<sup>3</sup> concerning fornication,

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<sup>2</sup> Definition of "immoral action" is: bodily contact, actively undertaken or passively permitted, between members of the opposite sex or members of the same sex for the purpose of satisfying sexual desires and any bodily contact that a reasonable person would understand to demonstrate a propensity or intent to engage in an immoral or homosexual act.

<sup>3</sup> Definition of "identifying statement" is: a statement that a person is a homosexual, bisexual, or otherwise immoral, or words to that effect or language or behavior that a reasonable person would believe is intended to convey the statement that a person engages in or has a propensity or intent to engage in immoral and/or homosexual acts. Examples: "I am gay," "I am a homosexual," "I have a homosexual orientation." Homosexual or immoral conduct, defined as acts or identifying statements, is incompatible with membership at Wichita Falls Baptist Church and is a basis for automatic removal from membership. All persons should be treated with dignity and respect, free of threats or harassment.

adultery, homosexuality, lesbianism, bisexuality, or pornography (Genesis 2:24; 19:5, 13; 26:8-9; Leviticus 18:1-30; Romans 1:26-29; 1Corinthians 5:1; 6:9; 1Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 13:4).

## **Article 8: Church Offices**

### **General**

The officers of the church shall be Pastor and Deacon. Other positions shall be appointed by the Pastor and Deacons and approved by the majority vote of the congregation for proper functioning of the church (i.e., church clerk, treasurer, etc.). All individuals holding elected or appointed office shall subscribe to the Constitution of Wichita Falls Baptist Church, and shall be members in good standing. All officers shall be spiritually mature, of irreproachable Christian character, dedicated and devoted to the Lord Jesus Christ and to the spiritual and material welfare of this church. They shall be faithful in attendance and participation in the church. They shall live a separated life and exhibit deference abstaining from things that are questionable for love of the brethren. In the light of 1Timothy 3, the home and family relationships shall be considered as well as individual qualifications for the offices of Pastor and Deacon. No person, either elected or appointed, shall be a member of any secret society.

### **The Pastor**

The pastor shall serve for an undesignated period of time. He shall continue in office until he resigns or it is necessary for him to be dismissed. The qualifications of the Pastor are those given in 1Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. The pastor is recognized as the under-shepherd of Christ's local church. He shall preach the Word of God, equip the saints for the work of the ministry, oversee the administration of church and shepherd the flock of God, seeking to lead the membership in the utilization of their God-given gifts for ministry. He shall have charge of all services and shall administer the ordinances. He shall be a member ex-officio of all organizations and standing committees and counselor to all departments. The pastor or his designee shall moderate all congregational meetings of the church. The pastor and his wife shall be considered members upon the church's affirmative vote to extend a call. The children shall become members of the church by the above stated process in Article 7 "Reception of Members."

### **The Deacon**

A Deacon shall serve for a term of three years, and may be voted in for a second consecutive term prior to taking a year out of office. There shall be a sufficient number of Deacons to care for the affairs of the church. The qualifications of the Deacon(s) are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 and Acts 6:3. It shall be the duty of the Deacon(s) to assist the Pastor in promoting the spiritual welfare of the church. They shall serve the congregation through their care for the sick and widowed, administration of church property and resources, and assistance in church ministries.

The deacons shall serve as officers and directors representing this corporation as its agent. They shall serve as trustees for the church in all matters requiring the same. They shall not have authority to sell, lease, give away, or dispose of church property in excess of \$500 in any manner outside of approved budgeted categories, nor to mortgage or encumber the same with debt to exceed the above amount, except as the church shall order the same by a congregational vote.

New deacons shall be nominated by the congregation, screened for qualification and desire by the Pastor, and then voted upon by the congregation to the extent of need.

In the event of the loss of the Pastor, the Deacons will function as a pulpit committee seeking a qualified man to candidate for the office.

### **Ministry Staff**

Church staff shall be called and employed when the church and pastor determine the need for such positions. All ministerial staff will be under the direction of the pastor. Ministerial staff shall be required to be in harmony with the pastor and his leadership of the church. It is required that all staff members have adequate professional training to perform their designated ministry objectives.

### **Removal of Officers**

The church has the authority, for good and sufficient cause, to remove from office any elected or appointed person. Grounds for dismissal include immorality, apostasy, heresy, unfaithfulness to duties or Scriptural qualifications, departure from the spirit or principles of the Constitution, or a lack of agreement with the direction or stand of the church. No one shall be removed from office until positive effort has been made to assist that person in correcting (if possible) the cause for proposed removal. All charges against any officer must first be brought directly to the individual(s) concerned. If there is not a resolution of the issue(s), the matter must be submitted to the Deacons in the form of a signed, written statement. The Deacons shall determine if there is good and sufficient cause for removal and bring recommendations to the church according to Matthew 18:15-20. A simple majority of those present and voting at a posted business meeting shall be necessary for removal from office.

### **Article 9: Church Meetings**

#### **Worship and Special Services**

The church will meet regularly each Sunday morning and Wednesday evening for worship of our Lord. Revival meetings, Bible Conferences, fellowships and other meetings which complement the advancement of the church's objectives may be placed on the church calendar by the pastor as needed, providing that the expenses for such meetings are available or can be raised through offerings taken during such meetings. If necessary, the schedule may be altered by decision of the Pastor and Deacons.

#### **Business Meetings**

A regular business meeting can be called by the Pastor or the Deacons. An agenda must be prepared and posted one week prior to the meeting. The pastor shall serve as moderator for business meetings. The church business will be conducted in an orderly and calm manner following Robert's Rules of Order for procedure. The voting process shall follow a simple majority ruling unless otherwise stated in the church's guiding documents. In case of any conflict between said rules and the guiding documents of the church, the guiding documents shall govern.

Only recommendations or motions appearing on the meeting agenda will be addressed and acted upon. Individuals with ideas or input should submit a motion in writing to the Pastor and Deacons prior to the posting of an agenda. This will allow the leadership to evaluate ideas, and administrate business meetings in an orderly and expeditious manner with a minimum of confusion. Seven signed letters from seven different voting members, submitted to the Deacons, concerning the same issue, will serve as grounds for posting an agenda and holding a regular business meeting to address the specific concern.

Quarterly business meetings will be held during a regularly scheduled service in the months of January, April, July, and October unless announced otherwise. Prior minutes, the financial statement, and membership changes will be reported along with other posted items of business.

The fiscal year for Wichita Falls Baptist Church begins January 1'st and ends December 31'st each year. As such, an annual business meeting will be held in the first two weeks of December to address and vote on the upcoming annual budget.

A budget committee consisting (if possible) of two deacons, the church treasurer, and two members of the congregation will be elected at the October business meeting of the church to present a proposed budget to the Deacons by the beginning of November. The deacons will consider, modify, and post the proposed budget to the church at least one week prior to the annual business meeting each year.

### **Special Business Meetings**

Special business meetings can be called by the Pastor (if the church is without a seated Pastor, by majority vote of the Deacons). Special business meetings deal with issues that are considered extremely important or issues in which it is impractical to wait one week or more. Routine policy matters such as receiving members or appointing representatives to meetings (such as ordinations and recognition councils), may be transacted when necessary without regard to agenda and time requirements.

### **Proxies and Voting By Mail**

No vote of any member of the congregation or officer of the church shall be by proxy or conducted by mail but only at a duly called meeting where such person is personally present.

### **Article 10: Legal Provisions**

This church shall have the right to own, buy or sell tangible properties, both real and personal, in its own name and through properly elected officers, when authorized by vote of the church. No profit from the assets, or holdings or other transactions in which this Corporation may be come involved, shall ever accrue to the benefit of any individual(s).

In the event of the dissolution of this Corporation, all of its debts shall be fully satisfied. None of its assets or holdings shall be divided among the members or other individuals, but shall, by corporate vote prior to dissolution, be irrevocably designated to such other nonprofit religious corporations as are in agreement with the spirit of the Articles of Faith adopted by this church, and in conformity with the requirements of the United States Internal Revenue Service Code of 1954, Section 501(c)3.

### **Article 11: Amendments**

This constitution may be amended or revised by a majority vote at any regular business meeting on the recommendation of the Pastor and Deacons, provided one week's notice of such proposed revision or amendment is posted on an agenda in normal fashion.