

The Constitution of Calvary Baptist Church of Alford



Calvary Baptist Church

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ARTICLE I—Name and Purpose

The name of this church shall be Calvary Baptist Church of Alford (hereafter referred to as CBC). The church was first gathered under the name Alford Methodist Episcopal Church on December 9, 1895.

The purpose of CBC is threefold: (1) *Know*, (2) *Grow*, and (3) *Go*. As a church, CBC exists to encourage and exhort one another to personally *know* Christ greater, corporately *grow* together as a church family, and ultimately *go* impact the world for Christ.

ARTICLE II—Statement of Faith

Section 1: Scripture

We believe that the Bible (composed of sixty-six canonical books) is the verbally inspired (2 *Tm* 3:17), inerrant (*Heb* 6:18; *Jn* 17:17), authoritative Word of God (2 *Tm* 3:17; 2 *Pt* 1:21).

Section 2: Trinity

We believe that there is one God, eternally existent as three Persons (*Mt* 28:19-20): Father (*Rom* 1:7; 1 *Pt* 1:3), Son (*Jn* 1:1; *Rom* 9:5), and Holy Spirit (*Acts* 5:3-4; 1 *Cor* 3:16; 6:19).

Section 3: Jesus Christ

We believe in the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ (*Jn* 1:1-3; *Phil* 2:6-8; *Col* 1:15), His virgin birth (*Is* 7:14; *Mt* 1:25; *Lk* 1:34), His sinless life (1 *Pt* 2:22; 2 *Cor* 5:21), His miracles (*Is* 61:1-2a; *Jn* 20:30-31), His vicarious and atoning death (*Rom* 6:23; *Heb* 7:26-27), His bodily resurrection (*Mt* 28:1-10; *Mk* 16:1-8; *Lk* 24:1-12; *Jn* 20:1-10; 1 *Cor* 15:3-8), His ascension to the right hand of the Father (*Acts* 2:34-35; *Ps* 110:1; *Heb* 1:3), and His future return to the earth in power and great glory (*Acts* 1:11; *Dn* 7:13-14; *Rev* 19:11-22:21).

Section 4: Creation

We believe that God created out of nothing the heavens and the earth in six literal days (*Gn 1:1-2:3; Ex 20:11; Heb 11:3*) apart from the process of evolution. Man is made in the image of God (*Gn 1:26; Jas 3:9*).

Section 5: Mankind

We believe that as a result of the fall (*Gn 3:1-24; Rom 5:12-14*) men are totally depraved (*Rom 3:10-25*) and utterly unable to remedy their lost condition (*Eph 2:1-9*); therefore, regeneration by the Holy Spirit (*Jn 3:5-8; Ti 3:5*) is necessary through personal faith in Jesus Christ (*Jn 1:12; Acts 16:31; Rom 10:17*), whose precious blood was shed at Calvary for the forgiveness of sins (*Lk 24:47; Col 1:19-20*).

Section 6: Salvation

We believe that upon conversion, the believer is declared righteous before God (*2 Cor 5:21; Rom 3:21-26; 5:18-19; 1 Pt 2:24*). Furthermore, at that time, he is baptized into the body of Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit (*1 Cor 12:12-13*). All who trust Christ are eternally secure (*Jn 10:28-29; Rom 8:30; Eph 1:13-14*) and through the indwelling of the Spirit (*Jn 14:17; 1 Cor 3:16-17; 6:19-20*), every believer is enabled to daily have victory over sin (*Gal 5:16-25*).

Section 7: Local Church & Ordinances

We believe in the spiritual unity of the church, the Body of Christ (*1 Cor 12:13; Eph 1:22-23; Mt 16:18*), which is made up of all born-again persons of this present age (*Eph 4:4-6*). The local church is the physical expression of the universal church to a specific geographical area for fellowship (*Rom 1:7; 1 Cor 1:2; Acts 8:1b*).

We believe that the two ordinances of the church are (1) water baptism of believers by immersion (*Mt 28:19; Acts 9:18; 10:48*), and (2) the Lord's supper (*1 Cor 11:23-26; Lk 22:19*).

Section 8: Final Destinies

We believe in the physical return of Christ to the earth in power and glory prior to His millennial reign (*Mt 24:30-31; Dn 7:14*). Upon completion of the millennium (*Rev 20:1-6*) and defeat of Satan (*Rev 20:7-10*), God will restore heaven and earth into the perfect state it was designed to be (*Gn 1:1-2:25; Rev 21:1-22:5; Is 65:17-25*). On that day, all sin will be purged and its wretched effects banished forever.

We believe in the resurrection of all men; the saved to eternal life (*Rev 21:1-22:5*), and the unsaved to judgement and everlasting separation from God (*Rev 20:12-15*).

Section 9: Moral/Contemporary Issues

Abortion—We believe that human life begins at conception (*Ps 51:5; Isa 44:24*) and that the unborn child is a living human being (*Job 3:16; Lk 1:44*). Therefore, abortion constitutes the unjustified, unexcused taking of an unborn human life.

Marriage—We believe that marriage is a divine institution between one man and one woman (*Gn 2:24; Mt 19:5-6; Eph 5:25-33*). God's design and intention is for marriage to last as long as both spouses are living (*Mt 19:6; 1 Cor 7:10*).

Human sexuality—We believe that God has created the gift of sex to be enjoyed exclusively between a husband and wife within the confines of marriage (*Gn 2:24; Heb 13:4*). Therefore, all other forms of sexual activity such as pre-marital, extra-marital, homosexual, pornographic, etc. are perversions of God's intent (*Rom 1:26-28; 1 Cor 6:9; 1 Thes 4:1-8*). God's design for gender is determined by biological sex and not by one's self-perception.

Section 10: Authority of the Statement of Faith

The *Statement of Faith* does not exhaust the extent of our faith. The Bible itself is the sole and final source of all we believe. We do believe, however, that the above *Statement of Faith* accurately represents the teaching of the Bible, and therefore, is binding upon all members.

ARTICLE III—Church Government

The New Testament pattern for the local church is for each congregation to be *shepherd-led* and *congregationally sensitive*. In other words, CBC adheres to a congregational form of church government where the local church is autonomous, localized, shepherd led (*1 Tm 3:1-7*), servant supported (*1 Tm 3:8-13*), and congregationally governed (*1 Pt 2:9*). The congregation should select their shepherds, but once selected, the shepherds should be entrusted with the majority of the church's decisions (*1 Tm 5:17*).

ARTICLE IV—Membership

While church membership is not a prescribed doctrine, through a synthesis of biblical teaching, it is evident that regenerate membership in the local church is a vital component to a healthy and growing body of believers. By definition, the universal church is composed only of true believers (*1 Cor 12:13*). As the local church seeks to emulate this, it too, must be composed only of those who have professed faith in Christ and followed the command to be baptized (*Mt 28:19-20*). Unfortunately, since some claim the title 'Christian' yet practically deny this claim through their actions (*1 Cor 5:11*), it is important to establish boundaries regarding formal church membership.

Qualifications/Composition/Commitment

1. The membership of CBC shall consist of those who have professed faith in Jesus Christ, given evidence of regeneration, and followed the Lord's command to be baptized by immersion.

2. All candidates must express convictions in harmony with the above statement of faith as well as submit to the the church constitution.
3. At the discretion of the shepherd(s), members may be dropped from church membership if they neglect to attend or manifest interest in CBC for a reasonable time period of at least 6 months.
4. CBC will be intentional about church discipline—a clear command of Jesus Christ (*Mt 18:15-20*). The goal is always to bring glory to God through the restoration of the fallen member.

ARTICLE V—Elected Officers and Servants

Section 1: Shepherds — Elder/Bishop/Pastor

The position of shepherd is one of both functional as well as spiritual leadership. The terms *elder*, *bishop*, and *pastor* are all used to indicate the same office, yet each carries different connotations and implications. The term *elder* is used to indicate the maturity required of this leadership position as well as the responsibility to preach the Word of God (*Acts 14:23; 1 Tm 5:17*). The term *bishop*—or *overseer*—is used in reference to the supervisory work of this individual and his role as a teacher (*Acts 20:28; 1 Tm 3:2*). The term *pastor* is used when describing this individual as shepherding and leading the flock of God (*Eph 4:11; 1 Pt 5:2*). The Bible presents this position as the visible representation of a spiritual reality, since God entrusts His church to its shepherds (*1 Pt 5:2-4*).

The qualifications of shepherds are listed most fully in *1 Tm 3:1-7* (additionally, see *Ti 1:5-9*). One serving in this role must be: *Above reproach, a 'one-woman' man, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to substance abuse, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must also manage his household well, and not be a recent convert.*

The goal of CBC is to be led by a team of shepherds. This will consist of the vocational shepherd (“the pastor”) as well as non-vocational shepherds. As CBC grows, the aim shall be to add one non-vocational shepherd for every 20 additional members. To call or remove a shepherd, a member must request a special meeting, where 75% of members in good standing approve the motion.

Section 2: Servants — Deacons

The position of servant (or deacon) is one of service to the local church. Servants are to assist the shepherds in serving the church by helping the congregation and enabling the shepherds to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word (*Acts 6:2*). They are to serve in such a way that allows the shepherds to take care of the spiritual needs of the church (*1 Tm 3:5b*). Through their service, they are able to care for those in need and help equip the congregation for godly living. Servants are not merely a subset of shepherds (such as ‘non-vocational shepherds’). The role of shepherd is a unique ministry position of service in the church.

The qualifications of servants are listed in *1 Tm 3:8-13*. One serving in this role must be: *a man who is dignified, not hypocritical, not given to substance abuse, honest, and having a clear conscience. If married, his wife must be dignified, not a gossip, but sober-minded and faithful in all she does. Additionally, the servant must be a ‘one-woman’ man and must manage his household well.*

We recognize the need for flexibility in number of servants. However, it shall be the goal of CBC, if possible, to have a team of servants. As CBC grows, the church shall aim to add one servant for every 20 additional members. To call or remove a servant, a member must request a special meeting, where 75% of members in good standing approve the motion.

Section 3: Additional Positions

The New Testament offers the flexibility for churches to operate in such a way that includes other positions. For example, a church is free to create and fill positions such as *secretary, janitor, pastoral-intern, trustee, treasurer, and Sunday School teacher*. However, since these positions are not specifically required by God for the church, they must not negatively interfere with the biblically established positions of shepherd and servant. Furthermore, the positions created must reflect and enhance CBC’s purpose and mission.

Question: Why do we call pastors 'shepherds' and deacons 'servants'? Are these the only two official roles?

*Answer: We believe that these terms most accurately reflect the two biblical roles prescribed in Scripture. **The shepherds are those who shepherd the church. The servants are those who serve the church.** This is not to imply that the shepherds are not to serve, nor that the servants are to not assist in shepherding. The point is that the Bible ordains these two specific ministry roles as the basis for the church to function biblically.*

ARTICLE VI—Missions

The goal of the local church is to present believers mature unto God through embracing its role as a “pillar and buttress of the truth” (1 Tm 3:15). Jesus Christ commands his disciples to go into the world and preach the gospel (Mt 28:18-20). Ultimately, the purpose of the church is to glorify God by mediating His presence to the world through evangelism and edification. As the church accomplishes this, it acts as the hands and feet of Christ (1 Cor 12:14-26).

Towards this end, CBC shall endeavor to engage in both national as well as international mission work. This may look different at various times, yet as long as CBC remains an independent organized church, we will strive to maintain a missions budget and financially support various missionaries around the world. To financially support a vocational missionary, a special meeting must be scheduled where 75% of members in good standing approve the motion. The missionary must express convictions in harmony with the above statement of faith and be a member in good standing at a like-minded evangelical church.

ARTICLE VII—Ordinances

Section 1: Baptism

Although not essential for salvation, baptism is the public testimony of the believer's identification with Christ in His death and resurrection. Baptism takes place by immersion in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit (Mt

28:19). Baptism is the physical representation of a spiritual reality, for the moment one trusts Christ, he is spiritually baptized by the Holy Spirit into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13). Water baptism symbolizes this truth (Rom 6:3-5). As such, water baptism should closely follow one's decision to trust in Jesus Christ. Only those who have placed their faith in Christ should be baptized.

Section 2: Lord's Supper

The Lord's Supper (communion) has great significance for all Christians. While baptism is a one-time event, the Lord's Supper is a repeated event which represents our continued relationship with Jesus Christ (1 Cor 11:23-26). Since all believers have been baptized into the body of Christ (1 Cor 12:13), the Lord's Supper serves to remind Christians that they are joined together as one body waiting for the return of the Lord (1 Cor 11:26).

While the form can vary from church to church (unleavened vs. loaf of bread, wine vs. grape juice, weekly vs. monthly), the elements should be chosen by their similarity to those used by Jesus at the Last Supper (Lk 22:14-23). While the Lord's Supper need not be observed in a church building, it is vital to remember that this is a corporate event—not an individual event—whereby the local church proclaims the Lord's death "until He comes" (1 Cor 11:26).

ARTICLE VIII—Facility Use

The use of the facility of CBC for special events (weddings, conferences, etc.) is up to the sole discretion of the shepherd(s). Furthermore, those who use the facility must express convictions in harmony with the above statement of faith and be members in good standing at a like-minded evangelical church.

ARTICLE VIII—Amendments and Prior Documents

As of April 1, 2016, this constitution shall replace all prior church documents. All future amendments and adjustments must be voted upon and approved by the shepherd(s) as well as at least 75% of the church membership.