

SOVEREIGN GRACE PARTICULAR BAPTIST CHURCH

OUR SOLEMN COVENANT

The Solemn Covenant of
SOVEREIGN GRACE PARTICULAR BAPTIST CHURCH
of San Angelo, TX., at Our Reconstitution
August 26, 2018

We who desire to walk together in the fear of the Lord do, through the assistance of the Holy Spirit, profess our deep and serious sorrow for our lack of conformity unto, and transgressions of, God's holy law. We do also solemnly, in the presence of God and of one another, with a deep sense of our own unworthiness, give up ourselves to the Lord in a church body, according to the Apostolic prescription, that He may be our God and we may be His people through the everlasting covenant of His sovereign grace. In this grace alone, we hope to be accepted by Him, through His blessed Son Jesus Christ, whom we take to be our High Priest to justify and sanctify us, and our Prophet to teach us, and our Law-giver and King under Whom we are subject. By His grace also, may we be conformed to all His holy laws and ordinances for our growth, establishment, and consolation, that we may be as a holy spouse unto Him, serve Him in our generation, and wait for His second coming as our glorious Bridegroom!

Being fully satisfied in the way of church communion and the truth of grace in some good measure upon each other's spirits, we do solemnly join ourselves together in a holy union and fellowship—humbly submitting to the discipline of the gospel and all holy duties required of a people in such a spiritual relation.

1. We do promise and engage to walk in all holiness, godliness, humility, and brotherly love, as much as in us lies to render our communion delightful to God, comfortable to ourselves, and lovely to the rest of the Lord's people.
2. We do promise to watch over each other's conversations, and not to persist in sin against one another, so far as God shall discover it to us in His word; and to stir up one another to love and good deeds, to warn, rebuke, and admonish one another with meekness according to the rules left to us of Christ in that behalf.
3. We do promise in a special manner to pray for one another and for the glory and increase of the church, and for the presence of God in it, and the pouring forth of His Spirit upon it, and His protection over it to His glory.
4. We do promise to bear one another's burdens, to cleave to one another, and to have a deep bond of fellowship with one another, in all conditions both outward and inward, as God in His providence shall cast any of us into.
5. We do promise to bear with one another's weaknesses, failings, and infirmities, with much tenderness, not disclosing to any without the church, nor any within, unless according to Christ's rule, and the order of the gospel provided in that case.
6. We do promise to strive together for the truths of the gospel, and purity of God's ways and ordinances, to avoid causes and causers of division, "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace," (Eph. 4:3).

7. We do promise to meet together especially on the Lord's Day, but also at each additional stated meeting of the church unless of necessity providentially hindered from so doing, in order that we may serve and glorify God in the way of His worship, edify one another, and plan for the good of the church.
8. We do promise according to our ability (or as God shall bless us with the good things of this world) to communicate a comfortable living to our elders, especially those who labor hard at preaching and teaching, God having ordained that they that preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

These and all other gospel duties we humbly submit unto, promising and purposing to perform, not in our own strength, being conscious of our own weaknesses, but in the power and strength of the blessed God, whose we are, and whom we desire to serve: To Whom be the glory now and forevermore. Amen.

The By-laws of
SOVEREIGN GRACE PARTICULAR BAPTIST CHURCH
s g b c s a . c o m

Adopted August 26, 2018

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SOVEREIGN GRACE PARTICULAR BAPTIST CHURCH
BY-LAWS

PREAMBLE

For the more certain preservation and security of the principals of our Faith, and to the end that his body may be governed in an orderly manner consistent with the accepted tenets of Baptist Churches, and for the purpose of preserving the liberties inherent in each individual member of this church and the freedom of action of this body with respect to its relation to other churches of the same faith, we do declare and establish this constitution.

ARTICLE I

NAME

The name of this church is Sovereign Grace Particular Baptist Church, San Angelo, Texas.

ARTICLE II

PURPOSE

The purpose of this church is to glorify the God of the Holy Scriptures in the making of disciples by going into the world, baptizing believers into covenant membership with the local church, and teaching them to observe all that Christ commanded. To this end we are committed to proclaiming God's perfect law and His glorious gospel of grace in Jesus Christ throughout the world, and defending the "faith once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

ARTICLE III

ARTICLES OF FAITH

Section 1 – Confession of Faith

- A. The confession of faith of this Church is *The London Baptist Confession of Faith of 1677/1689* (heretofore called the 1689). The Holy Bible is the final and only authority in all matters of faith and practice. We accept and adopt the 1689 as the most accurate expression of that system of the doctrine taught in the Bible. We do not hold it to be above or equal to the Holy Scriptures. Rather, we accept it as an assistance in controversy, a confirmation of the faith once and for all delivered to the saints, and an instrument of edification and instruction. The 1689 provides all members with a succinct and concise body of divinity and, by availing themselves of the scriptural proofs, they can be ready to give a reason for the hope that is in them.
- B. As an addendum to the 1689 we believe that, in this age, the work of the Holy Spirit is to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ; to convict men of sin, righteousness, and judgment; to regenerate sinners; to illuminate the minds of the saints through the reading and preaching of the Holy Scriptures; and to indwell, seal, lead, instruct, and empower every believer for godly living and service. We also believe that, while the Holy Spirit gives each Christian spiritual abilities or gifts for service, there were temporary, foundational, and confirmatory sign gifts of the early church that have passed away and are not being given by Him today. These temporary, foundational, and confirmatory sign gifts are: the gifts of apostles, prophets (prophecy), healing, miracles, faith (which is different from saving faith), a word of knowledge, a word of wisdom, discerning of spirits, tongues, and

- C. interpretation of tongues. The ceasing and passing away of the sign gifts was brought about by the completion and canonization of the New Testament which, with the Old Testament, constitutes the perfect and all-sufficient Word of God (John 16:7-13, 14:17; Eph. 1:13; 1Cor. 12:1-3, 13:8-10; Eph. 4:1-16).
- D. In matters of disagreement as to the meaning of Scripture, the 1689, or the official position of this church on any matter, the Board of Elders has final authority to interpret the Scriptures and the 1689 and to state the church's official position on any matter.
- E. This Article may not be amended or repealed without the unanimous approval of both the Eldership of this Church and the membership.

Section 2 – Full (or Strict) Subscription of Elders and Deacons

- A. The Elders and Deacons of this church must hold to what is commonly called “Full” or “Strict Subscription” regarding the 1689. “Strict Subscription” means a belief in, and assent to, all the doctrines described in the 1689. (For a full explanation and historical description of “Strict Subscription,” see the Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America (ARBCA) Constitution, Article II. A, and Appendix 1, which is available through the ARBCA office).
- B. If at any time an Elder or Deacon should change his views and find he is no longer able to subscribe strictly and fully to the 1689 and/or the doctrines of this Church, he agrees to resign voluntarily and peaceably from his office.

ARTICLE IV MEMBERSHIP

Section 1 – Requirements for Membership

Any person professing repentance toward God and faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, who has been baptized as a believer, holds to the orthodox affirmations of Protestant Christianity, demonstrates a life of Christian humility, and is willing to submit to the teaching, preaching, aims, and government of this church without any pretense to disunity, shall be eligible for membership. It is understood that each individual will have read and agrees to sit under teaching that aligns with the 1689 and the SGBCSA Constitution expressed in the Bylaws of this church for mutual agreement and conscientious commitment. All members will be expected to attend any congregational meetings summoned by SGBCSA, unless providentially hindered.

- A. By Profession of Faith and Baptism - Any person who meets the above-mentioned requirements shall apply for membership through one of the Elders. The Elders shall then fix a time and place for meeting with the applicant, who shall attend and be questioned as to his or her basic Christian experience, doctrinal beliefs, and seriousness of intention to wholeheartedly support the total ministry of this church (Philemon). The church shall then, at a regularly gathered Sunday morning Worship Service, affirm the faith of the applicant and—if he or she has not yet been baptized as a believer—acceptance into its number by the corporate rite of baptism in the Triune name by water immersion. In keeping with the order of the church, baptism being an ordinance of our Lord Jesus Christ, candidates shall be baptized by the Elders of the church (1 Corinthians 4:1).
- B. By Letter - Any person desiring to unite with this church upon letter of recommendation from another true church shall be examined by the Elders concerning his or her Christian experience, doctrinal beliefs, and seriousness of intention to wholeheartedly support the

total ministry of this church (Philemon), after which the church shall, upon common suffrage, receive him or her as a member upon condition of receiving a letter of recommendation from their previous church.

- C. Special Exceptions – Some special considerations owing to the physical and intellectual impairments of candidates, heretical or heterodox positions held by previous churches, and other such matters require that the Elder Board be granted power to grant special exceptions to membership candidates.

Section 2 – Forms of Membership

- A. Regular - All who are received into the membership of the church on the aforementioned conditions shall be considered members in good standing until such status is changed by one of the conditions set forth in Article IV, Section 5. Any change in the status of membership shall be determined by unanimous vote of the Eldership. If there be not a plurality of Elders established, the matter shall be brought before the church for a two-thirds vote.
- B. Other - The membership status Christian workers and others whose relationship to the church involves special circumstances and consideration shall be determined in each case by a unanimous vote of the Eldership. If there be not a plurality of Elders established, the matter shall be brought before the church for a two-thirds vote.

Section 3 – Procedure for Receiving New Members

Applicants shall be recommended by the elders for admission into church membership when the Board of Elders is satisfied that an applicant gives a credible profession of faith and meets the requirements for membership and then accepted by vote of the members at any regular or special meeting of the church, at which point a date shall be set for baptism if the candidate has not yet been baptized as a believer according to a proper Trinitarian formula, and shall at that point relinquish their formal membership in any previous church.

Section 4 – Powers of the Membership

Membership in this Church shall not vest in any member any proprietary rights in the church, but shall only entitle the member, if age 18 or over, to vote as set forth in these By-laws: 1) on the approval or disapproval of ordaining Elders and Deacons or an Interim Pastor; 2) on the sale or purchase of real estate; 3) on incurring indebtedness that exceeds the combined amount of the average of the prior two years contributions plus any funds in reserve, in bank accounts, and in investments; 4) the removal of an Elder or Deacon in accordance with the provisions of Article IX; 5) the reception of new members into the body; 6) the expulsion from membership of unrepentantly sinful, heretical, divisive, or otherwise unruly members of the body; 7) the adopting of an annual budget; and 8) the amending of these by-laws, per Article XIV.

Section 5 – Termination of Membership

- A. By Transfer - Letters of Recommendation shall be granted by the Board of Elders to churches that request them, provided the member in question is in good standing and not subject to or under discipline at the time of the application. Should a member resign while under the process of church discipline, the elders may (at their discretion) yet proceed with disciplinary proceedings. When a letter has been granted, the relationship to this church shall be considered terminated. Letters of recommendation shall be forwarded

and given only to other true churches. If the person in question is in the process of, subject to, or under church discipline then visits or requests membership in another church, the Eldership may inform the other church of the person's status and the specific sins involved (Philem. 2; 1Cor. 5).

- B. By Discipline - It is right and in harmony with the Scriptures for the congregation, upon recommendation of the Eldership, to exclude from this assembly any who persist beyond stern warning in holding false or heretical doctrine; who obviously and persistently live lives inconsistent with their Christian profession; who live in violation of those laws of the land which accord with the authority granted civil magistrates in Scripture; who walk disorderly; who persist in disturbing the unity and peace of this church; or who habitually absent themselves from the stated meetings of this church without just cause (Matt. 18:15ff; 1 Cor. 5:1ff; 2 Thess. 3:6, 11, 15; Rom. 16:17; Heb. 10:23-25).

ARTICLE V

CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

Section 1 – Notice of Meetings

Notice of all congregational meetings shall be given at regular worship services at least one week prior to the meeting. In an emergency, a meeting may be called on shorter notice by notifying each member of the time, place, and purpose of the congregational meeting.

Section 2 – Method of Calling Meetings

It shall be the right and responsibility of the Board of Elders to call all congregational meetings. When special congregational meetings are called, notice must be given to the congregation as to the purpose.

Section 3 – Responsibility for Meetings

The Board of Elders shall arrange the details of all congregational meetings and see that all possible preparation for their successful conduct is made.

Section 4 – Quorum for Transaction of Business

The resident, voting members present at any constitutionally called congregational meeting shall be considered a quorum for the transaction of business.

Section 5 – Voting Age

Any member of the church eighteen years of age or over in good and regular standing with the church shall have the responsibility to vote on any question properly brought before the congregation.

Any persons received into membership while under voting age will, upon attaining voting age, sign a statement that they have read the church's By-Laws and the 1689; and that, as an adult, they agree with and will abide by church policy respecting each. Failure to do so will result in their being excluded from voting privileges of the church and may result in a need to review their desire to maintain membership in this church.

Section 6 – Time and Place of Meetings

In order to honor the Sabbath Day, to keep it holy, and to call it a delight (Deut. 5:12; Isa. 58:13; Heb. 4:9), and in order to keep the word and the worship of God central on the Lord's Day (1Tim. 4:16), special congregational meetings will be held in place of a midweek service at a location that does not uniquely inconvenience any members who wish to attend. Members with unique circumstances regarding health, distance, or any other hindrance may be conferenced in at their request, granted the necessary availability of the required technology.

ARTICLE VI MEMBERSHIP ROLLS

In order to keep an accurate membership roll, there shall be an annual review of the membership roll by the Elders one month prior to the Annual Meeting. All who have been inactive members for whatever cause will be classified as such and will be notified of this action in writing. In the event such inactivity is not corrected through the counsel of the Elders, the Elders may suspend the voting rights of inactive members until the situation is resolved by further church discipline.

ARTICLE VII CONDUCT

Section 1 – Means of Grace

Members are expected to regularly attend the services of the church (Heb. 10:25), in order to attend to the public reading and preaching of the Holy Scriptures, the observance of the sacraments (the Lord's Supper and Baptism), and corporate prayer for their own sanctification as well as the edification of the church, families, and members of SGBCSA.

Section 2 – Government of the Home

- A. We expect our members to follow the Scriptures in home government. God requires that godliness in the home have a high priority in every life. The home holds a central attention in God's Law and is the object of frequent exhortation in the New Testament. Men are expected to rule their homes with gentleness but firmness, loving their wives and children as Christ loves the Church (Eph. 5). Women must be subject to their husbands in everything as unto the Lord (Eph. 5). Parents should train up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord (Eph. 6:4) by holy example, catechizing, consistent education, and firm discipline. Children must reverently obey their parents (Eph. 6:1). These primary responsibilities, prayerfully executed, will honor the name of Christ in the community, adorn sound doctrine, and strengthen the cause of Christ in generations to come.
- B. We believe that marriage was ordained by God at creation as the sacred union of one man and one woman for life. All sexual relations must therefore be reserved for that union. Marriage being of great concern to the health of the church, marriages recognized by the church are those only which have been duly administered by the God-ordained institutions of the church or the civil magistrate, in accordance with God's law not man's. Where the civil magistrate contradicts the Bible in its definition of marriage, SGBCSA will follow the Bible in its proceedings. Marriage between one man and one woman for

life is a representation of Christ's relationship to His church, a means toward the propagation of the human race, and a means toward the promotion of good and proper order in society. We also believe that children are a blessing from the Lord. Thus, all human life is sacred and worthy of protection from the moment of conception. (Gen. 1:2628; Ps. 127, 128, 139:1316; Matt. 19:110; 1 Cor. 6:911; Eph. 5:2233; Heb. 13:4).

- C. Our elders are free to perform wedding ceremonies at their own discretion, but only in cases where one or both of the parties to be wed are members in good standing of SGBCSA.

Section 3 – Missions and Witnessing

- A. Missions: Missionary efforts are the command of the risen and exalted Christ (Matthew 28:18-20). It is the duty of every able church of Christ, building on the foundation of the apostles, to obey this command. The pastors will obey Christ's command by the preaching of the gospel and calling all to repentance and faith; by seeking to preach the gospel beyond our church as the opportunity arises; by planting or assisting in the planting of other churches; and by seeking to extend the gospel to whatever geographical locations the Lord allows. As church members, obeying this command means we unite in common efforts for sending forth the gospel. These efforts include faithful attendance on the Lord's Day, prayers, and financial giving according to each person's ability. We also pray that God will raise up gifted men from our number, from churches with whom we associate, and from seminaries we support, who will go out as pastors and church-planters, whether in the United States or in foreign countries, that many lampstands may bear witness to Christ and faithfully preach His word around the world.
- B. Witnessing: While every Christian has differing gifts according to the grace that is given to us (Rom. 12:6), it is the duty of every child of God to witness to each other and to those that are outside the church by being salt and light in this world (Mt. 5:13-16); being faithful in worship (Heb. 10:25); being ready to give a defense to everyone who asks a reason for the hope that is within us (1Pt. 3:15); commending the gospel by providing for our families' earthly needs (1Thess. 4:10b-12); proclaiming the Lord's death until He comes through regular observance of the Lord's Supper (1Cor. 11:26); and walking in wisdom toward those who are without, that we may know how to answer each one (Col. 4:56). Further, it is our duty to grow in the knowledge of Christ (2Pt. 3:18) that, as we have opportunity, we may share the gospel with those whom God providentially brings into our lives.

Section 4 – Associations

For the greater opportunity to fulfill the Great Commission, and desiring to "hold communion" together with other local churches (1689, 26.14), this church purposes to associate with the Texas Area Association of Reformed Baptist Churches (TAARBC) and the Association of Reformed Baptist Churches of America (ARBCA) as soon as providentially enabled. In associating with other churches, we will gladly share with them in fellowship, accountability, the education of future pastors, and the support of church planters, both at home and abroad. The other member churches holding to the standards put forth in the 1689, we shall heartily and joyfully extend to each of them our own conscientious commendation.

Section 5 – Principles of Giving

We assert our conviction that Christians are to support the work of the Lord through tithes and offerings made to the local church. Tithes and proportionate giving are distinct and positive commands in Scripture (Mal. 3:8-11; Mt. 23:23). Hence, we pledge ourselves to a systematic contribution toward the support of this church with a proper proportion of our income according to the principle in 1 Corinthians 16:2 and the rest of Scripture.

Section 6 – Support of Church Leaders

It is the duty of every member to respect the God-appointed officers of the church. The duties of church members toward their elders and deacons are as follows:

- A. To pray for them, that God would open a door of utterance unto them, to unfold the mysteries of the Gospel (Eph. 6:18-20).
- B. To obey the elders in the Lord, in whatsoever they admonish them, according to the Holy Scriptures (Heb. 13:17-22; 3 John 3,4).
- C. To follow their example and footsteps, as far as warranted by the word (1Cor. 4:16, 11:1; Phil. 3:17; Heb. 13:7).
- D. To stand by them in trial and affliction, and to defend them in all good causes, as far as each member is able (2Tim. 1:15-18).
- E. In the event of the necessity of exposing the transgressions of the officers, let it be done according to the principles of Matthew 18:15-21 and 1 Timothy 5:19-20, with soberness and charity for the sake of the gospel.
- F. To support the eldership financially through tithes and offerings within the guidelines of 1 Timothy 5:17 (see Article VII, Section 5).

ARTICLE VIII

CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Section 1 – 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 members of the body of Christ. It has as its objective the instruction of disciples, the transformation of their lives, and their edification in love (Eph. 4:11-13; Rom. 12:1-16; 1 Cor. 12:4-27). Formative discipline has a sanctifying influence. All members should be satisfied with their God-given ministry, and thus we shall all grow in grace and the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ (1 Pet. 4:7-12). Formative discipline utilizes the gifts of each church member, whether old or young, for the edification of all. All who have been redeemed by Christ should live for Him and His church and not for themselves (2 Cor. 5:15).

As members of this church we recognize our obligation to honor, serve, worship, praise, and glorify the Lord Jesus Christ in all that we say and do (1 Cor. 10:31). Jesus Christ is the Head of the church and therefore, its endeavor is to keep His commandments (John 14:15). In His Holy word our Lord has entreated believers to perform certain duties one toward another. Some of these duties are:

- A. To love one another without offense or hypocrisy (John 13:34-35; Rom. 12:9-10; 13:8-10).
- B. To labor to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace (Eph. 4:3).

- C. To endeavor for the edification and spiritual benefit of the whole body, that they all may grow up to be a holy temple in and for the Lord (1 Cor. 14:12, 26; Eph. 4:12, 29; 2:21-22).
- D. To look out for the best interests of others (Phil. 2:3, 4).
- E. To pray with and confess our sins to one another (James 5:16).
- F. Not to neglect the assembling of ourselves together, for the celebrating of divine worship, and so promote one another's spiritual benefit (Heb. 10:25; Acts 2:42).
- G. To unanimously contend for the faith and truth once for all delivered to the saints, in the purity thereof, according to the Holy Scripture (Ps. 93:5; Zech. 14:2; 1 Cor. 14:33-40; 11:2; Jude 3).
- H. The above duties, when faithfully performed by all will have a positive, formative effect upon the whole assembly; and with the blessing of the Holy Spirit we will all be enabled to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

Section 2 – Corrective Discipline

Corrective discipline results from disorderly conduct or heretical doctrine which is contrary to the church's standard of life and doctrine. Reasonable efforts shall be made to resolve difficulties and remove offenses before further action is taken. No offenses shall be brought before the church until the instructions of Scripture have first been followed (Matt. 5:23-24; 18:15; Gal. 6:12). Corrective discipline always has for its aims the glory of God, the welfare and purity of the church, and the restoration and spiritual growth of the offender.

- A. Exclusion – If a member is habitually absent from the fellowship of this church without just cause, or requests severance of membership, he or she may be excluded from the membership at the discretion of the Board of Elders.
- B. Expulsion Under Church Discipline – We recognize termination of church membership as a disciplinary measure to be a most serious action; however, in order that the purity of the church be maintained, any member guilty of a serious offense (see Article IV, Section 5.B) who remains unrepentant despite repeated admonitions must be removed from the membership of the church. Yet our zeal for the glory of God must ever be tempered by a loving and prayerful concern for the full restoration of the offender (Galatians 6:1). The procedure to be followed depends upon the nature of the offense. However, the following procedure shall be followed in most cases. The suspected person shall first be interviewed as directed in Matthew 18:15-18, the offended party seeking resolution of the matter in private and, if a satisfactory resolution is not acquired, seeking resolution with the aid of an impartial third party. If this does not lead to restoration of fellowship, charges shall be filed with the eldership. After a fair and impartial hearing of all the witnesses accessible and all the facts ascertainable, if the eldership unanimously affirms the guilt of the accused, the eldership shall make an appropriate recommendation to the congregation for their action at a special meeting of the membership. This recommendation will include a summary explanation of the offense, including only the pertinent sinful actions committed by the offender and the repeatedly unheeded warnings. The matter having been confirmed by the testimony of two or more witnesses, the congregation shall vote on the recommendation of the Elder Board by a show of hands. Upon this congregational affirmation, a certified letter will be sent to the offender explaining the judgement of the church upon which the offender will be given 60 days to repent of the offense and reconcile with any offended parties. If after this time there is no

repentance and reconciliation then the offender will be considered excommunicated from the body. The aim of exceptional discipline is the glory of God, the purity, unity, influence, and witness of the church, and for the good of the one disciplined.

- C. Restoration to Church Membership – The right to exclude or excommunicate persons or the withdrawal of fellowship (1 Cor. 5; 2 Thess. 3:6) is in harmony with the teachings of the New Testament (Matt. 18:16-17). The Apostolic church also had a right to restore those persons who gave satisfactory evidence of repentance (2 Cor. 2:6-8). The object of the discipline having been accomplished, the congregation shall have the right to restore the repentant member to full membership, under the unanimous recommendation of the elders and by a two-thirds majority vote of the members present and voting.

ARTICLE IX

CHURCH OFFICERS

Section 1 – General Statement

Jesus Christ alone is head of the church (Col. 1:18). 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 of two kinds: Elders—also called Overseers and Pastors—and Deacons (Phil. 1:1; 1 Tim. 3:1-13). It is the duty of church members to seek and discover among its male members those to whom Christ the Lord has imparted the necessary gifts and qualifications for office-bearing. It is ultimately the duty of the Board of Elders to nominate and the congregation to confirm those who qualify for the offices of the church (Titus 1:5; Acts 14:23). The determination of the Eldership is subject to and determined by the qualifications found in Scripture alone, without respect to cultural demands and extra-biblical quotas (1 Tim. 3; Titus 1). Any members of the church who are privy to disqualifying factors pertaining to the potential candidate under consideration must bring the matter before the Eldership for thorough investigation. Scriptural complaints alone must be the basis for disqualification (1 Tim. 3:1-7, 8-13; Titus 1:5-9), after which no less than a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting shall be required for the election of an officer. After formally recognizing them by common suffrage, the church shall set them apart by united prayer and fasting and the laying on of the hands of the Board of Elders, and then submit to their God-given authority.

When the church is too small to maintain both offices, one Board will function as both Elders and Deacons until such time that qualified officers are recognized. In such cases where one Board functions in the capacity of both Elders and Deacons, all references in the By-Laws to either Elders or Deacons will apply to that one Board (Acts 6:1ff; Titus 1:5).

In the case that the church no longer has qualified officers, the membership may invite another likeminded congregation to oversee certain unique matters of church life until such time that qualified officers are recognized.

Section 2 – Elders

- A. Plurality and Parity – The scriptures indicate that normally there should be a plurality of Elders in the local church (Acts 20:17; Phil 1:1). These men are called “Bishops” (meaning overseer) because they have oversight of the assembly (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:2; Heb 13:17). They are called the “Pastor/Teachers” given to the church “for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering unto the building up of the body of Christ”

(Eph. 4:11-12; cf. Acts 20:28). They are called “Elders” to signify their spiritual authority and that the spiritually immature and those new to the faith are to be excluded from consideration for the office (Exod. 3:16-18; Acts 15; 1Tim. 3:6). There is parity (equality) among the Elders, each bearing authority in the deliberations and decisions of the Board of Elders. Thus, the plurality and parity of the Elders guard the flock from the weakness of rule by one man and use the collective wisdom of several godly men to rule the flock of God as one Board.

- B. Qualifications – The qualifications for a man chosen to fill the office of Elder are clearly set forth in 1 Tim. 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. The recognition of these qualifications by the congregation will help prevent the infiltration of hirelings who forsake the flock and wolves who enter in and destroy the flock (John 1:12-13; Acts 20:28-30). Any man called to the Eldership must demonstrate ability to conscientiously affirm and teach in accordance with and full agreement with, and support of, the 1689 and SGBSCA’s By-laws. Should he at any time move from these positions, he is under spiritual and moral obligation to make this fact known to the Elders for further consultation. In the event of irreconcilable differences after consultation, this fact must be made known to the church, and the Elder in disagreement with the church’s governing documents is free to depart the church without sowing any discord.
- C. Responsibilities – All Elders are pastors and overseers of the flock (Acts 20:28). They are responsible for the spiritual ministrations of the church, the implementation of discipline, the oversight of the souls of the members, and the oversight of all ministries and functions of the church. They shall give account to God for all things in the church (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17; 1 Pet. 5:2-3). While every Elder should be “apt to teach,” some will be more engaged in formal and public teaching than others (1 Tim. 5:17a). The gifts of each man will be considered by the Board of Elders in assigning responsibilities. One or more of the Elders (usually the supported Elder[s]) may use the title of “Pastor” for the sake of associational communication and public contacts, and those who labor hard at preaching and teaching shall receive the greater support (1 Tim. 5:17). It shall be the duty of the Elders to be diligent and faithful in attendance at the Board of Elders meetings and the regular services of the church. They shall make suggestions regarding the pulpit ministry and encourage the one preaching in the work of the Lord. Elders may call upon one or more of the Deacons to assist them in the fulfillment of their responsibilities.
- D. Support – In view of the fact that the responsibilities of the Eldership are numerous and great, Scripture makes provision for the financial support of Elders. 1 Tim. 5:17 encourages the support of “elders who rule well” (oversight) but “especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching.” Thus a congregation may support more than one Elder in the various duties of that office but should place priority on those who “work hard” and are thus hindered from otherwise supporting themselves and their families through secular labors.
- E. Election – The normal procedure in the New Testament for the election of Elders is the process of recognition (1 Tim. 3:1-13). For this reason, the congregation normally will look first among its members for officers (See Article IV). However, in the event that none of the members possess sufficient proficiency to be engaged full time as to “labor in preaching and teaching” (1 Tim. 5:17b), the Elders may look outside the congregation for such a man. In such a case, the Elders and the congregation should exercise extreme

caution to avoid introducing a hireling or wolf into the flock (John 10:12-13; Acts 20:28-30).

- F. Length of Service – The Holy Spirit equips and places Elders in the church (Acts 20:28). Therefore, the church cannot arbitrarily fix either the number of Elders or their term of service. Therefore, the term of service for Elders and Deacons is indefinite, except in the case that they prove themselves unqualified for the office.

Section 3 – Termination of Service

The term of service for elders and deacons is permanent in nature. Therefore, church officers are not elected for a specific period of time. However, there must be allowances for the termination of service under certain circumstances.

- A. Leave of Absence - After consultation with the Elders, an officer may request a leave of absence from the responsibilities of office for a certain period of time. If the Elders grant the request, this action should be reported to the congregation with an explanation. Extended leaves of absence beyond six months are at the discretion of the Elders and may require final resignation from office.
- B. Resignation - If an officer should make application to be released from office, the congregation should receive an explanation and release the officer from office by a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting. In the case of releasing a supported Elder from office, support will continue for a period not to exceed ninety days until he is gainfully employed. His duties will continue until that time.
- C. Termination - If the relations between an officer and the congregation become detrimental to the welfare of the church, and the officer has not submitted to the exhortations of the Board of Elders (I Tim. 5:19-20), the Board of Elders shall have authority to consider this matter and make recommendation to the congregation at a duly called congregational meeting. If the officer's life or performance of duties should violate the standards of this church, and the Board of Elders so recommend, the officer's responsibilities may be terminated immediately following a congregational meeting at which his dismissal has been requested by a two-thirds majority vote of those present and voting. If the officer is a supported Elder, his support shall continue for a period not to exceed ninety days unless, before that time, he is gainfully employed.
- D. Departure - If an officer moves away from the community and can attend this church no longer, his service will be terminated.

Section 4 – Regular Meetings

The Board of Elders shall hold regular weekly meetings and the Board of Deacons shall hold regular monthly meetings.

Section 5 – Quorum and Call for Meetings

The quorum of the Board of Elders or of the Board of Deacons shall be two-thirds of the total number of the board. They shall meet at the request of any three members of the Board.

Section 6 – Duties of the Church Treasurer and Secretary

The Church Treasurer, offering counters and offering depositor shall be appointed by the Board of Elders and the Board of Deacons. The offering depositor shall deposit all church funds in a bank account or accounts, as instructed by the Board of Elders and the Board of Deacons, which account shall be opened and maintained in the name of the church. The Treasurer shall make monthly reports to the Board of Deacons and Elders, and an annual report to the congregation at the annual meeting. After each worship service, two offering counters will count, prepare and seal a deposit of the offerings. A count sheet will be given to the Treasurer and a separate carrier (offering depositor) will deliver the sealed deposit to the bank. The Treasurer shall submit his books for an annual audit prior to the annual meeting, and at such other times as he may be directed by the Board of Elders and Deacons. The Treasurer is responsible for preparing annual contribution reports for the giving members of the church and the W2 statements for the Board of Elders.

The Church Secretary shall be appointed by the Board of Elders and the Board of Deacons. The Church Secretary shall record the minutes at each business meeting and maintain the membership roll and call roster. The Church Secretary shall also be responsible for keeping all official records of church business.

Section 7 - Interim Support for a Prospective Elder

The normal process for the election of elders is to look first in the congregation. But in the event that none of the present members possess sufficient proficiency to be financially supported to “labor in preaching and teaching” (1 Tim. 5:17), the Elders may look outside the congregation for such a man. Extreme caution is urged in such a case to avoid hirelings and wolves entering the flock. After receiving nominations from the church, the Elders may invite a prospective elder to visit the church for an interview, preaching, officer’s meetings, and congregational examination.

It is preferred that the Elders work with only one candidate at a time. The candidate shall serve for at least one year as an intern at the church so that his beliefs, his aptitude, and his life may be examined. If the Elders and the nominating committee are satisfied with the prospective elder’s qualifications, they may propose that the congregation extend a call to the candidate for pastoral office.

A three-fourths majority vote will be required for congregational approval. The above procedure will constitute the normal process of congregational nomination and recognition required of other church officers. In the event that the required three-fourths majority is not attained in the confirmation vote, the church will provide ninety days severance support to assist the candidate in his life plans, or less if mutually agreed upon by the Elder Board.

Section 8 – Policies and Practices

Criminal activities committed by any member of the church and discovered by any other member of the church must be both brought to the attention of the Elders and reported to the proper authorities. It will be the duty of every member of the congregation to ensure that all criminal activity among the body has been reported to the appropriate authorities. The Board of Elders shall never withhold information from the congregation or any members thereof regarding any criminal act, past or present, that represents a clear and present danger to the congregation or any members thereof.

The Board of Deacons shall draft policies and practices that help ensure the safety of the vulnerable among the congregation and submit them to the Board of Elders. After a review of the recommended policies and practices, the Board of Elders shall post them publicly for all members to read. All officers, staff, and volunteers of the church shall abide strictly by these policies and practices. The Board of Deacons will annually review the policies and practices and draft an annual report on the church's compliance with them to be submitted in paper to the Board of Elders for review.

In the absence of a Board of Deacons to carry out the above duties, these duties shall fall to a duly elected committee comprised of members who have been on the church roles for no less than six months.

ARTICLE X BOARD OF ELDERS

The Board of Elders shall consist of all the duly elected Elders. There is parity (equality) among the Elders, each bearing equal authority in the deliberations of the Board of Elders.

Section 1 – Responsibility of the Board of Elders

The Board shall have the general oversight of all this church's affairs. The conduct of all church business and the work of all church organizations shall be subject to its supervision and government.

Section 2 – Membership and Discipline

The Board shall accept applicants for church membership, and apply discipline to offending members in accordance with Article VIII. The Elders shall watch over the souls of the flock as "they that must give account" (Heb. 13:17). According to their ability and with all patience, they must be persistent in the praying for, visitation, counseling, encouragement, reproof, and instruction of the membership and their families, the membership and their families readily and joyfully receiving such service.

Section 3 – Church Officers and Teachers

The Elders shall appoint the Superintendent of the Sunday School and the directors of all church groups from its own membership. These in turn, upon request, shall be responsible to present to the Elders, for its approval, all proposed teachers and leaders.

Section 4 – Pulpit Supply

The Elders have complete responsibility for the teaching ministry of the church. It shall be the duty of the Board of Elders to supply the pulpit with men whose ministry in our church shall be consistent with the 1689.

Section 5 – Administration of Baptism and the Lord's Supper

The Elders shall examine and approve candidates for church membership through believer's baptism and by letter. As stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Cor. 4:1), the Elders shall have

complete oversight over the administration of both baptism and the Lord's Supper. Christian liberty in the matters of food and drink has application to the relationship between believers at all times and places (Rom. 14:20-21; 1 Cor. 10:31-32). This is especially true at the Lord's Supper, the supreme symbol of Christian unity (1 Cor. 10:14-17, 23-24, 31-33). We recognize along with the 1689 that Jesus instituted the Lord's Supper with the elements of the Passover (unleavened bread and mixed wine). However, for the sake of those whose conscience is not yet in line with this teaching, who have medical considerations, etc., we also provide grape juice as part of our observance of the Lord's Supper (Rom. 14:20-21; 1 Cor. 10:14-17, 31-33).

Section 6 – Grievances and Suggestions

The Board shall receive, consider, and/or dispose of any grievance, suggestion, or recommendation by any member or organization of this church.

Section 7 – Miscellaneous Duties

The Board of Elders shall exercise oversight over all other powers and duties which properly belong to a local church, congregation, and corporation.

ARTICLE XI

BOARD OF DEACONS

Section 1 – Ministry of Mercy

The ministry of mercy in our church and community is a special responsibility of the Diaconate. The Board of Deacons shall see that the sick, the sorrowing, the aged, and the feeble-minded receive spiritual and physical comfort. They shall minister the word of God, administer this church's benevolence funds, and render counsel to those in need of comfort. They shall be vigilant for opportunities to do good, especially to those who are of the household of faith (Gal. 6:10).

Section 2 – Business Affairs

The Board of Deacons shall have general executive powers to administer the business affairs of this church. It shall be the Deacons' peculiar responsibility to prepare the church budget each year, under the oversight of at least one attending representative from the Elder Board. Upon reaching joint agreement on the proposed budget, the Board of Elders will submit the budget to the congregation for commitment by a three-fourths vote. It will be the Deacons' responsibility to administer the budget. The duty of caring for and maintaining the church's properties shall belong to the Deacons.

Section 3 – Limitations of Powers

The Board of Deacons shall not encumber, transfer, sell, or purchase any real estate for the church except by the express authorization conveyed by a three-fourths vote of the membership present and voting at a duly called congregational meeting. No obligation shall be incurred to spend over \$200 on one item without the special vote of the congregation, unless that item already appears in the adopted budget. In the case of legal necessity, trustees may be elected from the Board of Deacons.

Section 4 – Representation at Meetings

The Board of Deacons shall inform the Board of Elders of all of their meetings so that an Elder representative may be present. Likewise, the Board of Deacons may be asked to present regular reports of its business to the Board of Elders.

ARTICLE XII ORDINATIONS

It is our hope that spirit-filled men will be called out from among us to proclaim the gospel of the grace of God. The Elders may oversee such men for preaching, missions, planting churches both at home and abroad, hospital chaplaincy, the military chaplaincy, etc. The members of the church are encouraged to express to the Elders (privately) their views concerning those whom Christ may be gifting for an office in the church. Subsequent nominations to such offices will be made by the Elders as the Spirit leads.

When there is a prospective candidate for such ministries, the Board of Elders shall guide that person in his studies and preparation. The Board of Elders shall then call the Elders and the congregation to examine the qualifications of the candidate. They shall look into the soundness of his conversion, the godliness of his walk, the soundness of his doctrine, the degree of his gifts, the extent of his training, and the blessing of God upon his labor for Christ. The Elders shall ensure that the examination will conform to the requirement of the specific ministry.

The Eldership will take preliminary measures for the ordination of Elders and Deacons. These preliminary measures will include the input of all SGBCSA members to examine, pray, and consider the candidates, as well as voice any grievances concerning the candidates under consideration for ordination. If the Board of Elders considers a man proven, he will be presented to the congregation for the office for which he is qualified. At this time the congregation will have one month to pray, to fast, and to bring forth any issue that might disqualify the man for the office. After this one-month period, the church may give the recommended commission by a three-fourths majority of the members present and voting at a congregational meeting. If nothing is determined to be disqualifying by the Board of Elders and the congregation, then the man will be appointed to the office at the next regular worship service.

ARTICLE XIII FINANCES

The work of this church is financially dependent upon the tithes and voluntary gifts of God's people. Before the annual congregational meeting, the Board of Elders shall obtain from the Board of Deacons an estimate of the needs of the several divisions of the work, and a prepared budget, detailing the proposed expenditures for the coming year. This budget shall then be presented to the congregation to be codified by a three-fourths majority vote, after which it shall be considered the basis for the current liabilities. No committee or board is authorized to make changes in its provisions, or to make unauthorized disbursements.

ARTICLE XIV
AMENDMENTS

Amendments to the By-Laws may be adopted by the unanimous consent of the Board of Elders and a three-fourths majority vote of the members present and voting at a congregational meeting, provided that such amendments have been distributed by the Board of Elders in written form at least two weeks prior to the congregational meeting.

ARTICLE XV
DISSOLUTION

This church shall be considered dissolved when its membership concludes that it can no longer fulfill its hereto stated purpose of existence. In the event of dissolution, no donor, member, officer of the church, or private individual shall be entitled to share in the distribution of any assets of this church. Any assets of the church upon dissolution shall be used to pay any outstanding debts. Any remaining assets shall be transferred to and vested in the Texas Area Association of Reformed Baptist Churches (TAARBC).