

Bethany Chapel of Calgary CONSTITUTION

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Article I. CHURCH CHARACTER

A. AFFILIATION

Bethany Chapel of Calgary [Bethany Chapel] is an independent local church not subject to the control or direction of any ecclesiastical body. Bethany Chapel is directly accountable to the Lord Jesus Christ by commitment to the written Word of God. Bethany Chapel is not a member of any sect or denomination and seeks to give visible expression to the truth of the unity of the body of Christ by cooperation with other evangelical churches and organizations.

B. POLITY

The government of Bethany Chapel is vested in the members who comprise it. Leadership is organizationally accountable only to this congregation and spiritually accountable to the Lord.

C. DOCTRINE

The Scriptures are the only source of authority in faith and practice. Our understanding of Biblical truth is contained in our Statement of Faith (Article III).

Article II. CHURCH PURPOSE

The purpose of Bethany Chapel is to make disciples of Jesus Christ locally, regionally, and internationally in obedience to the Great Commission (Matt 28:18-20).

Article III. STATEMENT OF FAITH

- 1) "All Scripture is God-breathed"; in its entirety the Bible is God's Word without error in its original manuscripts and is the final authority in all matters of faith and practice (2 Tim 3:16-17; 2 Pet 1:21).
- 2) The one living and true God eternally exists in three distinct persons - Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - and these three possess the same nature, attributes, and glory (Deut 6:4; Matt 28:19; John 1:1,14; 10:30).
- 3) Humanity, designed biologically as male and female, was created directly by God, and by disobedience fell into sin. Therefore, men and women are liable to eternal punishment and cannot save themselves (Gen 1:26; 2:17; Rom 3:23; Heb 9:27; Eph 2:1-3; Rev 20:11-15). Creation's original marriage design was/is between a man and a woman, and the

resulting children were/are, by their very nature, male and female (Gen 1:27-28).

- 4) Jesus Christ is God the Son; through His virgin birth, true humanity and undiminished deity were united in one person forever (John 1:1,14; 1 Tim 2:5-6; Heb 1:1-3).
- 5) The Lord Jesus Christ died upon the cross as a full and perfect substitutionary sacrifice for sins, and His bodily resurrection and ascension to heaven marks Him as Lord of all (Matt 20:28; 2 Cor 5:21; 1 Pet 2:24; 3:18; Phil 2:9-11; 1 Cor 15:3-4).
- 6) Salvation is entirely of God's grace through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ alone. The believer is forgiven, regenerated, given eternal life, and unfailingly kept by the power of God to salvation on the sole basis of faith in Christ as personal Savior (Eph 2:8-9; Rom 3:24-25; John 10:27-30; 1 Pet 1:5; John 5:24).
- 7) God the Holy Spirit has united all believers to Christ's death, burial, and resurrection by Spirit baptism, and He indwells all believers to glorify the Lord Jesus Christ and guarantees their ultimate salvation (1 Cor 12:13; John 7:37-39; 14:16-18; Acts 1:8; Rom 8:9; Eph 1:13-14).
- 8) Spirit baptism enables and empowers the believer to be transformed through the process of sanctification; i.e., being made holy or set apart unto God and for His service. This applies to every aspect of the believer's life, including but not limited to marriage, family life, sexual expression, witness in the world, spiritual disciplines, and the believer's general transformation from the works of the flesh to the fruit of the Spirit (John 17:17; Eph 5:22-31; Gal 5:18-24).
- 9) The Church is composed of all true believers, and the Lord Jesus Christ is the only head of His church (1 Cor 12:13; Eph 1:22; 4:11-14; 5:23).
- 10) A local church is under the direct authority of the Lord Jesus Christ through His Word, and in obedience to Him it is to practice believer's baptism and the Lord's Supper as ordinances. Elders are appointed to shepherd God's people (Eph 1:22-23; Matt 28:18-20; 1 Cor 11:23-34; Acts 20:28).
- 11) The personal return of the Lord Jesus Christ for His church is imminent; He shall then reign in glory upon the earth, and those who have trusted in the Lord Jesus Christ for salvation shall enjoy eternal blessing in heaven (Matt 24; 1 Thess 5:1-2; Rev 21-22).
- 12) Believers live in the world under the mandate of the Great Commission which calls us to bear witness to the Lord Jesus Christ in all the world (Matt 28:18-20; Acts 1:8).

Article IV. MEMBERSHIP

A person who believes in the Lord Jesus Christ immediately becomes a member of the Church universal, the body of Christ. God's will is that all who belong to Him commit themselves to a local church for worship, fellowship, instruction, service, and discipline. Membership in Bethany Chapel is open to all who make a credible profession of faith in Christ and meet the applicable membership requirements set out below.

The Elders shall review the membership list annually to ensure accuracy.

A. TYPES OF MEMBERSHIP

There are two types of membership in Bethany Chapel:

- 1) Active membership is open to believers 18 years of age and older who express a desire to become members and who evidence to the satisfaction of the Elders (or those designated by the Elders for this task) a clear confession of salvation, a commitment to the central truths of the Christian faith, and a desire to live in obedience to the Lord. It includes the right to vote in church meetings and the responsibility to be active and supportive members of the church.
- 2) Associate membership is for those who meet the above criteria for active membership and are committed to the fellowship at Bethany Chapel, but
 - a) who desire to retain active church membership elsewhere for significant personal reasons, or
 - b) are temporarily resident outside of Calgary, or
 - c) are unable to participate actively by reason of illness or infirmity, or
 - d) are missionaries commended by Bethany Chapel but resident elsewhere.

Associate members may serve in various areas but do not have the right to vote.

B. ADMISSION TO MEMBERSHIP

New members will be publicly presented to the congregation after their Elder-approved application. While we believe that God's Word requires believer's baptism, this is not a condition for membership. Regular participation in the Lord's Supper is an important expression of church membership.

C. TERMINATION OF MEMBERSHIP

Membership may be terminated or the type of membership changed by request of the member or by action of the Elders. The Elders may take such action for the following reasons: relocation to another geographical area or church fellowship,

voluntary absence for an extended period, or a matter of church discipline. Such action will be taken only after due enquiry and care.

D. CHURCH DISCIPLINE

The Lord has entrusted the local church with both the authority and responsibility to discipline members with the goal of the restoration of the offender. Discipline could involve exclusion from one or more of the following: leadership in ministry, participation in ministry, participation in the Lord's Supper, attendance at church services and other activities, and such other actions the Elders deem appropriate for the specific circumstance.

E. MEMBERSHIP AND SERVICE

Some leadership positions, as specified by the Elders, must be occupied by members. Elders, Deacons, and Ministry Staff must be members.

Article V. CHURCH GOVERNMENT

A. AUTONOMY

Bethany Chapel is an independent local church, not subject to any outside ecclesiastical authority. The church is subject to the authority of Christ alone, and to the Word of God. No affiliation with other churches or associations shall compromise this autonomy. At the same time, we value the fellowship of the entire Body of Christ and will seek opportunities for visible expression of our oneness in Christ.

B. ELDERS

1) Authority

The New Testament teaches that the local congregation is under the direction of a plurality of men who serve as Elders (Acts 14:23, 20:17; 1 Thess 5:12; 1 Tim 3:1-7, 5:17; Titus 1:5-9; Heb 13:17; 1 Pet 5:1-5). They are responsible to the Lord as shepherds of the assembly and have final responsibility for the local church under God.

2) Qualifications

Each Elder must have the necessary spiritual qualifications, have a sense of divine calling to the role of Elder, and possess the confidence of the members because of the way he is functioning among them as a servant and shepherd. An Elder is characterized by spiritual maturity as seen in his personal character, his ability in God's Word, his personal leadership, and his Godly example (1 Tim 3:1-

7; Titus 1:5-10). The Elders are required to accept without reservation Bethany Chapel's Statement of Faith.

3) Appointment

The Elders will be responsible to prayerfully consider men who have the biblically stated spiritual and moral qualifications for the Elder role. The congregation is encouraged to submit to the Elders the names of men whom they consider to be potential Elders. The number of Elders will fluctuate according to the availability of qualified men and the needs of the ministry. The men unanimously chosen and willing to serve will be presented by the Elders to the church for affirmation and then will be recognized publicly and formally (Acts 14:23). The Lead Pastor will serve as an Elder, though non-voting, by virtue of his position.

4) Duration and Termination

Each Elder shall serve an initial term of three years. An Elder may serve further successive terms of two years, each such term conditional upon the unanimous vote of the other Elders based on their continued confidence in the support of the congregation as well as their own. An Elder may resign at any time for personal or private reasons or take a temporary leave of absence in consultation with his fellow Elders. It is imperative that the Elders continue to evaluate themselves and one another to maintain the effectiveness of their ministry (Heb 13:17), and seek both private and public expressions of confidence from the church as well as the other Elders. An Elder who no longer maintains the confidence of the members or his fellow Elders will be expected to withdraw from this position. An Elder may be removed at any time by a majority vote of the remaining Elders.

5) Relationships and Responsibility

Under God, the Elders are responsible for the direction of congregational life and all ministries are ultimately accountable to them directly or indirectly through such staff as they may designate. The primary concern of the Elders is spiritual oversight, including pastoral care and a commitment to "prayer and the ministry of the Word" (Acts 6:4). They are also responsible for the overall direction of the total ministry of the church. They are responsible to structure the church's life in a manner that maximizes the involvement of the congregation.

6) Meetings

The Elders shall keep written minutes of their meetings. The majority of Elders shall be considered a quorum for conducting business. The Lead Pastor, though a non-voting Elder, shall be counted for quorum purposes.

7) Other Duties

The Elders shall appoint a Financial Audit Committee of which at least 3 Elders

form a majority.

C. DEACONS

1) Qualifications

The Biblical qualifications stated in 1 Timothy 3:8-13 emphasize the spiritual maturity and practical godliness of those who serve as Deacons. They minister as servant-leaders of the congregation. They are required to accept without reservation Bethany Chapel's Statement of Faith.

2) Election

An appropriate number of Deacons will serve the congregation based on the ministry activity from year to year, but that number will be not less than five (5) and no more than twelve (12). The actual number of Deacons required to serve in any given year will be determined by the Elders in consultation with the Deacons (the "Authorized Number"). Nominees will be put before the congregation by a committee chosen by the Deacons. The congregation is encouraged to suggest names to the Deacons, but no nominations will be taken from the floor. This process is to protect the priority of the Biblical qualifications. Nominees will be approved by the Elders before being presented to the congregation. Elections will be held at the Annual General Meeting. Temporary Deacons may be added by the Elders in consultation with the Deacons to fill vacancies until the next Annual General Meeting.

3) Duration and Termination

Each Deacon shall serve an initial term of three years. A Deacon may serve further successive terms of two years by appointment or election at the annual meeting. A Deacon may resign at any time for personal or private reasons or take a temporary leave of absence in consultation with his fellow Deacons.

A Deacon who no longer has the support of the other Deacons may be removed at any time by a majority vote of the remaining Deacons.

4) Meetings

The Deacons shall keep written minutes of their meetings. A quorum for the transaction of business at a Deacons' meeting is at least fifty percent (50%) of the Authorized Number of Deacons.

5) Responsibility and Accountability

The Deacons serve under the authority of the Elders with the purpose of freeing the Elders for pastoral ministry. Responsibilities will be determined in consultation with the Elders, and regular reporting will be made to the Elders.

D. TRUSTEES

The Deacons and the Treasurer will serve as the Trustees of Bethany Chapel. The Treasurer, who shall be appointed by the Trustees, is a member of the Trustees by virtue of the position, unless he or she is already a member of the Deacons. The Treasurer is a non-voting member of the Trustees.

The Deacons, in their role as Trustees, are the legal representatives in all property dealings of Bethany Chapel. They must execute all legal documents under seal, approve signing authorities on church bank accounts, and act as representatives in other legal matters before the government. The Trustees shall ensure that an annual independent financial audit is presented to the Financial Audit Committee. The Trustees draw their authority from the membership at large; however, in most matters they take direction from the Elders. In certain matters such as the borrowing of funds or the disposition or major purchase of property, they must obtain ratification of proposed actions in advance by way of special resolution from the membership at a Special Meeting called for that purpose.

Article VI. MINISTERING STAFF

A. LEAD PASTOR

- 1) The Lead Pastor will serve with the Elders as the primary teaching Elder, responsible to exercise a pastoral-teaching ministry to the congregation. He is also responsible to provide leadership and oversight to the staff, either directly or through his designate. He will serve with the Elders and his other specific duties will be determined in consultation with them. He is a non-voting member of the Elders. He is required to accept, without reservation, Bethany Chapel's Statement of Faith.
- 2) In the event of a vacancy in this position, the Elders will form a Pastoral Search Committee to recommend candidates to the Elders and then to the congregation. A candidate must possess the Biblical qualifications to serve as an Elder and the gifts requisite for ministry as Lead Pastor. He will be approved by written ballot at a Special Meeting.
- 3) In serving with the Elders, the Lead Pastor will exercise a pastoral-teaching ministry to equip the saints for the work of service (Eph 4:11-12). He will work in cooperation with the Elders, reporting on a regular basis, and being evaluated at least on an annual basis by the Elders.
- 4) Should the Elders, excluding the Lead Pastor, come to the unanimous conviction that the ministry of the Lead Pastor is completed, he will be obliged to resign under conditions to be made in arrangement with the Elders. Should a majority

of the Elders, after an extended failure to reach unanimity, be convinced that the Lead Pastor's ministry is completed, they shall call for an active member vote of confidence at a Special Meeting. Should such a vote not be sustained, the Lead Pastor's ministry will be terminated under conditions to be made in arrangement with the Elders.

B. ASSOCIATE STAFF

Ministry staff, i.e. those staff with congregational leadership or educational responsibilities, shall be hired and removed by the Lead Pastor (or his designate) upon Elder approval.

All other staff shall be hired and removed by the Lead Pastor (or his designate) without Elder approval.

Article VII. CONGREGATIONAL MEETINGS

A. ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

- 1) An Annual General Meeting of the congregation shall be held no later than March 31, the time and place to be determined by the Trustees (in consultation with the Elders), at which time the audited financial statements for the prior fiscal year shall be presented to the members for approval. Other business to come before the meeting shall include, but is not limited to:
 - reports of the Elders, Deacons and Lead Pastor,
 - the annual budget for the current fiscal year, and
 - the election of Deacons.
- 2) The meeting shall be called by way of public notice at the church, to be posted at least two weeks (including two Sundays) prior to the date of the meeting, and to be read at all intervening services.
- 3) A quorum for an Annual General Meeting shall consist of 25% of the active members. If a quorum is not met, a second meeting shall be called in which the number of present active members shall be considered a quorum.
- 4) When voting on issues requiring active member approval, a simple 50% majority of those active members present and voting shall rule. Votes shall ordinarily be by show of hands but may be taken by secret ballot if any member present so requests.

- 5) Should any "special" matters of business be scheduled to come before the meeting, the Special Meetings requirements as specified below shall be applied.
- 6) The annual budget presented and accepted by vote at the Annual General Meeting will guide financial expenditures for the current fiscal year. Any significant changes to the budget must be approved by the Elders, in consultation with the Deacons, and subsequently communicated to the congregation.

B. SPECIAL MEETINGS

- 1) A Special Meeting of the congregation shall be called by the Trustees at the direction of the Elders, or upon the petition in writing of no less than 10% of the active members of the congregation, to consider "special" matters of business. Special matters shall include but not be limited to the following:
 - acquisition or sale of church land or buildings,
 - dissolution or distribution of assets,
 - building projects of more than 10% of the current budget,
 - borrowing in excess of 10% of the current budget,
 - constitutional amendments, and
 - call of a Lead Pastor.
- 2) Notice of such a meeting shall be communicated to the active members by announcement at least two Sundays prior to the Special Meeting. In addition, a copy of the notice shall be posted at the church at least two weeks (including two Sundays) prior to the date of the meeting and public announcements made at intervening services. The notice shall state the date, time and purpose of the meeting. Where the meeting is called in order for the membership to pass a specific resolution, the proposed wording for the resolution shall be included in the notice of the meeting.
- 3) A quorum for a Special Meeting shall consist of 50% of the active members. If a quorum is not met, a second meeting shall be called in which the number of present active members shall be considered a quorum.
- 4) A vote by three quarters (75%) of active members present and voting in favor of a motion shall be required at a Special Meeting in order to pass the item of business. Votes of this nature will normally be by secret ballot; however, a vote may be taken by show of hands with the unanimous approval of those present at the meeting.

Article VIII. DISTRIBUTION OF PROPERTY

A. GENERAL

Bethany Chapel shall not pay any dividends or distribute any of its property among members for personal use.

Should a dissolution, merger, new affiliation, or the like be proposed and passed in accordance with the Special Meeting provision of the Constitution, the Trustees shall put forward a proposed plan of dissolution and distribution of assets to the membership at a second Special Meeting called for that purpose. If the proposed plan is passed by special resolution (either as presented or as duly amended), the Trustees shall execute the distribution.

B. DISSOLUTION

If Bethany Chapel is dissolved, any funds or assets remaining after satisfying all debts and liabilities shall be distributed only to other registered charities that share a doctrinal position like that of Bethany Chapel, in accordance with the following principles:

- 1) First preference is that any real estate be given or sold to an evangelical church or organization to carry on its activities on the real estate.
- 2) Failing "first preference" above, the remaining members shall decide the distribution of the real estate assets.
- 3) Property other than real estate shall be distributed to a charity or charities with preference to those that Bethany Chapel has supported and/or co-operated with previously. Distribution may be made to more than one organization and may be in cash, or kind, or both.
- 4) The fact that a member of Bethany Chapel is also a member of any intended charitable recipient of any property on distribution shall not disqualify the distribution from being made, as long as it is apparent that the member shall not receive any property for personal use.

C. MERGER

Should Bethany Chapel believe that it would be advantageous for the achievement of its purpose, it may choose to become a part of another church, in which case the assets of Bethany Chapel - both real estate and other - shall become the property of the new church as Bethany Chapel is officially merged.

D. NEW AFFILIATION

Should Bethany Chapel decide to become affiliated with a denomination, the new denomination will clarify the property ownership options available.