

The Constitution of Branson Bible Church



Preamble

We, the members of Branson Bible Church, of Branson, Missouri, in Taney County, institute the following constitution. Our desire is to promote the work of Christ by establishing administrative guidelines to govern this independent local assembly. It is organized and established under the laws of the State of Missouri as a non-profit corporation.

Article I: Membership

- A. This church will consist of persons willing to give testimony of personal faith in Jesus Christ, of water baptism by immersion, and of affirmation to the Statement of Faith and submission to the articles of this Constitution.
- B. The congregation will be notified at least two weeks prior to the time when the applicant for membership will be interviewed by the Elders. This will allow the fellowship to give any input that might be relevant to the decision of the Elders.
- C. All applicants for membership will be interviewed by the Elders.
- D. All applicants deemed eligible by the Elders will be confirmed by a unanimous vote of the quorum of the Elders present. A quorum is defined here as a simple majority of the Elders.
- E. Affiliate membership is open to persons temporarily residing in the Branson area who wish to retain active church membership elsewhere because of special personal considerations. Their names will be removed from the membership roll when they leave the community. Affiliate members must meet the same spiritual and doctrinal requirements as active members and have the same right to vote and hold office.
- F. Termination of membership will be granted to members in good standing who request that their membership be dropped or by a letter of termination. Termination may also be brought about by exclusion due to church discipline (*see Article V*).
- G. Members should actively participate in the meetings of the church.
 - 1. Members who are inactive for a period of six months will be placed on an inactive membership list and will not retain the right to vote (*see Article II*).
 - 2. Reinstatement of members to the active list is at the discretion of the Elders.
 - 3. The inactive membership list will be regularly reviewed by the Elders. Members inactive for one year may be removed from membership by the Elders.

- H. All members, and especially those who serve as leaders and/or who regularly teach God's Word, shall consistently affirm agreement with the Statement of Faith and demonstrate submission to this Constitution.

The Statement of Faith summarizes the major doctrines that we hold to be core beliefs—those that are foundational to the faith and/or are central to our corporate practice. Everything we teach must be clearly and unequivocally consistent with these doctrines. If there are differences concerning any aspects of the Additional Doctrines, we willingly maintain fellowship despite these, avoiding divisiveness and giving deference to the stated position of the church.

Elders and teachers of the church must be in agreement with the stated positions on Additional Doctrines, or submit to teaching those positions, or not teach on the particular doctrine. With a heart to shepherd, the Elders desire that teachers come to them directly concerning such issues for help and guidance.

Article II: Church Government

- A. The government of this church and all its auxiliary organizations will reside in the members of the church.
- B. Church business meetings will be held semiannually, as well as such special business meetings as the Elders consider necessary. Notice of all business meetings will be given public announcement in the church for two consecutive Sundays prior to such meetings.
- C. The members present will constitute a quorum for voting. A $\frac{3}{4}$ majority vote is needed to pass a motion. Only formally recognized members may vote (*see Article I*). The voting age of members will be eighteen years of age.
- D. The Board of Elders will set the agenda and recommend courses of action for the congregational meetings.
- E. The Lead Pastor, or a designated Elder, will act as moderator in all business meetings.
- F. Motions originating from the floor during congregational business meetings may be referred back to the Board of Elders for additional consideration at the discretion of the moderator.
- G. All business meetings of the church will be conducted properly and in an orderly manner.

Article III: Officers of the Church

A. Board of Elders

1. Selection and Composition:

- a. Spiritual leadership of the church resides within a plurality of Elders. The Board of Elders will be composed of the elected Elders, Lead Pastor, and at the discretion of the Elders, the Associate Pastor(s). The qualifications for Elders are found in 1 Timothy 3:1–7, 5:17 and Titus 1:5–9.

- b. The church body will endeavor to have a minimum of three elected lay Elders for the first one hundred members, and at least another Elder for each additional one hundred members.
- c. They will be elected at the first annual meeting for a three-year term.
- d. Other than conducting membership interviews (*Article I, Section D*), the presence of $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Elder Board constitutes a quorum for voting. If all members are present, a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority vote is needed to pass a motion. If only a quorum is present, the vote must be unanimous to pass, or the issue will be tabled.
- e. Each year the Elders may choose one Elder to serve as their chairman.

2. Obligations and Authority

The Elders have the obligation and authority to teach and protect sound doctrine and to shepherd the church family. This includes guarding against false teaching. It also includes evaluating whether leaders and teachers have a sincere spirit of submissiveness or a developing pattern of divisiveness, and determining a corresponding course of action. Shepherding from the Elders could range from encouragement and guidance, to gentle rebuke and correction, to eventual discipline or dismissal. This includes fellow Elders/Pastors being subject to the leadership and authority of the plurality of Elders.

3. Duties

The board is responsible for setting a vision in accordance with God's will and providing general spiritual oversight of the assembly and its ministries. Their other duties will include the following:

- a. Oversee the spiritual life of the church (Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2; Hebrews 13:17).
- b. Govern and administer the church (1 Timothy 3:4-5, 5:17), which will include decisions concerning programs and committees, and the selection of ministry leaders.
- c. Guard sound doctrine (Titus 2:1-7).
- d. Examine prospective church members.
- e. Oversee ministry curriculum and policies.
- f. Oversee stewardship of the church's finances.
- g. Oversee the care of the ordinances of Lord's Supper and baptism.
- h. Be responsible to oversee the final stages of church discipline. (Matthew 18:17)
- i. Maintain a spirit of humble submission to the leadership and authority of the plurality of Elders.
- j. Call a joint board meeting of Elders, Deacons and Pastoral staff to consider matters that are better served by such a joint meeting.

B. Lead Pastor

1. Selection

The Lead Pastor of the church will be a man chosen by the congregation for an indefinite period of service following a unanimous recommendation by the Board of Elders and confirmed at a specially called church business meeting. The Elders may choose to appoint a pulpit committee to assist them in the pastoral search. A majority of at least three fourths ($\frac{3}{4}$) of the voting members of Branson Bible Church present will be necessary to elect.

2. Duties

- a. He will serve the congregation as an under-shepherd, a servant to the Great Shepherd, Jesus Christ.
- b. He will regularly teach God's Word so that the congregation is united in a pursuit of knowing God better and proclaiming Him accurately.
- c. He shall be an ex-officio member of all committees, boards, and organizations of the church.
- d. He will meet regularly with the Board of Elders and the Board of Deacons. He will also meet with the Nominating Committee (when one is appointed). Attendance at the meetings of the other boards and committees will be at the Pastor's discretion.
- e. He, or the Board of Elders, will have oversight regarding pulpit supply and special programs.

3. Resignation

When the Lead Pastor submits his resignation from the pastorate, or if the relationship between Pastor and congregation becomes detrimental to the welfare of the church, the relationship may be terminated in sixty days from the date of notice of intention, or a shorter period if it is mutually agreed upon. The Board of Elders will initiate this process. They will also have the authority to consider remuneration and pastoral duties through this period and make appropriate recommendations to the congregation.

C. Associate Pastor(s)

1. Selection

He will be chosen for an indefinite period by ballot upon recommendation of the Board of Elders in conjunction with the Lead Pastor. The Elders may choose a pulpit committee to assist them in the pastoral search. After careful investigation and consideration, the selection of an Associate Pastor will be voted upon at a specially called congregational meeting. Three fourths ($\frac{3}{4}$) of the voting members present will be necessary to elect.

2. Duties

- a. His duties will be directed by the Lead Pastor under the oversight of the Board of Elders.
- b. He will regularly teach God's Word so that the congregation is united in a pursuit of knowing God better and proclaiming Him accurately.

3. Resignation

When the Associate Pastor submits his resignation, or the relationship between Pastor and congregation becomes detrimental to the welfare of the church, the relationship may be terminated in sixty days from the date of notice of intention, or a shorter period if it is mutually agreed upon the Board of Elders will be responsible to initiate this process. They will also have the authority to consider remuneration and pastoral duties through this period and make appropriate recommendations to the congregation.

D. Deacons

1. Selection:

- a. The qualifications for Deacons are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13.
- b. The church body will endeavor to have a minimum of three elected Deacons for the first one hundred members, and at least another Deacon for each additional one hundred members.
- c. They will be elected at the annual meeting for a three-year term.
- d. The presence of a simple majority of the Deacon Board constitutes a quorum for voting. If all members are present, a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority vote is needed to pass a motion. If only a quorum is present, the vote must be unanimous to pass, or the issue will be tabled.
- e. Each year the Deacons may choose one Deacon to serve as their chairman.

2. Duties:

- a. The Deacons will serve under the direction of the Elders, assisting with such things as helping with member care, dealing with safety and security, overseeing ministries and committees, and writing policies.
- b. They will manage the earthly affairs of the church and be responsible for compliance with any legal requirements of the State of Missouri for the holding of property.
- c. They will assist the Elders in serving the Lord's Supper.

E. Treasurer

The Treasurer will be elected at the annual meeting for a one-year term. His or her duties are:

1. To receive and disburse all funds of the church in accordance with the annual budget or as directed by the Board of Elders.
2. To keep a careful record of the financial transactions of the church and ensure that a current back-up copy is kept at a separate location.
3. To give a financial report at the business meeting of the church.
4. To make available a copy of the church's finances in a timely manner should the Pastors, Elders, or Deacons request it.
5. To coordinate an audit of the church's financial records under the direction of the Board of Elders whenever they deem it necessary.

F. Church Clerk

The Church Clerk will be elected at the annual meeting for a one-year term. He/she will keep an accurate record of the minutes of the regular and special congregational business meetings of the church.

G. Termination of Elected Positions

An elected or non-elected official will be removed from office if he or she:

1. Has become an offense to the testimony of the Church.
2. Holds to and/or propagates doctrines contrary to those set forth in the Statement of Faith, or fails to comply with this Constitution.
3. Fails to adequately fulfill the duties of their office.

H. An elected or non-elected official may resign due to health or other personal reasons, should they feel no longer able to fulfill the duties of their office.

Article IV: Elections

- A. All elections are to be held at the annual congregational business meeting in January. The official church year will begin on January 1 (*See Article II, C for voting requirements*).
- B. All officers of the church will be elected by ballot. With the exception of Elders and Deacons, offices will be held for one year, ending at the annual meeting. Pastors are to be elected as specified in Article III, B, 1 and C, 1.
- C. The Elders and Deacons will be elected every three years with terms so arranged that a majority will not go out of office at the same time.

D. A Nominating Committee of three persons may be appointed by the Elders not less than thirty days before the election. Together with the Lead Pastor they will nominate candidates for the officers of the church.

E. The report of the Nominating Committee (or the Board of Elders) will be presented to the church two Sundays prior to the election.

F. Unexpired terms of office will be filled at the discretion of the Elders.

Article V: Discipline

The church must properly and lovingly exercise discipline upon those members who, in the judgment of the Elders, have persisted in sinful behavior without demonstration of godly repentance (2 Corinthians 7:9-10).

A. The purposes of church discipline are:

1. To seek the spiritual well-being of the sinning believers by calling them to biblical conduct in their way of living (Galatians 6:1).
2. To maintain purity in the local church (1 Corinthians 5:6).
3. To deter sin in other members (1 Timothy 5:20).

B. The procedure of discipline shall be according to Matthew 18:15-17, allowing reasonable time for repentance after every effort has been made to call, exhort, and admonish the person.

C. Members of this local church who err in doctrine, or who engage in conduct that violates Scripture as determined by the Elders, shall be subject to church discipline.

Article VI: Amendments

A. Any proposed amendment(s) of this Constitution and Statement of Faith shall be submitted first to the Elders for approval. At least thirty (30) days shall elapse between any proposed amendment and the vote by the Elders. The quorum of Elders for this vote shall be fifty-one percent. A unanimous vote of this quorum is then necessary before being submitted to the members of the congregation for their vote of approval or disapproval.

B. Proposed amendments approved by the Elders shall be submitted to the congregation at a specially called congregational meeting. At least thirty (30) days shall elapse between the proposal and the congregational vote. A written copy of the proposed amendment(s) shall be made available to every member in good standing. Passage of the proposed amendment(s) shall require a seventy-five percent majority voting in favor. Absentee ballots may be obtained during the week prior to the congregational meeting.

Article VII: Affiliations

Branson Bible Church is an autonomous church that is free to fellowship with other churches with similar doctrine in ministering the gospel, or cooperating in activities furthering the cause of Christ. We will seek to remain faithful to our Constitution and Statement of Faith, while maintaining other associations.

Article VIII: Property

- A. The Board of Elders will have the authority to make recommendations to the members concerning transfer, sale, or purchase of property. Any recommendation will be brought before the membership for a vote.
- B. Upon the dissolution of Branson Bible Church, after paying or making provisions for the payment of all liabilities of the church, the assets of Branson Bible Church, Inc. will be distributed to one or more organizations that are of similar biblical persuasion and that are qualified as an exempt organization under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code. No members individually or collectively will profit from the dissolution of the church. Such dissolution and distribution of assets will be carried out to completion by the current members of Branson Bible Church, Inc., at the time of dissolution.

Article IX: Ordination

- A. When, in the judgment of the Board of Elders, a man in the membership of this church, or in special cases a non-member, is recognized as being called and equipped by God to minister His Word, it will be within the power of this church to authorize the Board of Elders to call and conduct a council for ordination.
- B. The council for ordination will consist of Lead and Associate Pastor(s), Elders, and other like-minded, doctrinally sound churches as desired.
- C. The ordination council will thoroughly examine the candidate as to his call to the ministry, biblical education, character, doctrinal beliefs, and demonstrated ability in Christian service.
- D. Upon the satisfactory completion of the examination and a two-thirds vote of the council, the church will authorize a public ordination service for the candidate.
- E. The Board of Elders will have the authority to conduct an examination of the person ordained under this constitution in the spirit of 1 Corinthians 13 and Galatians 6:1.
- F. Should it be discovered subsequently to the ordination that the minister has changed his theology to be in conflict with the Statement of Faith of Branson Bible Church, or should it be determined that his lifestyle reflects badly on his ordination, that minister may be disciplined or have his ordination revoked by the board of Elders if he is found guilty of doctrinal or moral deviation.