

Constitution Of the High River Baptist Church  
February 27/2012

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## Constitution Of the High River Baptist Church As revised February 27, 2012

### Article 1 Object

The object of this church shall be to glorify God, enjoying Him forever and the maintenance of regular services for the preaching of the Gospel, for worship, for the administration of the ordinances of the New Testament, the spiritual care and improvement of its members, the promotion of missionary work at home and abroad and the conversion of men to Christ.

That the above object may be carried out, we accept and adopt the following articles of faith and practice.

### Article 2 Name and Affiliation

The name of this church shall be: "The High River Baptist Church." This church shall be affiliated with the Southern Alberta Association of Baptist Churches, Canadian Baptists of Western Canada, and shall support the programs of the Canadian Baptist Ministries.

### Article 3 Statement of Faith

- A. We believe that the Bible is God's Word, that it was written by men divinely inspired, and that it has supreme authority in all matters of faith and conduct.
- B. We believe in the Trinity of the Godhead existing eternally in the three persons of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit; and that these three are one God, having precisely the same nature, attributes and perfections, and worthy of the same homage, confidence, and obedience.
- C. We believe in the Virgin birth of Christ, His substitutionary atonement, His bodily resurrection, and His coming a second time to receive the church unto Himself.
- D. We believe that man was created by a special act of God and after His own image, in knowledge, righteousness, and holiness; and that he fell from his high and holy estate through disobedience by eating the forbidden fruit, and in consequence, the threatened penalty of death was then and there inflicted, so that he totally lost all spiritual life, becoming dead in trespasses and sins and subject to the power of the devil.
- E. We believe in Salvation by grace, that it is the free gift of God, not by any virtue or works of men, but received only by personal faith in Jesus Christ; and that all true believers are eternally secure in Christ.

- F. We believe that the local church is an autonomous congregation of baptized believers associated under Christ, for worship, work, and fellowship. We believe that the Lord our Savior prescribed for His disciples the two ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper. Baptism is a symbol and proclamation of the sinner's death to sin and his resurrection in newness of life in Christ Jesus. The Lord's Supper is a memorial of the Lord's death to be kept by His disciples until He comes again, according to His promise and the Father's revealed plan.
- G. We believe in Heaven as a literal place – the final and eternal blessed abode of the believer; and in Hell as a literal place - the final abode of eternal punishment for the unbeliever.

## Article 4      Our Covenant

Having been led, by the Holy Spirit of God, to receive Jesus Christ as Savior and to confess Him as Lord, and on confession of this faith, having been baptized in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, we do now, in the presence of God and this assembly, most solemnly and joyfully covenant with one another, as one body in Christ, to lead a life worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to Him.

We promise by the aid of the Holy Spirit, to forsake the ways of sin and to walk together in Christian love and in the paths of righteousness. With this in view, we engage to strive together for both the peace and purity of this church; to sustain its worship and steadfastly to cherish and hold its ordinances, discipline, and doctrines; to contribute, as faithful stewards, such time, talent, and money, in the measure that God prospers each of us, that the responsibility for the work of the local church and the world-wide ministry of spreading the Gospel be faithfully and effectively discharged.

We also engage to maintain family and private devotions; to teach the Bible to our children; to seek the salvation of our kindred and acquaintances; to be just in our dealings and faithful in our engagements; to be exemplary in our deportment; to avoid unkind words and unrighteous anger; to abstain from drunkenness and from every form of evil; to combine zeal and knowledge in our efforts to advance the cause of our Savior; to make Christ first in all things both spiritual and temporal.

We further engage to give and receive admonition with meekness and affection; to remember each other in prayer, and to aid each other in case of sickness and distress; to cultivate Christian sympathy in feeling and courtesy in speech; to be slow to take offence, but always ready for reconciliation, and mindful of the Scriptures, to seek it without delay; to encourage one another in the blessed hope of our Lord's return.

We, moreover engage that when we move from this place, we will as soon as possible unite with some local church, where we can carry out the spirit of this covenant and the principles of the Word of God.

## Article 5 Membership

We believe that every believer should join the church for Christian fellowship and for most effective service and witness. However, such membership should not be entered upon lightly, but after careful and thoughtful recognition of the duties and obligations involved.

A. Church members are expected to realize the NATURE OF THE CHURCH. Since the church is comprised of regenerate persons indwelt by the Holy Spirit, we must recognize that the church also is a holy society indwelt by the Holy Spirit.

1. Such members having become a “new creature” in Christ (“Therefore, if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature; old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new.” 2 Cor. 5:17) are commanded to be filled with the Spirit, (“And be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess; but be filled with the Spirit.” Eph. 5:18), walk in newness of life (“Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism unto death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Romans 6:4), (see also Romans 7:6, Eph. 4:24) so controlled, led and empowered by the Spirit that the Fruits of the Spirit will be evidenced in their lives, namely: (“love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance; against such there is no law.” Gal. 5:22-23). Such a life would in itself be a witness to Jesus Christ.

However, we are to witness also with words. (Matt. 28: 18-20, Acts 1:8, 2 Cor. 5:18)

2. Remembering this, any un-Christian attitude or action on our part shall grieve the Master and injure the Body of which we are a part. Members will be expected to abstain from those habits, practices, attitudes and amusements generally considered as being “of the world” in accordance with the admonitions of Scripture: (“It is good neither to eat flesh, nor to drink wine, nor anything whereby thy brother stumbleth, or is offended or is made weak.” Rom. 14:21, see also 1 John 2:15-16; 2 Cor. 6:14,17; Titus 2:12; Eph. 5:11; Gal 5:19-21; Eph. 5:18; 1 Cor. 8:9-13; 1 Cor. 3:16-17; 1 Thess. 5:22-23; 1 Cor. 10:6-14; 1 Peter 2:11; Eph. 4:32. “He that saith he abideth in Him ought himself also so to walk; even as He walked.” 1 John 2:6).

As a church body we encourage our pastor(s) and Elders by example, admonition, the teaching of Scripture and prayer to assist those desiring to become members of the church to understand the separated life, both the negative and the positive, and to help them in their spiritual growth in the Lord, thus keeping worldly practices from entering into the life and program of our church. And each member will prayerfully search his own heart and the Scriptures in his endeavor to leave worldly practices and become more like the Lord, realizing such practices may indeed cause a brother to stumble.

- B. We believe that the first day of the week, or the Lord's Day, is the Christian Sabbath, and is to be joyfully hallowed as a day of sacred rest by abstinence from secular labour and worldly recreations. Church members, therefore, will be expected, as far as possible, to share regularly in the worship of the church and the observance of the Lord's Supper. It is a part of our loyalty to our church to faithfully attend all worship services as well as necessary business meetings. (Heb. 10:25, 1 Cor. 11:24-26, Isa. 58)
- C. Church members will be expected to do their share in contributing to the financial support of the church according to their ability as God has prospered them.  
(1 Cor. 16:1-2, 2 Cor. 8:1-7, 9:6-7)
1. Reception of Members: Upon recommendation of the Elders Board and on an affirmative vote of the church, members shall be admitted in the following ways:
    - a. Upon giving credible evidence of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, followed by baptism by immersion and substantial agreement with the doctrines and policies of this church. Baptism will not be required of those who by reason of a physical disability are incapable of receiving believer's baptism, but who otherwise meet the above requirements.
    - b. By letter of recommendation of recent date from another Baptist Church
    - c. Upon statement of Christian experience, if previously baptized by immersion.
    - d. Through restoration to church membership after the withdrawal of fellowship.
    - e. Believers having been baptized by believer's baptism (not infant baptism) by a mode other than immersion and giving evidence of a genuine Christian experience, may, by special recommendation of the Elders Board, be received into the membership of the Church.
    - f. While making provision for membership for those who have been baptized as believers – but not by immersion ( as noted in Section e), it is nevertheless required that the Pastor(s) and Elders be baptized by immersion in order that there be no doubt as to the teaching and practice of the Church, which is believer's baptism by immersion.
  2. Dismissal of Members: Dismissal of members from the membership of this church shall be:
    - a. By letter of transfer to another Baptist Church.
    - b. By letter of dismissal and in order that the member may unite with a church of another denomination.
    - c. By withdrawal of membership as requested by the individual.
    - d. By withdrawal of membership for disciplinary reasons subject to a  $\frac{3}{4}$  majority vote of  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the resident voting members of the church voting by ballot. (see also Article 6, A)

#### D. Classification of Members

1. Active Members: An active member is one who complies with Article 5, Sections A, B, and C.
2. Inactive Member: An inactive member is any member absenting himself/herself from the regular services of the church for a period of six months. Inactive members who have been absent for a valid reason may be immediately considered active members upon their return to the church.
3. Non-Resident Members: A non-resident member is one living at a distance that prohibits attendance at the regular services of the church, and for valid reasons wishes his/her membership to remain in this church. Non-resident members may be immediately considered active members upon their return to the church.

### Article 6      Discipline

- A. Every member of the church shall be subject to its discipline and liable to removal from its membership and exclusion from its fellowship by a  $\frac{3}{4}$  majority vote of  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the resident voting members at any regular church meeting, or at any meeting specially called for the purpose, notice having been given to the church and to such members at least 2 weeks before the meeting. (see also Article 5, C 2 d)
- B. All cases of offences between members shall be dealt with according to directions given by our Lord as recorded in Matthew 18:15-17.
- C. If any member of the church shall be charged with any crime, gross impropriety, or of disseminating views contrary to the fundamental doctrines of the church, it shall be the duty of the church to investigate such charges and take such action as it may deem necessary for the restoration of the offender and the protection of the church.
- D. If a member, having erred, shall voluntarily confess it to the church and manifest repentance, no further proceedings shall be entertained against him, except in cases of public scandal. In cases of confirmation of public scandal, he shall be dismissed from the membership of the church and shall only be received back into membership after having shown by his life that he is truly repentant.
- E. If a charge be preferred against an absent member, he shall, if practicable, be asked to appear at the next meeting of the church, and no member, if absent, shall be censured or excluded at the same meeting during which a charge is preferred against him.
- F. Every member against whom a charge of misconduct is preferred shall have the privilege of speaking in his own defense.

## Article 7 Organization

- A. The members of the church shall constitute the final authority for all matters pertaining to the church. Only members 18 years of age or over shall have voting privileges, and a simple majority vote shall govern business matters unless otherwise specified in the Constitution.
- B. Quorum  
The quorum for meetings shall be as follows:
1. Boards, Councils and Committees – 2/3 of the members.
  2. Church Board- 1/2 of the Elders and 1/2 of the trustees, as well as 2/3 of total board membership.
  3. Quarterly Business meetings – 1/4 of the resident active voting membership.
  4. Annual meetings – 1/3 of the resident active voting membership.
  5. Special meetings – 3/4 majority of 1/2 of the resident active voting membership.  
(see Articles 5 C 2 d, 6 A, 8 A 6)
- C. The Annual Church Business Meeting shall be held on the fourth Monday in February, if possible, for the purpose of hearing reports, of electing officers and committees, and of transacting other church business. A notice must be in the church bulletin and be given from the pulpit for two consecutive weeks before this meeting.
- D. All branches of church work having organization including officers, shall report to the church at its annual meeting for the purpose of receiving its approval and ratification.
- E. A quarterly business meeting shall be held each quarter, if possible, for the hearing of reports from all departments of the church and the transaction of such business as needs to be brought before the church from time to time. A notice must be in the church bulletin and be given from the pulpit for two consecutive weeks before each meeting.
- F. A special meeting for the purpose of dealing with specific issues may be called by the Senior Pastor, the Church Moderator, the Council of Elders or Trustees, or by a majority vote of any regularly called business meeting. Two notices of this meeting must be given in the church bulletin and from the pulpit for two consecutive weeks (on the Sunday) before it is held.
- G. Voting by proxy may be granted to those Resident Active Members who must be unavoidably absent from a Congregation Meeting. Such proxies shall be exercised by the Moderator under the following conditions:
1. The proxy has been arranged for with respect to a Notice of Motion that has been posted before the Congregation Meeting; or with regard to a motion to call a Pastor in which the absent person wishes to register a vote; or a motion that the absentee member knows will be put to the Congregation and for which he/she wants to register a vote.
  2. Clear instructions have been given as to how the proxy is to be exercised – whether for or against.
  3. The proxy cannot be exercised concerning any motion that the absentee member has no prior knowledge of.
  4. The proxy cannot be exercised if amendments are made to a motion for which the

proxy was arranged – if the amendments so alter the original motion sufficiently as to leave in doubt what the wishes would be of the absentee member. The moderator shall make the judgment as to whether the proxy is still applicable in the light of amendments from the floor.

- H. The officers of this church shall be the members of the Church Board, namely: The Church Moderator, Church Clerk, Treasurer, Senior Pastor (Ex-Officio), Elders, Trustees Deaconesses, and representatives from any other such Committee, Board or Council as may be added to the Church Board Structure from time to time. The officers shall constitute the Church Board. Others may be added as may be deemed necessary. The Chairman from each elected committee other than those already mentioned in the Constitution may attend Church Board Meetings.
- I. The organization shall be carried on without purpose of gain for its members and any profits or other assets of charity shall be used in promoting its objects.

## Article 8 Duties of Officers and Committees

### A. The Pastor

1. The Pastor(s) shall have adequate training and experience and be able to obtain denominational accreditation.
2. The Pastor(s) shall be responsible for the spiritual direction of the Church in cooperation with the officers of the Church and subject to the oversight of the Church particularly as expressed by the Council of Elders and the Church Board.
3. The Pastor(s) will ensure that the general pastoral functions of the Church are carried out, including worship, preaching, teaching, adult discipleship, pastoral care, fellowship, children and youth ministries, and Christian education. The Pastor will be directly in charge of some functions and in others share the oversight with the appropriate Officers of the Church as worked out mutually with the Council of Deacons/Elders and the Church Board.
4. The Pastor(s) will work within the framework of any detailed job description that has been worked out between him and the Council of Elders and the Church Board and endorsed by the Church Congregation at a duly called business meeting.
5. The Senior Pastor shall be an ex-officio member of all Boards and Committees except that appointed after his resignation to seek a new minister.
6. When a pastor is to be chosen, a Pulpit Committee of three members shall be appointed by the Council of Elders and approved by the Church whose duty it shall be to take such steps as shall be necessary to obtain a new pastor. Voting to call a new pastor shall be by ballot and requires the presence of  $\frac{1}{2}$  of the active resident voting membership, with a  $\frac{3}{4}$  majority vote. A unanimous vote should be sought. (see subsection M, Pulpit Committee)



## B. The Church Board

1. The Church Board is the governing body of the Church.
2. The Church Board shall be composed of the Church Moderator, Church Clerk, Treasurer, Senior Pastor (ex-officio), Trustees, Elders, Deaconesses, and representatives from any such other Committees, Boards or Councils as may be added to the Church Board structure from time to time.
3. The Church Board shall act on behalf of the church membership between church meetings, subject to the limitations declared elsewhere.
4. The Church Board shall report to the congregation on a quarterly and annual basis.
5. The Church Board shall bring any major decisions to the congregation for ratification.
6. The Church Board will present a proposed budget at the Annual Meeting for consideration by the Church.
7. The Church Board shall be authorized to spend up to \$10,000.00 without authorization of the church, once between Quarterly Business Meetings.
8. All members of the Church Board must be Church Members.

## C. The Council of Elders

The Council of Elders shall be men of spiritual maturity (1 Timothy 3:8-13, Titus 1:6-9, Acts 6:1-8) who with the pastor(s) and at the direction of the church shall have the spiritual and temporal oversight of the church. The term Elders is used to reflect the responsibilities that are described in the New Testament by the use of both the terms Elder and Deacon. Those appointed to oversee servant ministries such as Pastoral Care and Small Groups is consistent with a Deacon's responsibilities (1 Timothy 3:8-13, Acts 6:1-8). They will also oversee the spiritual welfare of the church and share with the Pastor(s) in the overall leadership which is consistent with the responsibilities of Elders as outlined in the New Testament (1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:6-9, 1 Peter 5:1-4).

1. To advise, assist and support the pastor(s) in the spiritual welfare and advancement of the church.
2. To take leadership with the pastor(s) and any other designated Associate Pastoral Staff in forming a group of personal workers who will lead others to accept Christ and unite with the Church.
3. To consider all applications for church membership and all requests for letters of dismissal.
4. To distribute elements at the communion service.
5. To assist the Pastor(s) in visiting the sick and needy of the church.
6. To assist candidates at their baptism.
7. To look after the church in the absence of the Pastor(s).
8. To oversee ministries that are in keeping with the above responsibilities, such as
  - a. Pastoral Care Ministries
  - b. Small Groups
  - c. Missions
  - d. Music/Worship
  - e. Welcome at Sunday Services
  - f. Ushers

- g. Sunday school
- h. Children's ministries
- i. Youth ministries
- j. Adult and Senior ministries
- k. Library

Such ministries will be carried out with the help of others, but overseen by the Elders.

9. The Council of Elders shall consist of at least four members. An Elder shall hold office for a three-year term. An Elder may be re-elected for a second three-year term, and after being out of office for one year is eligible for re-election.

#### E. The Trustees

While the Council of Elders is charged with the duty of advancing the spiritual life of the church, the Trustees are responsible for its physical welfare. The Trustee Board shall consist of a least 4 members, each member to act for 3 years. The Treasurer will either be one of the members or act in an ex-officio capacity.

The functions of the Trustees are:

1. They are the legal custodians of the church property and premises.
2. They shall oversee all measures for its upkeep and protection.
3. All bills authorized by the Church shall be approved by the trustees before payment is made; routine operating expenses excepted.
4. The Trustees, in consultation with the Church Board, shall present to the Church Board a proposed Budget for the coming year. The Church Board will then present the Budget to the Congregation for ratification at the Annual Meeting. (see Article 8 Duties of Officers and Committees, section B The Church Board, subsection 6)
5. The Trustees will exercise budget control and ensure that spending levels do not unnecessarily exceed income levels. To assist the Trustees in their budget control responsibility, each church organization will seek authorization from the Trustees before expending money not provided for in the budget. If an item is provided for in the budget, but is a large one, the Trustees should be consulted before making that expenditure to ensure that current cash flow will allow it.

#### F. Deaconesses

The Deaconesses shall assist the Elders in overseeing the spiritual welfare and the pastoral needs of the church.

1. While the Deaconesses are not a policy making body, they will be directly involved in servant ministries such as Pastoral Care, assisting female candidates at baptismal services, and overseeing the preparation of the Lord's Table on a monthly basis.
2. The Deaconesses will be responsible to develop avenues of fellowship and care with all ladies such that there will be opportunity for spiritual nurture and counsel.
3. The Deaconesses will oversee the sending of appropriate cards for special occasions.
4. The Deaconesses should be 4 in number and will serve one year renewable terms.

#### G. The Church Moderator

The Church Moderator shall provide orderly and unbiased leadership to the Church Board and Congregational Meetings. He shall moderate all church Board Meetings and all Congregational Meetings. In the Moderator's absence, an elder or designate shall be called on to moderate Church Board and Congregational meetings. In respect of those meetings, the Moderator shall prepare the agendas in consultation with the Pastor(s) and the Church Clerk. The Moderator and/or Chairman of the Trustees, shall approve accounts for payment in consultation with the Church Treasurer, and serve as a co-signatory with the treasurer on all cheques. An alternate co-signor would be any one of the trustees

#### H. The Church Clerk

The functions include:

1. The Church Clerk shall act as secretary of all business meetings and keep a correct record of the proceedings of such meetings.
2. The Church Clerk shall keep a correct roll of all members received, with date and method of reception, baptism and dismissing.
3. The Church Clerk shall act as the corresponding secretary of the church, and shall communicate with any person on any matter, when requested to do so by the Church.
4. The Church Clerk shall call to the attention of the Church matters of business which require attention, and report on the state of the church membership at each Annual Meeting.

#### I. The Church Treasurer

The functions of this office include:

1. To receive and deposit all Church and Sunday School funds for which the Church is responsible.
2. To pay all bills chargeable to the Church account, under the direction of the Trustees and/or the Church Board.
3. To maintain the church accounts and render a true report to the Annual Meeting and other Church meetings as required, of all monies received and paid out, and when required, furnish a statement of the financial position of the Church.
4. To issue receipts for those donations which include the name or number of the donor.
5. Three members are to count and record offerings.
6. The Treasurer shall be either a voting member or an ex-officio member of the Trustees and the Church Board.

#### J. Assistant Treasurer

From time to time the Church may appoint an Assistant Treasurer to help the Treasurer in his/her responsibilities. The duties of the Assistant Treasurer may vary from time to time – and shall be defined by the Treasurer, with the endorsement of the Trustees and recommended by the Trustees to the Church Board for ratification.

K. The Nominating Committee

1. This committee shall be elected by the church at a business meeting at least a month prior to the Annual Meeting.
2. Nominations shall be posted at the church at least two weeks before the Annual Meeting.
3. Additional nominations may be made at the Annual Meeting.
4. No nominations shall be posted without the nominee's previous consent.
5. The committee shall be composed of three members and the Pastor.

L. Ratification of Officers

The leaders of all other organized church groups shall be elected at a meeting previous to the Annual Meeting, at which time the church will ratify and approve the appointment. All such officers shall be Christians and in good standing.

M. The Pulpit Committee

See Article 8 , subsection A (The Pastor), section 6.

## Article 9 By-Laws

- A. A set of by-laws shall be established, and revised from time to time as necessary, to cover the administrative framework for the Church Board and it's three constituent groups: Council of Elders, Deaconesses, and Trustees.
- B. If any other Councils or Committees are added directly to the Church Board – then along with the corresponding constitutional provisions shall be added a set of appropriate by-laws.

## Article 10 Amendments to the Constitution and the By-Laws

- A. Changing the Constitution. The foregoing Constitution may be changed by a 3/4 majority vote of at least ½ of the resident, active, voting members at an Annual or Quarterly meeting, provided notice of such change has been given at the preceding Quarterly Church Meeting, and posted in the Church bulletin at least 2 weeks before the meeting when the proposed change will be dealt with.
- B. Changing the By-Laws. The By-Laws can be changed by Notice of Motion recommended by the Church Board and posted in the Church bulletin two weeks before a regularly scheduled Quarterly or Annual Meeting; and passed by a simple majority at the meeting.
- C. Maintaining a Permanent Record. The Church Clerk shall see that this constitution and by-laws be printed and a copy be given or sent to each member of the Church together with amendments as adopted. The Church Clerk will keep on file an up-to-date copy of the constitution and By-Laws and will also keep a full and permanent record of all changes that are made to the constitution and By-Laws, including the date of the changes and reference to the Church Meetings at which the changes were made.