

CONSTITUTION
of
COTTONWOOD BIBLE CHURCH
Cottonwood, Arizona

Adopted by the membership on March 8, 2009
Revised by the membership on Sept. 9, 2012, March 9, 2014, and Sept 14, 2014

Whereas we, Cottonwood Bible Church, having searched the Scriptures under the guidance of His Spirit, have recognized the need to constitute ourselves to conform more closely to God's will for the Church and to prepare ourselves for greater efforts in His name, therefore, we do hereby organize ourselves in accord with the Arizona Nonprofit Corporation Act and adopt this Constitution as our articles of governance, to be interpreted at all times to reflect the character of and bring glory to Jesus Christ, as revealed in the Holy Bible and articulated in the Statement of Faith and Covenant of this church.

ARTICLE 1

Name

This body shall be known as Cottonwood Bible Church.

ARTICLE 2

Affiliation

This church is autonomous and maintains the right to govern its own affairs, independent of any denominational control. Recognizing, however, the benefits of cooperation with other churches in world missions, this church voluntarily affiliates with the Southern Baptist Convention in its National, State and local expressions.

Should this church decide that it will no longer exist as a Southern Baptist Church, or decide to disassociate itself from the Southern Baptist Convention, control of all its real property and improvements thereto, shall be conveyed, temporarily, to the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention, an Arizona non-profit corporation. The Arizona Southern Baptist Convention shall try to establish a Southern Baptist Church in this location with the assets. If this is not successful, at the end of two (2) years, permanent ownership shall be transferred to the Arizona Southern Baptist Convention.

If this congregation ever ceases to be a viable church, the members of this church shall have no claim to property, and they shall be entitled to no assets.

ARTICLE 3

Membership

Section 1 – Qualifications

To qualify for membership in this church, a person must...

- Be a believer in Jesus Christ who gives evidence of regeneration,
- Have been baptized by immersion, in obedience to Christ, following his or her regeneration, and
- Wholeheartedly believe in the Christian faith as revealed in the Bible.

After faithfully attending a new members' class and completing a membership interview with the pastor and another elder, each member must agree to submit to the teaching of Scripture as expressed in the Statement of Faith and must promise to keep the commitments expressed in the Church Covenant. The elders shall be responsible for determining each person's qualification for membership. In making this determination, they may rely on a person's profession of faith, or such other evidence, as the elders deem appropriate.

Section 2 – Admission of Members

To be admitted into church membership, applicants shall be recommended by the elders for admission and accepted by at least three-quarters vote of the members at any regular or special meeting of the members, and shall at that point relinquish their membership in other churches. Unless the elders deem otherwise, new members will be asked to wait a period of twelve (12) Sundays before they begin to serve in a particular ministry.

Section 3 – Duties and Privileges of Membership

In accord with the duties enumerated in the Church Covenant, each member shall be privileged and expected to participate actively in the life of the church by...

Regularly attending its Lord's Day meetings;

Faithfully observing its ordinances, namely Baptism and the Lord's Supper;

Submitting to its discipline and instruction;

Attending its Members' Meetings;

Contributing to the ministry and life of the church, consistent with God's leading and with the gifts, time, and material resources each has received from God; and

Voting on the election of officers, on decisions regarding membership, and on all other matters submitted to the congregation's vote.

Only those shall be entitled to serve in the ministries of the church who are members of this congregation; non-members may serve on an ad-hoc basis with the approval of the elders.

Section 4 – On Church Discipline

Any member consistently neglectful of his or her duties or guilty of conduct by which the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be dishonored, and so opposing the welfare of the church, shall be subject to the admonition of the elders and the discipline of the church, according to the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15-17 and the example of Scripture.

Church discipline, then, should ordinarily be contemplated after individual private admonition has failed. Church discipline can include admonition by the elders or congregation, deposition from office, and disfellowship (see Matthew 18:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 3:14-15; 1 Timothy 5:19-20; 1 Corinthians 5:4-5).

The purpose of such discipline should be...

for the repentance, reconciliation, and spiritual growth of the individual disciplined (see Proverbs 15:5; 29:15; 1 Corinthians 4:14; Ephesians 6:4; 1 Timothy 3:4-5; Hebrews 12:1-11; Psalm 119:115; 141:5; Proverbs 17:10; 25:12; 27:5; Ecclesiastes 7:5; Matthew 7:26-27; 18:15-17; Luke 17:3; Acts 2:40; 1 Corinthians 5:5; Galatians 6:1-5; 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 14-15; 1 Timothy 1:20; Titus 1:13-14; James 1:22)

For the instruction in righteousness and good of other Christians, as an example to them (see Proverbs 13:20; Romans 15:14; 1 Corinthians 5:11; 15:33; Colossians 3:16; 1 Thessalonians 5:14 [note this is written to the whole church, not just to leaders]; 1 Timothy 5:20; Titus 1:11; Hebrews 10:24-25);

For the purity of the church as a whole (see 1 Corinthians 5:6-7; 2 Corinthians 13:10; Ephesians 5:27; 2 John 10; Jude 24; Revelation 21:2);

For the good of our corporate witness to non-Christians (see Proverbs 28:7; Matthew 5:13-16; John 13:35; Acts 5:1-14; Ephesians 5:11; 1 Timothy 3:7; 2 Peter 2:2; 1 John 3:10);

And supremely for the glory of God by reflecting His holy character (see Deuteronomy 5:11; 1 Kings 11:2; 2 Chronicles 19:2; Ezra 6:21; Nehemiah 9:2; Isaiah 52:11; Ezekiel 36:20; Matthew 5:16; John 15:8; 18:17, 25; Romans 2:24; 15:5-6; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7: 1; Ephesians 1:4; 5:27; 1 Peter 2:12).

Section 5 – Termination of Membership

Termination of membership shall be recognized by the church following any church member's death. Membership may be terminated upon a member's voluntary resignation, joining another church, or as an act of church discipline at the recommendation of the elders and with the vote of three-quarters of the members at any regular or special meeting of the members. No church member may terminate his or her membership while under church discipline.

ARTICLE 4 Officers

Section 1 – Summary

The Biblical offices in the church are elders and deacons, but final earthly authority is vested in the assembled congregation. In addition, our church recognizes the administrative positions under this constitution of clerk and treasurer. All officers must be members of this church prior to assuming their responsibilities.

Section 2 – Elders

This church acknowledges that a plurality of men, called elders, are commanded to shepherd God's people (Acts 20:28). Elders, who should comprise of not less than three men, must satisfy the qualifications set forth in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. A majority of the active eldership shall be composed of church members not in the regular pay of the church, and no elder shall hold the office of deacon during his tenure. Subject to the will of the congregation, the elders shall oversee the ministry and resources of the church. In keeping with the principles set forth in Acts 6:1-6 and I Peter 5:1-4, the elders shall devote their time to prayer, the ministry of the Word (by teaching and encouraging sound doctrine), and shepherding God's flock.

The church shall recognize men gifted and willing to serve in this calling, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections. These men shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as elders. This recognition shall be reaffirmed by the church triennially. After an elder, other than the pastor(s), has served two consecutive three-year terms, he may only be elected to the office of elder after at least one year.

An elder's term of office may be terminated by resignation or by dismissal. Any two members with reason to believe that an elder should be dismissed should express such concern to the elders and, if need be, to the congregation. Any such action shall be done in accordance with the instructions of our Lord in Matthew 18:15–17 and I Timothy 5:17–21. Any of the elders may be dismissed by a two-thirds vote of the members at any members' meeting of the church.

The elders shall take particular responsibility to examine and instruct prospective members, examine and recommend all prospective candidates for offices and positions, oversee the work of the deacons and appointed church agents and committees, conduct worship services, administer the ordinances of baptism and communion, equip the membership for the work of the ministry, encourage sound doctrine and practice, admonish and correct error, oversee the process of church discipline, coordinate and promote the ministries of the church, and mobilize the church for world missions. The elders are further to ensure that all who minister the Word to the congregation, including outside speakers, share our fundamental convictions.

The elders may establish ministry positions or committees to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities. The elders may also propose funding for new paid staff positions. The membership shall give final approval for any candidate to fill the position of pastor(s). The scope and approval of job descriptions for any staff position shall reside in the hands of those with hiring authority for that position. The elders shall have primary responsibility for the employment, supervision, and evaluation of staff members. This responsibility may, on a case-by-case basis, be delegated to another staff member. The elders shall elect a chairman of elders' meetings and shall also elect one of their number to serve as moderator of members' meetings (or, at their discretion, they may select another member from the congregation to serve as moderator pro tempore). For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the State of Arizona, the elders shall elect one of their number to serve as the president of the corporation.

Section 3 – The Pastor

The pastor shall be an elder. He shall perform the duties of an elder described in Section 2 above, and shall be recognized by the church as particularly gifted and called to the full-time ministry of preaching and teaching. His call shall not be subject to the triennial reaffirmation or to the term limitation set out in Article 7, Section 2, for elders.

He shall preach on the Lord's Day, administer the ordinances of baptism and communion, and perform such other duties as usually pertain to that office, or as set forth in the constitution. In the absence or incapacity of the pastor the elders shall assume responsibility for his duties, any of which can be delegated.

Section 4 – Deacons

The office of deacon is described in 1 Timothy 3:8–13 and Acts 6:1–7. The church shall recognize, in accordance with the constitutional provisions on elections, men who are giving of themselves in service to the church, and who possess particular gifts of service. These members shall be received as gifts of Christ to His church and set apart as deacons. They shall be elected to one term lasting for a maximum of three years and may only be elected to another term after one year.

Deacons shall care for the temporal needs of members, attend to the accommodations for public worship, and encourage and support those able to help others and those with gifts of administration. Each year the elders, after consulting with the deacons, shall present to the church an itemized budget at a regular members' meeting. This budget shall be presented for discussion at that time and called up for a vote. No money shall be solicited by or on behalf of the church or any of its ministries without the approval of the elders and deacons. The deacons shall disburse a fund for benevolence. The deacons, with the agreement of the elders, may establish unpaid administrative positions or committees of members to assist them in fulfilling their responsibilities in the church.

Section 5 – Clerk

It shall be the duty of the clerk to record the minutes of all regular and special members' meetings of the church, to preserve an accurate roll of the membership, and to render reports as requested by the pastor, the elders, the deacons, or the church. The clerk shall be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation to serve a term of one year. In the absence or incapacity of the clerk the elders shall appoint a member to perform the duties of the church clerk. For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the State of Arizona, the clerk shall serve as the secretary of the corporation. The church clerk shall ensure that dated copies of the most recent revision of this constitution shall be available for all church members.

Section 6 – Treasurer

The treasurer, who shall not be an active elder, deacon, or paid church staff member, shall ensure that all funds and securities of the church are properly secured in such banks, financial institutions, or depositories as appropriate, being the signer of such accounts along with one of the non-paid elders. The treasurer shall also be responsible for presenting regular reports of the account balances, revenues and expenses of the church at each members' meeting. The responsibility may be delegated with the approval of the elders. The treasurer shall also ensure that full and accurate accounts of receipts and disbursements are kept in books belonging to the church, and that adequate controls are implemented to guarantee that all funds belonging to the church are appropriately handled by any officer, employee, or agent of the church. The treasurer shall render to the elders annually, or whenever they may require it, an account of all transactions as treasurer and of the financial condition of the church. All reports and records are open to inspection by any member of the church upon appointment with the treasurer and in the company of an elder. The treasurer shall be nominated by the elders and elected by the congregation to serve a term of one year. For purposes of compliance with the nonprofit corporation laws of the State of Arizona, the treasurer shall serve as the treasurer of the corporation.

Section 7 – Board of Directors/Trustees

This church shall have a board of directors (or trustees), and it shall be the function of the directors/trustees to sign any and all legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, or lease of church property or any other legal documents requiring the signature of the trustees for and in behalf of the church. Thus, they shall have no power to do anything without a specific vote of the church. These trustees may appoint from the members additional directors or trustees as needed.

Once a year, the trustees will have a business meeting to fulfill the obligations as set forth for corporations of the State of Arizona.

ARTICLE 5

Elections

Section 1 – Principles

The process for church elections shall be interpreted and carried out to fulfill the following principles: Substantial prayer, both individually and corporately, should be an integral part of the election process; Nominations should proceed with the support of the elders; All candidates for church office should be treated with the grace, kindness, and honesty appropriate in evaluating fellow members; The election process shall express that spirit of mutual trust, openness, and loving consideration that is appropriate within the body of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Section 2 – Selection of Officers

The election of officers shall be held at a members' meeting of the church. Names of nominees to serve as elders, deacons, clerk, or treasurer shall be presented by the elders at a previous members' meeting (providing that previous meeting occurred at least eight weeks prior), and the election shall proceed as directed by the moderator. The elders should seek recommendations and involvement from the general membership in the nomination process. Any member with reason to believe that a nominated candidate is unqualified for an office should express such concern to the elders. Members intending to speak in opposition to a candidate should express their objection to the elders as far in advance as possible before the relevant church members' meeting. The moderator shall declare elected all men receiving a 75% majority of all votes cast for the office of elder. For all other offices, the moderator shall declare elected all persons receiving a simple majority of all votes cast; abstentions will not be considered as votes cast.

The persons elected shall assume their respective offices upon election, unless another date has been specifically designated.

Section 3 – Calling of the Pastor

In the calling of any man to this position, the same basic process of calling an elder must be followed. In addition, however, the church must be given adequate opportunity to assess the preaching gifts of any potential pastor and, before being asked to express its judgment, must receive assurance from the elders that, having interviewed the man concerned, they are in no doubt as to his wholehearted assent to the Statement of Faith and Church Covenant. Notice of the nomination of a man to be elected to membership and called as pastor (which shall include, if necessary, election to membership of his wife if he is married) must be given at two Sunday morning services following the nomination, prior to the vote at a members' meeting.

ARTICLE 6

Indemnification

Section 1 – Mandatory Indemnification

If a legal claim or criminal allegation is made against a person because he or she is or was an officer, employee, or agent of the church, the church shall provide indemnification against liability and costs incurred in defending against the claim if the elders determine that the person acted (a) in good faith, (b) with the care that an ordinarily prudent person in a similar position would exercise under similar circumstances, and (c) in a manner the person reasonably believed to be in the best interest of the church, and the person had no reasonable cause to believe his or her conduct was unlawful.

Section 2 – Procedure

If a quorum of two-thirds of the elders is not available for an indemnification determination because of the number of elders seeking indemnification, the requisite determination may be made by the membership or by special legal counsel appointed by the membership.

ARTICLE 7

Dispute Resolution

Believing that the Bible commands Christians to make every effort to live at peace and to resolve disputes with each other in private or within the Christian Church (see, e.g., Matthew 18: 15–20, I Corinthians 6: 1–8), the church shall require its members to resolve conflict among themselves according to biblically based principles, without reliance on the secular courts. Consistent with its call to peacemaking, the church shall encourage the use of biblically based principles to resolve disputes between itself and those outside the church, whether Christian or pagan and whether individuals or corporate entities.

ARTICLE 8

Church Meetings

The church shall meet together for public worship each Lord’s Day morning, and at other times throughout the week as the church may determine.

Church members’ meetings shall be held at least quarterly. A quorum shall consist of active resident members, except as otherwise noted differently in this constitution, in attendance at a properly called meeting. Eligible voters at any meeting shall be as set forth under the “Duties and Privileges of Membership” in the Membership requirements of this constitution.

The Elders, whenever they deem it necessary, or within thirty days of receiving a written request signed by ten percent of the voting Membership, shall call a special Members’ Meeting. Any special called members meeting shall be announced at two (2) consecutive services with details regarding the purpose of the meeting, one (1) week prior to the special meeting.

Robert’s Rules of Order may be utilized at all members’ meetings-

ARTICLE 9

Amendments

Proposed changes in the Constitution shall be published and made available to all church members at all regular Sunday worship services two (2) Sundays prior to a regular members’ meeting. Amendments or changes must be ratified by a two-thirds (2/3) majority of members present in a regular members meeting. Regular worship services and regular members’ meetings are considered those which are approved by the church members or announced to the church body in advance.

The Constitution of this church shall be designated to the Arizona Corporation Commission as the bylaws of the corporation.