

HERITAGE FELLOWSHIP CHURCH CONSTITUTION AND BYLAWS

NAME AND AFFILIATION

The name of this church shall be Heritage Fellowship Church and though independent and autonomous, Heritage Fellowship is a Southern Baptist Church. The church is voluntarily cooperating with the Southern Baptist Convention in its ministries and the spreading of the gospel of Christ around the world through its mission programs.

VISION STATEMENT

Heritage Fellowship is a Christ-centered fellowship committed to impacting this and future generations with the life-changing message of Jesus Christ.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this church is as stated in the New Testament scriptures. This church exists for God's pleasure and to bring glory and honor to His name and the name of His Son, Jesus Christ *(1). This is done through the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of its members to attain unity of faith and true knowledge of Christ to spiritual maturity *(2). Thus, we can be light in a darkened world in word and in deed *(3). The church shall be devoted to equipping of the saints, worship of our God, watchcare of its members, and witnessing to the lost world of the grace and mercy of our God toward them *(4).

STATEMENT OF FAITH

1. We believe in one God *(1), Creator, Redeemer, and Lord of the Universe *(2), eternally existing in three Persons: Father, Son and Holy Spirit *(3).
2. We believe the Bible as contained in the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testaments is the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of God *(1), the final authority in all matters of faith and practice *(2).
3. We believe that Jesus Christ, the Son of God *(1), was conceived by the Holy Spirit *(2), born of the virgin Mary *(3), lived a sinless life, died a substitutionary death on the Cross *(4), rose bodily from the dead and ascended into Heaven, as truly God and truly man*(5). He is the only mediator between God and man*(6).
4. We believe that only the Holy Spirit can call sinners to new birth *(1). The Holy Spirit is a gift to every believer at salvation *(2). Every believer is called to surrender all obstacles to the influence of the Holy Spirit in their lives, so they will bear fruit to the glory of God *(3). The Holy Spirit is the presence of Christ in the life of the believer giving spiritual growth and guidance *(4).
5. We believe that all people are lost and have no hope outside of the free gift from God; salvation through Jesus Christ *(1). Salvation is given and received through repentance of sin and relying on Jesus Christ and His finished work on the Cross *(2).
6. We believe that Jesus Christ is the head of the Church, which is made up of believers *(1). We are called to be members of His body and instruments of His love to others by sharing The Gospel and making disciples *(2).
7. We believe that Jesus Christ will personally and visibly return to receive His church at the Father's appointed time *(1). He will reveal His triumph over evil, suffering and death *(2); fully manifesting His kingdom and establishing a new heaven and a new earth, in which He will be glorified forever *(3).

DOCTRINAL STATEMENT

Heritage Fellowship adheres to the Doctrinal Statements presented in the 2000 Baptist Faith and Message.

CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

THE CHURCH DEFINED

The word church (ekklisia) means, “called out ones” and can refer to the entire spiritual body of Christ or a local congregation. In the New Testament it most often refers to an established local congregation of believers.

Scripture teaches that all who place their faith in Jesus Christ are immediately placed by the Holy Spirit into one united spiritual body called the Church, the family of God, of which Jesus Christ is the head *(1). The Church is made up of individual local congregations of believers that assemble for the cause of fellowship and growing in Christ. God has given each local congregation all that it needs to individually and corporately mature and carry out the commands and commissions of our Lord *(2).

MEMBERSHIP DEFINED

Members of this church shall be comprised of those who have:

1. Made a public profession of their faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior * (1).
2. Been baptized by immersion.* (2).
3. Requested to be a member of this church.
4. Made a commitment to abide by the membership covenant of this church.
5. Been received as members of the church by the elder body.

PURPOSE OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Church membership is important in that it facilitates:

1. The defining of who belongs to our local congregation *(1).
2. The knowing of who should participate in the privileges and responsibilities of the church *(2).
3. The providing of adequate care, nurture, and protection for every individual that belongs to this body *(3).
4. The exercising of authority and oversight in discipline and restoration of those members not maintaining a biblical standard of doctrine and conduct *(4).

PROCEDURES FOR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

A. APPLICATION FOR CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Any person may request membership with this church by publicly presenting himself or herself to an elder for membership at any church service.

B. PROCESS FOR CONSIDERATION OF CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

Upon a person’s request for membership, the following procedures will be followed:

1. The person shall meet with an elder or an elder-appointed member to discuss if he or she has truly trusted Christ as Savior.
2. An elder or an elder-appointed member of the church shall give an information packet including the constitution and by-laws, and the membership covenant/commitment to the applicant.
3. An elder or elder-appointed member of the church shall meet with the person to discuss and answer any questions regarding the church and his or her membership commitment.
4. If after meeting with an elder of the church, the person is found to be of kindred spirit with the church, and can and will commit to the responsibilities of membership, an elder shall present his or her request for membership to the elder body for approval or denial.
5. If a request for membership is denied, an elder of the church shall meet with the person to discuss and answer any questions regarding the decision of the elder body.
6. Upon elder body approval, the new member shall be publicly presented to the church as a fellow member of the church.

MEMBERSHIP COVENANT

I affirm that I have made a public profession of faith in Jesus Christ as Lord and Savior and have been baptized by immersion. I further affirm that I have read the statement of faith and doctrine of this church and can support the mission, ministry and teachings of Heritage Fellowship Church.

I understand that my responsibilities as a member of this church are to:

1. Seek to grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ.
2. Support the church with my regular attendance in worship and Bible study.
3. Seek to use my spiritual gift(s) to benefit the cause of Christ in our church.
4. Support the church financially through faithful giving.
5. Be accountable to the church in doctrine and conduct.
6. Submit to the loving rule, oversight, and authority, under Christ, of the elders regarding reproof, instruction, correction, and loving discipline as given in Matthew 18:15-17.

I believe that the Lord is leading me to be a faithful member of Heritage Fellowship Church. I affirm and accept my responsibilities as stated above, and by the grace of our Lord and Savior, will seek to fulfill these responsibilities.

Your Name

Signature

Date

DISCIPLINE OF MEMBERS

The purpose of church discipline is to effect a return to a biblical standard of conduct and doctrine in a member who errs, to maintain purity in the local church, and to deter sin *(1).

Members of this church who shall err in doctrine or conduct shall be subject to correction according to Matthew 18:15-18, Galatians 6:1, 1Cor 5:1-5; 1Tim. 1:18-20, 1Tim. 5:19-20; 2Tim. 2:16-18; James 5:19-20.

As part of such correction:

1. It shall be the duty of any member of this church who has knowledge of the erring member’s heresy or misconduct to warn and to correct such erring member in private, seeking his or her repentance and restoration.
2. If said erring member does not heed this warning, then the warning member shall again go to the erring member accompanied by one or two witnesses to warn and correct such erring member, seeking his or her repentance and restoration.
3. If said erring member still refuses to heed this additional warning, then, it shall be brought to the attention of the elders.
4. The elders, upon careful and prayerful investigation, shall tell it to the church.
5. If said erring member refuses to heed the warning of the elders and the church, he or she shall be publicly dismissed from the church.
6. There shall be no appeal to any court from that decision.
7. It is understood that this process will continue to conclusion even if the erring member leaves the church or otherwise seeks to withdraw from membership to avoid the discipline process.
8. If said member, after dismissal, heeds the warning, demonstrates repentance, and requests restoration of membership, he or she shall be publicly restored to membership. Any such request shall be made to the Elder body *(1).

REMOVAL FROM MEMBERSHIP

Members may be removed from church membership for any of the following reasons:

1. Death.
2. Transfer of membership, providing that disciplinary action is not in process for an offense under “Discipline of Members” of the constitution and by-laws.
3. Inactivity.
4. Disciplinary action.

5. Member request, providing that disciplinary action is not in process for an offense under “Discipline of Members” of the constitution and by-laws.

MEMBERSHIP MEETINGS

A. Types of Meetings

1. A regular annual meeting shall be held to affirm the church’s annual budget and hear reports to the congregation from the elders regarding the church.
2. Special meetings may be called by the elders to report to the church of pending decisions.

B. Notice of Meetings

Any special-called meetings shall be publicly announced and in printed form at least one (1) week prior to the meeting unless extreme urgency renders such notice impractical.

ORDINANCES OF THE CHURCH

BAPTISM

We teach that Baptism is an ordinance of the Lord Jesus, obligatory upon every believer, wherein he is immersed in water in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit, as a sign of his fellowship with the death and resurrection of Christ, of the remission of sins, and of his giving himself up to God, to live and walk in newness of life. It is prerequisite to church membership. *(1).

COMMUNION

This church will practice "open communion," allowing non-members and visitors to participate in the Lord’s Supper if they profess faith in Jesus Christ, and are not under biblical sanctions by their church or in unrepentant sin.

Thus the Lord’s Supper is:

- 1) A remembrance of Him (Luke 22:14-20),
- 2) Our communion with Him, in which, in faith, spiritual grace is conferred (John 6:54-57, 1 Cor. 10:16-17),
- 3) Our fellowship with the body of Christ and especially the local body (1 Corinthians 11:18,20),
- 4) A proclamation of His death and resurrection (1 Corinthians 11:26),
- 5) A time of examination as pertaining to unconfessed sin in individual’s lives (1 Corinthians 11:28).

CHURCH GOVERNMENT

PURPOSE OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

Church government is an extremely practical and theologically significant issue. Biblical structure and function allows the peaceful and orderly working out of the ministry of the church. The Church is the family of God and its head is Jesus Christ. Just as God has given us the structure and the function of each person in a family, He has done so in regards to his church *(1). God’s Word reveals the proper structure of the church and the function of each of its parts. The purpose of such structure and instruction is to ensure spiritual maturity both individually and corporately as a New Testament Church *(2).

We desire that there be unity in the body of Christ. There is only one bride of Christ, the Church, to be presented to Him in all holiness and purity. Although we are striving for purity and unity, we realize that the purest of churches under heaven are subject to both truth and error. As fallen and fallible beings we realize that it is impossible for us to create the perfect church, yet we must strive for purity and oneness.

STRUCTURE OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT

JESUS CHRIST IS THE HEAD

Scripture teaches that Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church. Jesus Christ has revealed His will for us, as the Church, through His Word, the Bible *(1).

ELDERS

Jesus Christ as the Head of the Church mediates His rule over the Church by calling and appointing elders (pastors) to shepherd, oversee, and lead the church. These elders are directly responsible to Jesus Christ for the governing of the church according to His Word *(2). We believe the Scriptures teach that the church is led by a plurality and equality of Elders, called by God and affirmed by the congregation. Authority for the establishment of doctrine and practices beyond those found in this Constitution and for the daily operation of the church is vested in the local body of Elders, who shall strive to maintain the harmony and collaboration with the congregation seen in the New Testament.

DEACONS

Deacons are recommended by the church and approved by the elders to assist the elders in the practical ministry of service to the church. *(3).

COUNCILS

To promote efficient handling of church matters, the elders may appoint various councils from within its members. These councils shall perform tasks solely in accordance with the duties and with the powers specifically delegated by the elders.

The general functions of any council are:

1. To bring considered recommendations to the elders concerning church matters.
 2. To provide a wider base of counsel to the elders regarding church matters *(1).
- All elders serve as ex-officio members of all councils and may sit as such at their discretion.

All councils shall exist for the period specified by the elders.

THE ADMINISTRATIVE COUNCIL

To promote the efficient and studied handling of the financial matters of the church, the elders shall appoint a council for the purpose of making recommendations to the elders regarding the finances of the church. This group shall be known as the administrative council. They shall aid in the compilation of the annual church budget, and any other matters that the elders delegate to their care. The elders shall determine the number and tenure of members of the administrative council. *(1)

TRUSTEES

The elder body for the purpose of the signing of legal documents involving the sale, mortgage, purchase, or rental of property, or other legal document where the signatures of trustees are required shall appoint three trustees. They shall have no power to buy, sell, mortgage, lease, or transfer property without the specific authorization of the elders. Trustees shall serve for a period specified by the elders. Trustees will be members of the Administrative Council.

ORDINATION

Ordination refers to the recognition by the elders and the church of a man's call to the ministry as an elder or a deacon *(1). Ordination shall be conferred for life, so long as the man manifests the qualifications of the office to which he was ordained.

CHURCH RECORDS AND BOOKS

The church shall maintain current, adequate, and correct accounts, books, and records of its business and properties. All such books, records, and accounts shall be in the watch care of the church treasurer, or an elder appointed member. This person shall maintain an accurate account of all receipts and disbursements. The fiscal year of the church shall begin on January 1st, and end on December 31st of each year.

DISSOLUTION OF THE CHURCH

The elder body shall allow the church membership to decide by ballot vote the dissolution of the church. A 75% majority vote of all eligible members present is required for the dissolution of the church. Upon the dissolution of the church, the elder body shall cause all assets of the church to be distributed to another church of like faith and kindred spirit. The elders shall allow the church membership to approve their decision on the distribution of the

assets of the church. Approval shall be by a 75% majority vote of all eligible members present at a special-called meeting for that purpose.

AMENDMENTS TO THE CONSTITUTION AND BY-LAWS

The constitution and by-laws may be amended or changed by the elders. Elders shall seek the formal affirmation of the congregation when changes or amendments to the constitution and by-laws are required. A unanimous vote of the Elders is required to make any changes to this Constitution. These changes shall be affirmed by a two-thirds vote of voting members.

ELDERS

The Elders are called to shepherd God's flock (the church) and as such must meet all the qualifications outlined for them in Scripture. Elders shall be equal in ruling status, authority, and title, though may fulfill different roles in the local body. The Elder and his family must practice the holiness and purity that befits a Christian Elder and his family.

THE AUTHORITY OF THE ELDERS

A. DECISION-MAKING AUTHORITY

All the decision-making authority of the church is vested in the elders who shepherd the church. The objective of any and all decisions made shall be to do the will of God regarding the matter at hand *(1).

B. DECISION-MAKING PROCESS

Decisions shall be reached after prayerful consideration in a spirit of humility, with each elder regarding one another before himself.

A simple majority is required to make a decision.

Statement of unity: Any decision made after following the agreed upon decision-making process will be a unified "yes" or "no" decision. All elders agree to be unified in the final decision, "yes" or "no," in public and in private, even though it may not agree with their personal preference *(2).

C. SPECIAL DECISIONS

The elder body shall seek the formal affirmation of the congregation when the following decisions are being made *(3):

1. The church's annual budget.
2. Expenditures involving new property or new buildings and related indebtedness.
3. The selection of elders.
4. Any changes or amendments to the constitution and by-laws.

D. AFFIRMATION OPTIONS

The elder body may choose at any time and on any matter to seek the affirmation of the congregation or any leadership group within the church. These affirmations may be formal or informal.

CONGREGATIONAL AFFIRMATION

A. PURPOSE OF CONGREGATIONAL AFFIRMATIONS

The purpose of an affirmation from the congregation, deacons or any other group of the church is the wisdom of seeking the godly counsel of many as taught in scripture *(1). This type of counsel can be helpful to the elders in the determining of God's will in a matter *(2).

B. TYPES OF AFFIRMATIONS

1. Formal Affirmation:

A ballot vote of eligible members present at a meeting called for the specific purpose of affirming a decision being made by the elders on a particular matter. The meeting shall be called by the elders, and publicly announced at least one week prior to the meeting. The results of all formal affirmations will be made public.

2. Informal Affirmation:

A vote taken using any method desired by the elders for the purpose of polling the counsel of the congregation or a leadership group on any matter.

C. ELIGIBLE MEMBERS

Any member of Heritage Fellowship Church who is twelve (12) years old or older will be eligible to cast a ballot in formal affirmations.

D. BALLOTS

The ballots used for voting shall provide the following choices:

After prayer on the matter at hand:

1. I believe that this is God's will for our church.
2. I do not believe that this is God's will for our church.
3. I am undecided in the matter.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF ELDERS

A. TO SPIRITUALLY SHEPHERD THE CHURCH

1. To preach and teach God's Word *(1).
2. To pray *(2).
3. To maintain doctrinal purity in the church *(3).
4. To reprove, rebuke, and exhort the church with great patience *(4).
5. To be examples in the church *(5).

B. TO GOVERN AND OVERSEE ALL THE AFFAIRS OF THE CHURCH

1. To establish policies and practices for the church that are consistent with scripture and the purpose of the church *(6).
2. To direct and oversee all of the financial resources and expenditures of the church.
3. To direct and oversee the maintaining of adequate and correct accounts, books, and records of the business of the church.
4. To appoint officers and councils as needed to carry out the business of the church in an orderly and acceptable manner. Any officer or council appointed by the elders is directly responsible to the elders and shall serve as long as the elders see the need *(7).
5. To appoint elders for the church in accordance with the selection process established in these by-laws *(8).
6. To appoint deacons for the church in accordance with the selection process established in these by-laws *(9).
7. To see to the administration, oversight, and care of all church staff.
8. To maintain open communication with the church body.

QUALIFICATIONS OF ELDERS

A. CALLED BY GOD

An elder must be a man who has been called by God into the gospel ministry. The evidences for such a call are as follows:

1. Confirmation of the call to the ministry by other believers *(1).
2. Possession of the abilities necessary to serve (giftedness).
3. A deep desire to serve *(2).
4. A lifestyle characterized by moral integrity *(3).

B. ACTIVE MEMBERSHIP

An elder must affirm and adhere to the membership covenant of this church *(4).

C. BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS

An elder must possess the qualifications described in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:6-9. He shall be:

1. Blameless as a steward of God; above reproach.
2. Husband of one wife.
3. Temperate, sober, vigilant.
4. Sober-minded, prudent.
5. Given to hospitality.
6. Apt to teach; able to teach; he can exhort believers and refute false teaching.
7. Not given to much wine.
8. Not violent; not pugnacious.
9. Patient, moderate, forbearing, gentle.
10. Not a brawler; uncontentious; not soon angry or quick-tempered.
11. Not covetous; not a lover of money; not greedy of base gain.
12. Rules his own household well. His children are faithful; not accused of rebellion to God.
13. Not a novice; not a new convert.
14. Has a good report or reputation with outsiders.
15. Not self-willed.
16. Loves what is good.
17. Just, fair.
18. Holy, devout.
19. Self-controlled.

D. ORDINATION

An elder must be ordained to the gospel ministry by this church or a church of like faith *(5).

SELECTION OF ELDERS

The process by which elders are nominated and appointed to the body of elders is as follows:

1. The elders shall set aside a man that they determine has met the qualifications and calling of the office of elder. He shall be declared as being under consideration. He must be a member in good standing of this local body for a minimum of one year prior to being recommended for the office. This wait will allow him to become familiar with the people, and they with him and his family.
2. The elders shall then make it known to the church that a particular individual is being considered as a candidate for the office of elder.
3. For a period of time, not less than thirty days, the congregation will have the opportunity to prayerfully consider the individual's qualifications for the office of elder. If members for any reason feel that the person may be unqualified, they should go to him in love with discretion and privately discuss their concerns *(1). If after a discussion with the nominee, the members feel that their concern is unresolved, then they should approach the elders with their concern. During the time that a man is under consideration, there are several process options.
 - Option 1: The man under consideration can withdraw himself from consideration and the process will cease.
 - Option 2: The elders may deem the man unqualified for whatever reason and the process will cease.
 - Option 3: The man and the elders agree that the process should continue.
4. After the time of consideration, the elders shall call a special meeting for the purpose of a formal affirmation of the congregation regarding the man under consideration.
5. After prayerful consideration of the counsel of the congregation, the elders shall vote and make known their decision regarding the man.
6. Upon elder body approval, the man shall immediately assume his position as an elder.

NUMBER OF ELDERS

The number of elders shall be as many as are qualified and needed to carry out the ministry of elders in the church. The elder body shall determine that number.

TERM OF ELDERS

The term of office for an elder shall be as long as he is qualified, capable, and desirous of fulfilling the duties of an elder.

REMOVAL OF ELDERS

Any elder may be removed from office if he becomes physically incapacitated, spiritually unqualified, or his inability to serve is established by the remainder of the elder body. Any accusation or action against an elder must be presented to the elder body in accordance with scripture *(1).

ELDER MEETINGS

Meetings of the elder body shall be held on a regular basis as determined by the elders. Anyone desiring to approach the elders on any matter or need may feel free to arrange to meet with them.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF ELDERS

The administrative council shall initially establish and continually review the elders financial support *(1).

1. The elders shall receive their financial support information in writing.
2. The administrative council shall establish the elders' support and benefit packages.
3. The administrative council shall also review the elders' support and benefit packages at least annually.
4. Any change in his support and benefit package shall be given to the elder in writing.

DEACONS

The New Testament scripture teaches that deacons were set apart by the church as servants to minister to the needs of the Body of Christ. This ministry allowed the elders to devote themselves to prayer and to the ministry of the Word *(1). The office of deacon is one of a servant to the Body of Christ. Any other concept does injustice to the New Testament record found in Acts 6 and 1 Timothy 3.

PURPOSE OF DEACONS

The purpose of deacons in the church is as follows:

1. To work and serve alongside the elders to support, encourage, promote, and uphold their ministry *(1).
2. To exemplify spiritual leadership in the fellowship of the church, in their family, personal, and business relationships *(2).
3. To be men of prayer and students of the Word of God *(3).
4. To seek to lead the lost to the Lord Jesus Christ *(4).

QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS

A. ACTIVE CHURCH MEMBERSHIP

A man must be an active member of this church for one year prior to the time of election to the deacon body unless the elder body approves a shorter time *(1).

B. BIBLICAL QUALIFICATIONS

A deacon must possess the qualifications described in scripture.

He shall be:

1. A man of good reputation *(2).
2. A man full of the Spirit and wisdom *(3).
3. A man of dignity, not doubled tongued, not addicted to wine, or fond of sordid gain *(4).
4. A man who holds the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience *(5).
5. A man beyond reproach *(6).
6. A man who is the husband of only one wife *(7).
7. A man who is a good manager of his children and his own household *(8).
8. A man whose wife does not have a malicious tongue *(9).

DEACON SELECTION PROCESS

The process by which deacons are selected is as follows:

1. The elders shall determine if there is a need for additional deacons for the church *(1).
2. When the elder body determines that there is a need for additional deacons, it shall direct the church to nominate from among the active membership those that meet the qualifications of the office of deacon *(1).
3. Upon nomination by the church the elders shall prayerfully consider each nominee and appoint those determined qualified for the office of deacon *(1).

TERM OF OFFICE

The term of office for a deacon shall be as long as he is qualified, capable, and desirous of fulfilling the office and duties of a deacon.

REMOVAL OF DEACONS

Any deacon may be removed from office if he becomes physically incapacitated, spiritually unqualified, or his inability to serve is established by the elders of the church.

SUPPORT STAFF

DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The elders shall establish the duties and responsibilities of all support staff in writing. The elders may change these duties as the need arises. Any duties or changes in duties shall be given to the staff persons in writing so that they will know their duties and responsibilities to the church.

UNDER AUTHORITY

Persons on support staff shall be directly responsible to the elders.

SELECTION OF SUPPORT STAFF

The elders will lead in the selection of support staff.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT OF SUPPORT STAFF

The administrative council shall initially establish and review the financial package of all support staff.

1. Persons on support staff shall receive their financial package information in writing before they begin their tenure.
2. The administrative council shall review the support staff financial support and benefits package on an annual basis.
3. Any change in the package is subject to elder body approval and shall be given to the support staff in writing.

TENURE AND DISMISSAL OF SUPPORT STAFF

1. The tenure of support staff shall be indefinite in length.
2. Support staff shall be dismissed if they become physically incapacitated, or their inability to perform their duties is established and confirmed by the elder body.
3. Dismissal may be immediate if so determined by the elder body.
4. Support staff must give at least two weeks' notice if they intend to resign.
5. The time limit of resignation is subject to a lesser time if mutually agreed upon by the staff person and the elder body.
6. Financial support shall continue to the end of the staff person's tenure.

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