

REDEEMER CHURCH OF SOUTH HILLS CONSTITUTION

ARTICLE I: NAME AND NATURE

We are Redeemer Church of South Hills (hereafter known as 'RCSH') and will be defined in name by our purpose, mission, and nature outlined in our charter. Any changes made to our constitution or by-laws that nullifies any article of our charter requires a new charter under a different name. This protects the future integrity of our religious institution.

ARTICLE II: GOVERNING DOCUMENTS

RCSH acknowledges three (3) governing documents: charter, constitution, and bylaws.

1. Charter

The Charter of RCSH defines the nature of our institution including Name, Mission, and Purpose

2. Constitution

The Constitution of RCSH defines the nature, authority, and qualifications of officers, as well as qualifications of members

3. Bylaws

Our church bylaws outline procedures and processes concerning this elder-led body. This protects the integrity of our documents from future amendments in one, leading to contradictions between the two

ARTICLE III: GOVERNMENT OF THE CHURCH

Jesus Christ alone is the Head of the church (*Eph 5:23; Col 1:18*), and He governs His church through officers whom He appoints (*Acts 20:28; Eph 4:11*) and who are endowed by His Spirit with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work (*1 Tim 3:1-13*). RCSH holds to a congregational form of government led by the officers of the church. There are two (2) kinds of church officers – elders and deacons (*Phil 1:1; 1 Tim 3:1-13*). It is the duty of the church to seek to discover among its members those to whom Christ has imparted the gifts and graces necessary for office and, after formally recognizing them by common vote, to set them apart by united prayer and then to support and submit to the officers in their given areas of authority (*Luke 10:16; John 13:20; Acts 6:3-6, 14:23; 1 Thes 5:12-13; Heb 13:17; 1 Pe 5:5*).

ARTICLE IV: ELDER COUNCIL

1. Plurality, Duties, and Authority

A. Plurality

The Scriptures teach that normally there should be a plurality of elders in each local church (*Acts 14:23, 20:17; Phil 1:1; Titus 1:5*). Therefore, the church should endeavor to discover and then formally recognize all the men whom the Holy Spirit has endowed with the requisite graces and gifts for this office, but only such men (*1 Tim 3:1-7, 5:22*)

B. Duties

Elders are called 'overseers' in Scripture because they are charged with the oversight of the assembly (*Acts 20:17,28; Phil 1:1; 1 Pe 5:2*), 'pastors' because they shepherd the flock of God (*Acts 20:28*), and 'rulers' because they govern and care for the house of God (*1 Tim 3:5; Heb 13:17*). The eldership is therefore responsible for the

preaching and teaching of the whole counsel of God (*Acts 20:20-21,27; Titus 1:9*), the watching out for the welfare of the soul of every member of the church (*Eph 4:11-13; Col 1:28; 1 Thess 2:11; Heb 13:17*), and the directing of the church in all its tasks (*1 Tim 3:4-5*). 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 please the Lord regarding the matter at hand (*Acts 15:2-6; Heb 13:7*).

C. Authority

The Lord Jesus Christ, the Head of the church, has given the Scriptures to His church as the infallible and unchanging rule of practice (*Matt 28:20; 1 Tim 3:14-15; 2 Tim 3:16-17*, to which the elders are always bound in discharging the duties of their office (*1 Cor 14:37-38*). Insofar as the instruction of the elders is in accord with the Scriptures, that instruction carries with it the authority of Christ Himself (*Luke 10:16*). Where the Scriptures give explicit or implicit direction to the church on any issue, this direction is always to be obeyed (*John 14:21*). Where no regulative word from Christ is given, the elders must exercise their authority in subjection to the general principles of Scripture and to the light of nature and Christian prudence (*1 Cor 7:25, 11:13-15, 14:40*). The elders must exercise this authority with sensitivity to the congregation (*Ezek 34:4; Acts 6:5*) and in the posture of servants and examples to them (*Matt 20:25-28; 1 Pe 5:3*). Therefore, the elders should seek the support of the congregation respecting any major endeavor. They should also carefully consider congregational input when to do so would serve the interest of the church and would not involve the elders in a sinful relinquishment of their God-given responsibilities or authority (*1 Tim 3:5; Acts 19:30, 20:11-14*).

2. Qualifications

'[A]n overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household how will he care for God's church? He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.' (*1 Timothy 3:2-7 ESV*)

'If anyone is above reproach, the husband of one wife, and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination. For an overseer, as God's steward, must be above reproach. He must not be arrogant or quick-tempered or a drunkard or violent or greedy for gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, self-controlled, upright, holy, and disciplined. He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also to rebuke those who contradict it.' (*Titus 1:6-9 ESV*)

We believe the Lord Jesus Christ, through His Holy Spirit, appoints men to the office of Elder/Pastor in His churches. That appointment is recognized at RCSH by the current elders and then by the membership. Elders and members of RCSH will consider the following Biblical qualifications when evaluating a man's recognition to the office of Elder/Pastor: Calling, Character, Competence, and his Confession.

1. Calling

Men considered for the office of elder must demonstrate outward evidence of an inward call by God. Fruit of a man's desire and calling should be demonstrated tangibly in his example of steadfast service to the body, sacrificial attitude, faithful attendance, and current labors in the body of Christ according to the opportunities he has already been given (*1 Tim 3:1; 1 Pe 5:2; Acts 20:28; 2 Cor 1:6; 2 Tim 4:5*).

2. Character

Men considered for the office of Elder will evidence of Christ's calling of them by their moral character. To be 'above reproach' means there can be no serious and credible charge of deficiency in character established by two (2) or more witnesses (*1 Tim 3:2-7, 5:19; Titus 1:7-9, 2:7-8, 3:1-2*).

3. Competence

Men considered for the office of elder will further evidence Christ's calling of them by demonstrating competence in the use of the gifts and graces He has given them for the oversight, and especially the instruction of His church, for the glory of God (*1 Cor 12:18; Eph 4:10-12; 1 Pe 4:10-11; 1 Tim 3:4-5; 2 Tim 2:2,24, 4:2*).

4. Confession

Men considered for the office of elder must hold to sound doctrine as summarized in the Confessions brought forth from the Protestant Reformation. They must have already demonstrated an ability to teach sound doctrine and to contradict error. He will affirm his willingness to teach and defend all doctrines contained therein and has a moral duty to inform the elders of RCSH if he at any future time can not confess and teach these doctrines with a clear conscience (*Matt 28:18-20; Rom 16:17; 1 Cor 11:2; 1 Tim 1:3-4, 4:6,11,13,15-16, 6:3; Titus 1:9; 2 Tim 1:13-14, 2:15; 2 Thess 2:15, 3:6; Jude 1-3*)

An elder (pastor) must be ordained to the gospel ministry by this church or a church of like faith (*Acts 14:23*). Prospective elders must undergo an examination by the elder body to assess desire for the office, gifting by the Lord, and Biblical qualification, including personal godliness and knowledge of Scripture.

ARTICLE V: DIACONATE

1. Duties and Authority

Christ, the Head of the church, has instituted the office of deacon as an aid to the people of God in general, and to the elders of the church in particular (*Acts 6:1-6*). Deacons are responsible to administer the ordinary business, secular affairs, and benevolence concerns of the church so that the elders may devote themselves without distraction to the Biblical priorities of their office (*Acts 6:2-4*). Deacons must fulfill the duties of their office in cooperation with and under the authority and oversight of the elders (*Acts 6:3, 20:17,28*).

2. Qualifications

Each deacon must meet the qualifications for the office which are set forth in Scripture.

'Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.' (*Acts 6:3 ESV*)

'Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted too much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain. They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. And let them also be tested first; then let them serve as deacons if they prove themselves blameless. Their wives likewise must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded, faithful in all things. Let deacons each be the husband of one wife, managing their children and their own households well. For those who serve well as deacons gain a good standing for themselves and also great confidence in the faith that is in Christ Jesus.' (*1 Timothy 3:8-13 ESV*)

Any individual called to this office must hold to the doctrines summarized in the Confessions brought forth from the Protestant Reformation; he/she must exemplify the grace of Christ in generously dealing with the needy. Should he/she at any time change his/her convictions respecting these standards, he/she is under moral obligation to immediately make this fact known to the elders (*Matt 5:37; 1 Cor 1:10; Eph 4:25*).

ARTICLE VI: MEMBERSHIP QUALIFICATIONS: MORAL AND CEREMONIAL

There are two (2) requirements for membership at RCSH – a moral requirement and a ceremonial requirement.

1. Moral

The moral requirement includes repentance and faith. To the first of these, we point out the myriad times in Scripture individuals are called to repentance as a condition of coming to Christ (*Mark 1:15; Luke 13:1; Acts 26:20*). This is a doctrine of the gospel, knowing it is by the grace of God that a sinner may repent. To the second, we read that

without faith it is impossible to please God (*Heb 11:6*) and that through this gift from God we are reconciled to Him (*Eph 2; Gal 3*). Therefore, to be a member of a local church, one must be moral – have repentance towards and faith in the Lord Jesus. The moral qualifications of membership are private, between the individual and the Lord.

2. Ceremonial

A. Baptism

Baptism is one of the first acts of obedience of a new creature in Christ (*Acts 8:38-39*) and a requirement for membership at RCSH. This ceremonial qualification is a public display of the private work performed by the Lord on the recipient, symbolizing his death to sin and resurrection to new life in Christ. There is an actual, real remission of sins when we believe in Christ and are baptized in the Holy Spirit (*Titus 3:5*); there is a declarative, formal, symbolic remission in water baptism (*Matt 28:18-20*).

B. Covenant

Each person coming into membership with the body of RCSH is becoming a covenant member of that community. The statement and signature of a church covenant flow naturally from the relationship being initiated at the point of membership. To become a member of RCSH, one must agree to the Statement of Faith by way of signature, and declare that oath publicly before God and man during a worship service at RCSH.

C. Vows

As membership in a local church is a weighty matter, RCSH asks each membership candidate to take an oath before the church, and for the church to respond by oath to the membership candidate.

ARTICLE VII: ORDINATION AND LICENSING

1. Ordination

Ordination refers to the recognition by the elders and the church of a man's desire and qualifications for ministry as an Elder or Deacon (*Acts 6:6, 13:2-4, 20:28*). Ordination shall be conferred for life, so long as the individual manifests the qualification of the office to which he/she was ordained and continues to serve in such capacity. Ordination is a requirement to hold the office of Elder or Deacon.

ARTICLE VIII: ASSOCIATION

Voluntary association between two (2) or more like-minded churches is a welcomed and wonderful expression of the Christian love we are to have amongst the Universal Church and before the world. Therefore, RCSH will consistently seek association with other local churches with who we can share the core of our beliefs and the fellowship that edifies the saints.

ARTICLE IX: AMENDMENTS

Any petitions to amend the constitution must be submitted to the elder body in writing. The elder body must approve any amendment(s), and said amendment(s) must be affirmed by a binding, written affirmation of 2/3 majority of church voting members present in a congregational business meeting.