

Constitution, Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws for Scandia Bible Church

PREAMBLE

We, the elders and deacons of Scandia Bible Church, with the knowledge and consent of the congregants of Scandia Bible Church, do adopt the following Articles, to which we voluntarily and solemnly submit ourselves. This document shall supersede all prior constitutions, by-laws, and articles of incorporation of Scandia Bible Church or its predecessors.

ARTICLE I: NAME

The name of this church shall be Scandia Bible Church.

ARTICLE II: PURPOSE

The purpose of this church is to glorify the God of the Scriptures by maintaining and promoting His worship both individually and corporately, by evangelizing sinners, and by edifying His saints. Therefore, we are committed to the proclamation of God's glorious Gospel of grace through all the world, to the defense of that "faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3), and to the pure and faithful celebration of the ordinances of the New Covenant.

ARTICLE III: COVENANT

God has graciously entered into a covenant relationship with His believing people (Jer. 31:31-34; 32:40; Heb. 8:7-13; 10:16, 17; 13:20,21). Jesus Christ is the Mediator of the New Covenant (Heb. 8:6). His blood is the blood of the New Covenant, which infallibly secures all the benefits of the covenant for all of God's people (Matt. 26:26-28; Heb. 13:20,21). God has in this New Covenant made us members one of another (Rom. 12:4,5; 1 Cor. 12:12-27; Eph. 4:25). God has promised in this covenant to write His laws in our hearts and to cause us to walk in His ways. It is by the enablement of the Holy Spirit that we obey God, in loving gratitude for Christ's righteousness, which has been imputed to us, and not to establish our own righteousness before God. We obey with the confidence that the end of Christ's death will be realized in us (that is, "that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us" [Rom. 8:1-4] and that we should be a people "zealous of good works" [Titus 2:14]).

ARTICLE IV: ARTICLES OF FAITH

1. We believe that the Holy Scriptures are the inspired, infallible, and inerrant word of God, and constitute the sole, supreme, complete, and sufficient authority in every matter of Christian Faith and practice. We believe the Lord our God is one God, whose subsistence is in Himself; whose essence cannot be comprehended by any but Himself; and Who subsists as the Trinity, eternally existing as the Father, the Word, and the

Holy Spirit; each having the whole divine Essence, yet the Essence undivided; all infinite without any beginning, therefore but one God; who is not to be divided in nature and being.

2. We believe that Jesus Christ is God and is both fully God and fully man. As to His deity, Scripture proclaims that He is the mighty God, the word that is God; God over all, God manifested in the flesh, and the true God. He is the first and the last, He gives being to all things, He forgives sins, He was before Abraham, and He shall evermore be the same. He is with us always, even to the ends of the earth. As to his humanity, Scripture teaches us that Christ was made of a woman, of the seed of David, and that He Himself took part with us in flesh and blood, taking not the nature of angels, but the seed of Abraham. He was raised bodily from the grave and ascended bodily into heaven, whence he shall come bodily to judge the living and the dead.
3. We believe that salvation is by grace through faith, which faith is the gift of God, lest any man should boast. We believe in the justification of believers through the shed blood of Christ, who, by his substitutionary death, redeemed us from the curse of sin.
4. We believe in the ultimate resurrection of the saved and the lost, the justified and the condemned: the saved unto eternal glory through the grace of God, the lost unto eternal punishment for their sins.
5. We believe that every local church has power given them from Christ, for their wellbeing, to choose among themselves appropriate persons for elders and deacons, being qualified according to the word, as those which Christ has appointed in His testament, for the feeding, governing, serving, and building up of His Church.
6. We believe that baptism is an ordinance of the New Testament, given by Christ, to be dispensed upon persons professing faith; who, upon profession of faith, ought to be baptized and to partake of the Lord's Supper.
7. We believe that the Lord's Supper was instituted for the spiritual comfort and edification of believers, as a memorial by which we proclaim Christ's death until He comes.

ARTICLE V : MEMBERSHIP

The Lord has established His church by His gracious salvation of the saints. Scandia Bible Church accepts as congregants all who believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God come in the flesh (1 John 5:1) in order to die for their sins, and wish to live in loving obedience and gratitude to Christ. The church imposes no other membership ritual or requirement. Where brothers and sisters in Christ seek to move membership from churches of like faith and practice, Scandia shall accept such memberships in accommodation to the practices of such churches. Likewise, the elders may issue letters of church membership to congregants who seek to transfer by letter to churches of like faith and practice. All such letters shall include a statement of Scandia's position as to church membership and an endorsement as to the congregant's faith and service.

ARTICLE VI: CHURCH DISCIPLINE

Every disciple of Christ must be under His loving discipline (His instruction and correction), which is administered to each one through the proclamation of His word and the practices of the church. Mutual submission to one another and to the overseers whom the Lord has set over His church is necessary to the sanctification of each member and the knitting together of the whole body of the church. The elders of the church are responsible for proclaiming God's word to the body, teaching and admonishing every believer in all wisdom, until we all attain to maturity in Christ.

Where errors of doctrine arise or disorderly, immoral, or scandalous conduct appears within the church, such problems shall be resolved in accordance with the commands of Scripture, as set forth in Matt. 18:15-16, Rom. 16:17-20, 1 Cor. 5:1-13, 2 Thess. 3:6-15, 1 Tim. 5:19-20, and Titus 3:10. In some cases public admonition and/or public repentance may be warranted. In the most extreme cases excommunication from the fellowship of the church may be necessary. The goals of corrective discipline are always the glory of God, the welfare and purity of the church and the restoration and spiritual growth of the offender.

ARTICLE VII: ORDINANCES

A. General Statement

There are two ordinances of special significance that our Lord has commanded us to observe, namely, Baptism and the Lord's Supper (sometimes referred to as "sacraments."). Neither of these ordinances has saving merit.

B. Baptism

Only confessed disciples of our Lord Jesus Christ are proper candidates for Baptism, and all such persons should be baptized (Acts 2:38, 41, 47; 5:13, 14). Baptism in water is the God-ordained sign of one's personal union with Christ in His death, burial, and resurrection. Baptism shall be in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (Matt. 28:19). Immersion in water is the biblical mode of Baptism and is the only mode to be administered by this church, except in cases of ill health or other disability making such immersion impossible.

C. The Lord's Supper

Whereas Baptism is the ordinance by which one enters the visible church, and should be observed only once by each believer, the Lord's Supper should be celebrated frequently by the assembled church. While this is a most holy ordinance and should be observed with solemnity and dignity, the bread and the cup of the Supper are and remain symbols of the broken body and the shed blood of our Lord Jesus Christ. The church shall practice open communion, with the instruction that all believers examine themselves with respect to the propriety of their participation in the ordinance. The elders may, in extraordinary circumstances, and with explanation to the body, withhold communion from a person who continues in known sin after church discipline and counsel from the elders.

ARTICLE VIII: OFFICERS

A. General Statement

Jesus Christ alone is the Head of His Church. He has ordained that individual churches should be governed by Himself through officers whom He appoints, who are endowed by His Spirit with the gifts and graces needed to accomplish their work. Christ has ordained that local churches are to be administered by elders and deacons.

While we acknowledge the valuable gifts which God has given women and the valuable assistance they may render to the officers of the church (Rom. 16:1-6; Phil. 4:3; 1 Tim. 3:11), the Bible prohibits women from holding the office of elder in the church (1 Cor. 14:33b-35; 1 Tim. 2:8-15; 3:1-7). Women, therefore, shall not be nominated, elected, or ordained to the office of elder in the church. Nevertheless, we acknowledge and encourage the valuable gifts and assistance of women in instruction, (Acts 18:26, Titus 2:3-5), in the diaconate, and in the benevolent ministries of the church (1 Tim. 3:11; 5:9, 10).

B. Elders

1. Those who have been called of God to rule and teach in the church are called elders, pastors, or bishops (overseers). These are three interchangeable names designating one and the same office (Acts 20:17, 28; Eph. 4:11, 12; Titus 1:5, 7). At Scandia Bible Church, we shall use the name "elder" as the most common and usual title applied to such persons.

2. Anyone desiring the office of an elder must evidence to God's people the personal, domestic, and ministerial qualifications that are set forth in the Scriptures (1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9).

3. Because the authority of the elders of the church is human authority exercised in the house of God, it has both high prerogatives and important limitations:

a. It is divinely-delegated authority. Thus, elders are answerable to God for the exercise of this authority (Acts 20:28; Heb. 13:17). Therefore, elders are obligated to discharge all of the duties specified by God in the Scriptures (particularly in such passages as Acts 20:17, 28ff; 1 Pet. 5:1-4; and Heb. 13:17).

b. In the exercise of this authority, elders must seek to gain the consciences of God's people through the ministry of the word and the example of their lives (Eph. 4:11c; 1 Tim. 3:2c; 2 Tim. 4:1-2; Heb. 13:17).

c. The authority of the elders does not include the right to make decisions unilaterally. In major decisions of church life, the local church as a whole has a voice (Acts 6:2-6; 9:26; 1 Cor. 5:4-5; 13; 2 Cor. 2:6). Yet the elders must provide instructive leadership to the church in the making of such decisions.

d. The authority of the elders is limited to the sphere of the local church and the spiritual health of its people. Thus, they will not command God's people regarding matters not specified in Scripture except to order the house of God by the application of His word (Matt. 22:21; Luke 12:13-14; Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 5:3a; Rom. 13:1-7; Eph. 5:22-6:9; 1 Cor. 7:25-28; 35-40).

e. The authority of elders is conditioned by the fact that they are themselves members of the local church. While elders are shepherds over the flock, they are also members of the flock. Therefore, each individual elder is entitled to the same privileges, is obligated by the same responsibilities, and is subject to the same discipline as are all the other members of the church. Each individual elder is both under the oversight of his fellow elders and accountable to the church as a whole (Matt. 18:17; 23:9; 26:31; 2 Cor. 11:19-20; Gal. 2:11; 3 John 1, 9, 10).

f. The authority of every elder (or pastor) is the same. Thus, every elder has equal rule in the church. Though gifts possessed and functions performed will vary from elder to elder, this diversity must not undermine parity among the elders (Acts 20:28; Gal 2:11; 1 Pet. 5:1-2; 1 Tim. 5:17).

g. The authority of the elders is very real authority. God's people are, therefore, required to submit to the elders when that authority is Biblically exercised (Heb. 13:17).

4. One crucial aspect of the elders' duties is personally overseeing the flock of God. Fulfillment of this duty should include regularly meeting with members of the church.

5. Elders may be maintained in material necessities and disentangled from the cares of another vocation according to their gifts, the needs and capability of the church, and the direction of Christ her Head, as discussed below.

6. Though a plurality of elders is the New Testament norm for every church, the New Testament does not specify the number of elders each church should have, nor does it dictate the length of an elder's term of office. One truly called to this office is usually called to it for life. He is a gift of Christ to the church, and the gifts of God are without repentance. Only when an elder fails to meet the necessary scriptural qualifications for his office does he disqualify himself from being an elder.

C. Deacons

1. Deacons are responsible primarily to administer the benevolent concerns of the church and its business affairs (Acts 6:1-4). They must fulfill the duties of their office in cooperation with, and in subjection to, the elders. Deacons may be male or female. Female deacons may be referred to as "deaconesses," but are in all respects equal to male deacons. The deacons and deaconesses may be referred to as the "Diaconate."

2. The number of deacons shall not be fixed. The church shall set apart according to its need those who evidence the scriptural qualifications for that office.

3. The Diaconate may determine the manner in which it will conduct its activities, may assign individual duties to its members, and may organize itself as it sees fit. The elders shall have authority to review and approve or disapprove such organizational decisions.

D. Appointment of Officers

1. General Statement

The appointment of elders and deacons is the prerogative of the Lord Jesus Christ alone. However, He has ordained that each local church exercise the responsibility of recognizing those whom He is appointing to be elders and deacons in that particular church. Elders and deacons are ordained to office by the laying on of hands by the eldership. This is an expression of approval for which the elders are responsible. Therefore, each officer must have the approval, not only of the church as a whole, but of the eldership in particular. The Lord's appointment of an individual to either of these offices is recognized by means of that individual's possession of those graces and gifts required by Scripture for the particular office and his own conviction that the Lord is calling him to minister in that office. The recognition of officers is a matter of such importance that it should never be dealt with without much prayerful waiting upon God, an honest perusal of the relevant passages of Scripture, and a frank evaluation of those who are being considered. Each member of the church has a spiritual responsibility to be intelligently informed regarding these matters.

2. Procedure of Appointment

The recognition of those whom the Lord has appointed to bear office in this church is executed in three steps: nomination, election, and ordination.

a. Nomination

Nominations to either office are made by the eldership, which may consult the membership in any manner the elders deem appropriate. Individuals who believe that a particular person should be appointed to a position in the church should inform one of the elders.

b. Election

The names of prospective elders and deacons shall be announced to the church body for its consideration. Any person having any reason to question the nomination of any officer shall inform the elders of his concern and the matter will be dealt with by the elders, with the congregant being informed of the results of the elders' review of the matter. After sufficient time for receiving such concerns, the elders shall present the prospective elders and deacons to the body on the Lord's Day for ordination and acceptance.

c. Ordination

Following the election of an officer there shall be a portion of a regular worship service set aside at which time the officer shall be ordained by the laying on of the hands of the eldership. This solemn act should always be accompanied by the special prayers of the whole church. The laying on of the elders' hands shall signify their approval of an officer-elect.

E. Review of Officers

1. Officers may hold office as long as they meet the biblical qualifications for their office in the esteem of the church and the elders.

2. Where any individual has information that would tend to show that an officer of the church is unfit to serve in that position, the individual should bring that matter to the attention of the elders. Pursuant to 1 Timothy 5:19, such a charge shall not be received against an elder or other church officer except on the basis of two or three witnesses.

3. Where an individual has a personal difference with a church officer, that matter should be resolved through the process of Matthew 18. In such situations, individuals are directed to speak first with the officer at issue, and then to speak with the elders if the matter is not resolved in the personal meeting.

F. Support of Elders

1. The Bible teaches that persons engaged in ruling the church and, more especially, in public teaching and preaching, are worthy of financial support by the church (Gal. 6:6; 1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Cor. 9:1-14). Special caution should be exercised in giving financial support to an elder for the following reasons:

(1) financial support may involve the elder's removal from a secular vocation, which, in the interests of Christ's Kingdom and of his family, might be a more advantageous position for him to occupy;

(2) financial support may involve a major portion of the church's financial stewardship, for which Christ will hold it accountable; and

(3) financial support may greatly influence an elder's role in the church or relationship to the persons in the church.

2. After giving full consideration to the concerns noted above, the elders may recommend to the church that an existing elder or a nominee to the eldership be financially supported. The elders shall consider the church's response to such a proposal before making any final decision as to support.

3. In any consideration of financial support, special attention shall be given to the relevant teaching of Scripture (Gal. 6:6; 1 Tim. 5:17; 1 Cor. 9:1-14). Such consideration must at all times reflect the fear of God, the claims of truth, and the gravity of the matter.

4. The financial support of elders is subject to review and can be changed by recommendation of the elders and approval of the congregation.

ARTICLE IX: OFFICIAL BOARD AND LEGAL OFFICERS

In order to "render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar's," this church shall have an official Board and any "legal officers" required by law. The official Board shall consist of the elders as

voting members and deacons as non-voting members. In the absence of a plurality of elders, the deacons shall be voting members of the Board. The Board shall act only with respect to those matters as to which the law requires Board action. "Legal officers" are the President, Secretary, Treasurer, and Registered Agent. One person may hold more than one legal office. The Secretary shall serve as Registered Agent and maintain the corporate documents of the church. The Treasurer shall handle bookkeeping and accounting duties, under the supervision of the deacons. The President shall be a deacon, selected by the deacons, and shall have authority to sign official documents, under the Board's direction, as the representative of the Board. The Secretary and Treasurer shall be selected by the deacons. Should the law change so as to require additional legal officers, such may be appointed by the Board.

ARTICLE X: CHURCH MEETINGS

A. Annual Business Meeting

An annual business meeting shall be held in January or February of each year. A financial report for the previous year shall be presented. An officer of the church shall preside at the meeting.

B. Other Meetings

The body may meet at such other times and for such reasons as the elders deem appropriate. The elders shall call a meeting of the body at the request of any congregant if that request, in the opinion of the elders, is based on spiritual or practical concerns that require a meeting. The deacons may call meetings of the church to deal with issues confronting the diaconate, after consultation with the elders.

C. Form of Meetings

Meetings shall follow whatever form the elders believe to be appropriate for the purpose of the meeting. The church does not consider parliamentary procedure to be an appropriate method for administering the affairs of the family of God.

ARTICLE XI: CONSTITUTIONAL AUTHORITY

A. Nature

This Constitution reflects an earnest and sincere attempt to apply the Scriptures in ordering the life of this local church. The Constitution shall not be a straightjacket for limiting the body, but a form in which the body can grow according to the will of God. In all things, Scripture is our sole and final authority as to faith and practice.

B. Deficiencies

If at any time a congregant of this church becomes concerned that adherence to this Constitution would violate biblical principle, he or she should make this known to the elders. If the elders conclude that biblical principle requires disregarding a provision of this Constitution, they are obligated to communicate this together with the reason(s) for their conclusion to the church as soon as possible. Furthermore, relevant amendments to this Constitution must be submitted to

the church and acted upon in accordance with the provisions of Section C within one year following this informational meeting, to remove or revise the Constitution as required.

C. Amendments

Amendments to this Constitution may be adopted by the Board with notice to the congregation.

This Constitution was adopted by the elders, deacons, and congregation of Scandia Bible Church at its annual meeting on January 24, 1999.

Elders:

James W. Allen

Keith Barker

Robert A. Lowe

Secretary:

Jill Johnston